paperbilities

Inspiration for Creative Campaigners

SUMMER 2019

WHO'S DOING WHAT IN TODAY'S CREATIVE LANDSCAPE

EMERGING TRENDS FOR CREATIVES

THE TRACK

Business leaders who find themselves on the inside track to success have an ability to anticipate change, adapt quickly and navigate an increasingly complex world. Those traits typically come from a deep understanding and commitment. In other words, their ability to build sustainable success stems from having remarkable clarity on who they are and why they exist.

The challenge for today's creative firm, in particular, is that you rarely get a chance to step outside of your practice and strategize. You're so busy working within the business and taking care of your clients that you don't get the chance to work "on" the business and act on new ideas and models.

Getting the inside track in today's world is hard when we are immersed in the day to day. Therefore, you must set aside time to remind yourselves of the purpose of your existence. Finding your purpose is the first step in figuring out how to achieve the goals that excite and inspire you.

At Convertible Solutions, we have done some work on our own purpose and we like what we found. To be able to elevate the work of our clients and help them magnify their creativity makes us jump out of bed in the morning.

Having a purpose beyond financial rewards is, well, rewarding in itself. Our substrates and the success they create are simply the result of the "why" that drives us.

We recommend taking a moment away from the business to rediscover your purpose and find the inside track for success. And maybe on some small level this issue of *Paperbilities* can provide some inspiration.

Our cover story, "Going Retro — Creatives Love Designing for Print," reminds us how powerful print can be, what makes us come alive and a bit about why we got into the business in the first place.

Enjoy the issue.

**Aric Snyder
& George Fry**
Convertible Solutions

Inside
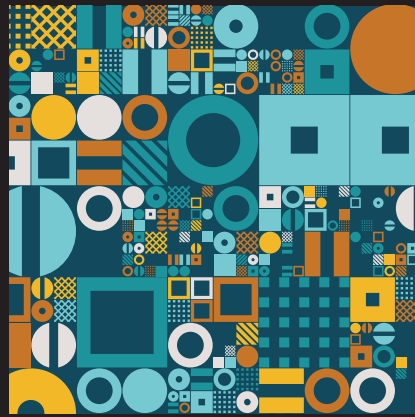
GOING RETRO

CREATIVES LOVE DESIGNING FOR PRINT

Maybe Pete Wells was onto something. When asked about Zagat's decision to start printing its iconic restaurant guide again, the response by the New York Times' chief restaurant critic was an unscripted validation of all things print. "I can find the phone numbers and addresses of most restaurants faster by

Interestingly, print, especially direct mail, is becoming more popular with younger generations. Take a recent study by the United States Postal Service (USPS). According to "The Case for Marketing Mail," 69 percent of millennials say they read marketing mail, while 30 percent consider responding to direct-mail advertisements.

"Because so many things are digital, from the electric bill to placing a grocery order, mail has become somewhat of a novelty," says Brigid Kaye, Chief Relationship Officer and Strategic Business Development at Creative Characters Print & Web Solutions. "They get less mail, so it grabs their attention and means more to them when they do get mail."

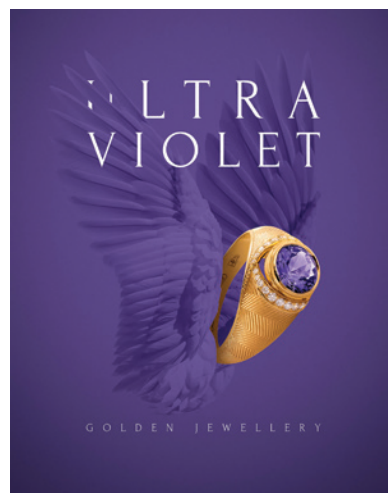In today's omni-channel world, Kaye says that print remains a strategic component for any marketing and branding campaign. And she should know. For the past 24 years, her company's team of award-winning graphic designers have used creative and innovative typography and imagery to tell stories, evoke feelings and reveal personalities.

A major proponent of the virtues of print's place in today's marketing landscape, she believes brands must start embracing its benefits again. And that starts with design. "Today, people have the attention span of a gnat," Kaye says. "Know that it truly takes at least seven to 12 touches or more before someone even notices a campaign. That means you must keep the messages in alignment and use print in tandem with other mediums. Design so that it works in all mediums, from print to digital."

