Since there were few large design studios in Germany capable of handling big projects, German businesses often went to design agencies in England. However, this collaboration was not without its problems. For example, British designers would often deliver final artwork and construction plans using inches instead of millimeters. So there was a need for good German design studios.

Erik Spiekermann founded MetaDesign in 1979 with Dieter Heil, with whom he had worked at Wolff Olins in London; Florian Fischer, his business partner in Berlin, and Gerhard Doerrié, a colleague of Fischer's. The first employee was Anna Berkenbusch. The name MetaDesign refers to the motto »design for design«.

Spiekermann traveled between London and Berlin, before moving back to Berlin in 1981. Since Florian Fischer wished to return to consultancy, and Spiekermann did not want to remain alone, MetaDesign »Mark One« was bought in 1983 by Sedley Place Design in London, and renamed Sedley Place Design Berlin GmbH. The London company was founded in 1978 by former Wolff Olins employees. Dieter Heil became managing director of the Berlin branch.

With: Gerhard Doerrié, Florian Fischer, and Dieter Heil

From left to right: Florian Fischer,
Cornelia Bassenge, Anna Berkenbusch,
Erik Spiekermann