Kaye's advice comes from a place deep within her heart. Over the past 20 years, she admits to seeing a decline in the way creatives use print. "Twen-

scanning an alphabetical list than by swatting my thumbs at my phone screen."

Take that digital. A year out from switching to a digital-only format, Zagat's new owner, The Infatuation, announced it wanted to return Zagat to its roots—those handy-dandy burgundy books that NYC patrons loved to consult when making their restaurant rounds. Infatuation founder and CEO Chris Stang said his company wanted to marry its domain expertise with Zagat's storied printed past to give today's consumer a variety of ways to engage with their content.

If you're looking for an underlying message in this story, it may be that print design leaves an indelible impression that just cannot be recreated through digital media. Let's face it—print is everywhere and touches us in practically everything we see and do. Business cards. Greeting cards. Concert tickets. The labels and packaging on our favorite products. Our favorite drinks and food. Point-of-purchase displays. Direct mail. And the list goes on...

In her office, design strategist Vicki Strull has a library of work featuring print pieces that have moved or touched her in some way over the years. "The permanence of print increases its importance to us. We have interactions with print all day long, and many times we might not even be aware of its effect on us. We couldn't live without it."

Like many designers, Strull understands the paramount importance print has in today's branding initiatives, stressing the importance for designers to understand how to integrate it into their campaigns. "It has to match the messaging, the design, the desired outcome," she says. "It's not an add-on; it's a part of the whole. It's one of the touchpoints."

A relationship for the ages

There are many ways to reach a target audience. That said, print will always be one of the best ways to connect with your audience, regardless of age.

ty years ago, graphic artists brought their paper portfolio into my office for review and they all had skill designing for print. Fifteen years ago, it was hard to find a graphic artist who had skill designing for the web as well as print, but there were some out there. About 10 years ago, it became harder to find graphic artists with any skill designing for print."

And last year, it happened. After advertising for a graphic artist position, she noticed that most applicants had experience designing for social media, designing websites, designing for online user experiences, but no experience with design for print.

"As designers, we must be flexible enough to know how to design for print, email, web and billboard because businesses use all these media for advertising," Kaye says. "A project might begin as a postcard, but it is likely to finish as a postcard plus an online ad, a social media post and a landing page. I believe designing for print is foundational for any graphic artist. It is a necessary skill in order to have a well-rounded level of experience."

Like Strull and Kaye, John Clifford isn't ready to write print off as an effective medium of branding proficiency. The award-winning creative director/designer and founder of New York City's Think Studio says that it simply was affected and changed by the use of screens. Much like TV forced radio to change, print has had to learn to adapt. Like any good disruption, that which does not destroy you makes you stronger.

Clifford, whose firm focuses on brand identity, digital and print design, says that when planning a campaign, designers should consider print as a part of the whole, along with digital. While there may be a few cases where it makes sense for a

5 print tips you can use right now

01 Learn everything you can about designing for print. It is a necessary skill for those who want a well-rounded level of experience.

02 Don't underestimate print's power to touch your senses; to create a completely different experience for your audience than anything you'd ever experience with digital.

03 The ability to design for print expands the channels that you can use to interact with your audience. Pieces like printed flyers, cards and posters help make brands more memorable.

04 If you are going to print something, make it worth it. Use good paper stock, look into finishes or die cuts that make it a more tactile experience.

05 When you think branding, think memorable. Within a multi-channel marketing strategy, talk about what's tactile. Why is that important? What's memorable? What's something you can save? Personalize?

Source: Brigid Kaye, Creative Characters Print & Web Solutions; Vicki Strull, design strategist, Vicki Strull Consulting; Emily Jones, Magnificent Mile; John Clifford, Think Studio

certain product or service to be marketed exclusively via digital channels, most of his clients need both.

"With any piece, I would ask if it needs to exist physically, or would it be more functional as a digital piece," Clifford says. "If print makes sense—maybe it's aimed at a market that appreciates print, or having a physical presence will make a bigger impact, or it will reach more people, or get more attention—then make it a great print piece."

As creative director for Magnificent Marketing, Emily Jones gets to work with a number of very cool branding campaigns that involve graphic design, animation and video. With each project, she strategizes the best pieces to help her clients expand their visibility.

When the discussion comes to print, it's always interesting to see how some people think it's an outdated approach. That's when Jones gets to set the record straight. "No way. I think the best practice is to incorporate it with digital. We can't ignore that it is the most popular and accessible medium, but the two can work together wonderfully. Learning to design for print expands your knowledge and can allow you to try different styles based on the piece. As long as there are events, gatherings and information to be shared, there will be the need for printed materials."

If there is one takeaway these creatives want to have, it is that printed materials are a fine art—one that can have a more profound impact in person than it does digitized and placed on a screen. "Print touches our lives in many ways," Jones says. "For me, I still buy physical copies of magazines and newspapers. It gives me time to slow down and flip through the pages without the common distractions of the internet."

Madina Turchaninova

Emerging tren

WHO'S DOING WHAT IN TODAY'S CREATIVE LANDSCAPE

our business involves boundless creativity, but at the end of the day, it's still a business. Balancing your design campaigns with the demands of operating in the black takes a special approach. That involves making determinations, big and small, about the format of your campaigns, the delivery of your message and with whom you'll partner to make it happen.

Among the decisions and choices you'll make is whether to stick with print or go digital for each campaign. Since each campaign and audience is different, you must do your homework, keep up with analysis and apply a little wisdom.

"There's an ongoing argument that either print is dead or it's more effective than ever," says Cami Travis-Groves, graphic designer, speaker and freelance coach(www.camiimac.com). "I'm of the latter opinion, because there's so much focus on the digital space that the competition for attention in your mailbox is not as fierce."

When print is the choice, the expectations are seemingly high. Due to the juggling of multiple clients and projects, creative time can be stretched thin. "Clients expect to see

ds for creatives

very polished layouts," says Mary Day, SVP and director of print for EnergyBBDO. "Designers help sell the work for us by finessing the details that an art director used to be able to focus on, such as fonts, kerning, art elements and composition."

Print or no print, customer service continues to dictate ongoing success for design companies. Here's where the terms "customer experience," "retail experience," or "service experience" become relevant. The customer has to have an enjoyable encounter from start to finish.

Hugh Allspaugh says the opportunity to create better customer and product experiences is increasingly how brands are differentiating themselves and justifying a premium. "I don't think today's designers are talking about print enough, or maybe even at all—but they should be," says Allspaugh, SVP, associate partner, and brand and marketing strategy leader, VSA Partners.

Allspaugh says print is about to experience a renaissance. "The focus on digital has been relentless for almost two decades, and designers and marketers are waking up to the reality that print can truly break through the clutter."

> "IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET TO WHERE YOU'RE GOING, HIRE A COACH OR FIND A MENTOR. OTHERWISE, YOU'LL JUST BE FOLLOWING WHATEVER COMES YOUR WAY, AND YOUR LIFE WILL HAPPEN TO YOU."
>
> — CAMI TRAVIS-GROVES, CAMIIMAC

Print, after all, is tangible. Consider the impact of touch and haptics. Physically touching an item creates more value. This theory has come to be known as the "Endowment Effect." Allspaugh says that with today's premium paper choices and printing techniques, designers can execute incredible experiences through paper.

When to use print
It has been Travis-Groves' experience that print works best when the audience is at least somewhat familiar with the product or service. "Print can convey quality so much more effectively than digital campaigns alone."

While the audience matters, the product may demand print as well. High-quality food products are one example. Think about the magazines consumed by foodies. Publications such as Bon Appetit and Food & Wine can be a stand-out place to feature a top brand in the food category.

"I think luxury brands can get lost in the digital space," Day says. "It's like the overload of direct mail we used to see, only now it's in our inboxes and social media apps. I think a brand can stand out in specialty magazines and through a smart use of out-of-home media."

Allspaugh believes print works for account-based marketing since it can be highly personalized and vertically customized. He also describes it as an "awareness builder." Direct-to-consumer brands are leveraging print beyond packaging.

Direct mail
Today's direct mail campaigns should use personalization whenever possible. "I also try to add something tactile to the printed piece, either soft-touch aqueous or spot gloss UV—

something to get the audience's attention," Travis-Groves says. "Even better is if the printed piece gives them something to do, such as scratch off, unfold, peel open, etc."

Allspaugh recommends simple messaging, high-quality paper choices, attention-grabbing printing techniques, and mass customization through variable printing.

What clients want
As expected, clients are looking for value and efficiency in production, and lots and lots of content. They also want to stand out from their competitors and leave a lasting impression.

Travis-Groves advises becoming a true business partner rather than just an order taker. "My clients have come to expect pushback when their suggestions steer the project away from the target goals."

As you grow your business and move your team forward, be an active participant in your career. Determine where you want to go and what you want to achieve. "If you don't know how to get to where you're going, hire a coach or find a mentor," Travis-Groves says. "Otherwise, you'll just be following whatever comes your way, and your life will happen to you."

Consider working in an environment where you can feed creatively off others while honing your own skills. Identify mentors who will critique your work and provide solid direction. Day says that while freelancing can be a great alternative, the energy, collaboration and communication of a group will greatly enhance your design skills.

All in all, great design boils down to the ability to be a problem solver. Allspaugh recommends the basics. "Stick to designing with purpose, whatever your purpose may be," he says.

> ## "I DON'T THINK TODAY'S DESIGNERS ARE TALKING ABOUT PRINT ENOUGH, OR MAYBE EVEN AT ALL—BUT THEY SHOULD BE."
> — HUGH ALLSPAUGH, VSA PARTNERS

FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIPS
When it comes to partnerships, designers are looking to find people who can perform the specialized skills that they cannot. This allows the designer's time to be spent in the creative zone, rather than working in areas that aren't of expertise.

"The kind of partnerships I'm looking for involve people who do what I don't do, such as web coding, copy editing, photography and UX design," says Cami Travis-Groves, graphic designer, speaker and freelance coach (www.camiimac.com). "It's important to me to spend as much time as I can in my 'zone of brilliance,' in my own areas of expertise."

Hugh Allspaugh, SVP, associate partner, and brand and marketing strategy leader, VSA Partners, recommends adhering to the following principles:

Surround yourself with people who have varied skills but shared intellectual curiosity. Diverse teams and diverse groups of people make the best solutions.

Walk in other people's shoes. If you're a designer, become pals with the data scientist or take an online course about supply chain management. There's value in seeing the bigger picture through other disciplines.

In the more practical sense, look for vendors and production partners who value quality and customer experience, and who will take risks. Look for the "yes, and" people, versus those showing you the limitations.

5 DESIGN TRENDS YOU SHOULD BE ALL OVER

"This is going to be my greatest masterpiece." That's the mindset every designer should embrace when it's time to do what you do best. As you get ready to put your thoughts into motion, remember to embrace every new idea. Following are the leading design trends happening right now, compliments of the Adobe Design Team:

1. 3D design — After several years of design "flatness," there's a new sheriff in town—3D. Bringing your life to work in 3D enables you to recreate the world around you and construct new environments and dimensions. Expect to see 3D elements to enhance web pages, and create AR and VR experiences. 3D also will expand into the world of typography, with three-dimensional typefaces that pop off the page and catch the eye.

2. Minimal meets bold color — The "less is more" mindset has dominated design in recent years. While the trend will continue, it will take on the shape of clean, uncluttered visuals that can help view content on smaller screens like smartphones and tablets. The color pops will continue, as designers take advantage of 70's inspired palettes with bright colors and gradients. These color combinations lend themselves well to smooth the duotones and fades.

3. Realism + Flat design — The combination of flat and real-life objects will challenge the way we see design. The chaotic mix of solids will take on a futuristic feel, as they often appear 3D. Flying and floating elements will add to this effect and the overall abstract aesthetic. With a presence in fashion and editorial photography, often combining digital 3D objects with traditional photo shoots, expect to see this technique expand to mainstream advertising.

4. Eclectic — As pop culture pushes for authenticity and transparency, designers will have to get real, too. The resulting shift in illustration style celebrates the imperfections in art. Look for more projects featuring freestyle doodles, stains of color, unique brush strokes and organic textures. The eclectic shift will push designers away from rigid, grid-based layouts and toward a more asymmetrical approach. Doing so will create a feeling of raw, kinetic movement. The trend currently is happening in packaging design.

5. Open compositions — Say goodbye to framed finishes and hello to free-flowing final products. Open compositions make people feel like they're seeing one beautiful piece of a bigger picture. Elements fly on and off the page with ease, creating a glimpse of infinity. The power of open composition is its ability to tap into the audience's imagination and spark curiosity. See web designs.

Sketchings ...

✚ **"Over half the designers still want to make things beautiful and can't help it. That's a built-in competency. To a business person that seems irrelevant. To the developer, it's like, 'I have to build that.'" — John Meda,** head of inclusion and computational design at WordPress parent company Automattic, on a designer's role in business

LOGO UP

9 TRENDS THAT ARE HELPING REDEFINE TODAY'S LOGOS

Bright and vibrant colors, gradients, minimalism, oh my. These are among the trends designers are incorporating into today's logo designs. And while logo design trends tend to follow graphic design patterns, brands don't change their logos that often. If your client is looking to change its game, design group Graphic Mama offers some styles to consider:

+ Bright Colors — On top of the charts the last few years, bright colors can be easily adapted to different kinds of brands. They enhance the emotions a logo conveys and can be combined with other trends.

+ Gradients — A steady graphic trend, it's no wonder they have made their way to logo design.

+ Metallic — This style often is associated with high-class, but has an even more powerful quality. The shiny metal effect can make even a simple design stand out.

+ Geometric — Whether made in flat, 3D or perspective, geometric logo designs capture the essence of a brand and convey it in an elegant and conceptual look. Logos are meant to be symbolic, and in geometry, each shape has a meaning. They can easily simplify a complex figure.

+ Minimalism — Minimalism makes a logo look clean and simplistic, but still impressive, as they look good in small and big sizes. Minimalist logos go hand in hand with the geometric logo style. The mix between minimalism and geometry help designers create simple, elegant and witty conceptual logos.

+ Minimalist Typography — The minimalist logo style often is translated into minimalist typography. Creative minimalist typography logos are made by using just a letter or two of the brand's name. Minimalist typography logos may be accompanied by the full brand name on some marketing materials like business cards, brochures, billboards.

+ Creative Logotypes — Whether accompanied by a logomark or not, creative logotypes will make their presence felt. Usually, this would include the full brand name written in a specific creative, unique and recognizable way.

+ Illustration as Letter Substitutes — Creative logotypes often include an illustration to replace a part of the word. In most cases, this would be a letter or two. Of course, the illustration replacing the letters must remind about the letter itself and still be meaningful.

+ Artistic Logos — An artist's dream is to receive a project for a logo in which he can express his artistic soul.

Logo design by Suhail P.
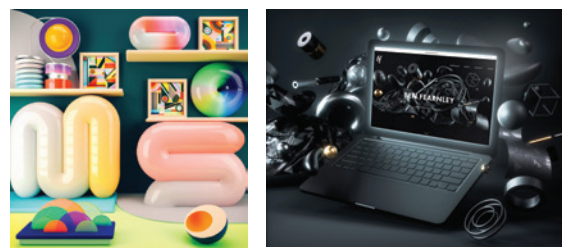
Clockwise from top: Muokkaa Studio; Ben Fearnley; Leonardoworx LWX

SO YOU WANT TO BE A DESIGNER?

In a time when every brand is competing for attention, setting yourself apart from the crowd is paramount. Enter today's design experts, who are tasked with creating the look and feel of every logo, marketing campaign, etc. But how do you get into the game? According to the "Design in Tech Report 2019" by noted design technologist John Maeda, here's a look a few of the career path recommendations, in order of how survey respondents ranked them:

Agency
Join a small agency that is about three years old.

Startup
The new and upcoming design firm is a good place to hone your craft.

Big Company
Join a large company to learn how diverse the discipline is, then specialize and find a meaningful startup.

Consultancy
Every three to six months, there's a new project, problem or rebranding that needs tackled. Finding out how to solve them is a solid path to follow.

Freelance
Companies are always looking for design help to flush out the next great look.

Grad School
Any one option is a good one, but if design shall have a seat in the C-suite, grad school is not a bad idea.

THE SWIFT WAY

Jessica Slaydon's memories of "Movie Night" in the Gutowski home were a little different than most kids her age. For the Gutowski family, a third-generation print shop, "Movie Night" might mean stuffing 10,000 envelopes. A trip to grandma and grandpa's house might include the couple sorting through a box of billing invoices during commercials of a Detroit Lions or Pistons game.

Life was work and work was life. The experiences helped shape the character and tenacity of the Gutowski clan, who continue to build the Swift Printing Company brand in the spirit of the family name. "Work and home life was so intertwined that you couldn't separate them and I loved it," says Slaydon (her married name). "I grew up in the industry and love what printing has done for my family and coworkers."

Today, the Grand Rapids, Michigan-based printer is a model of consistency that continues to serve as an example of what commercial print shops should strive to be. For example, in 2017 Swift Printing became B-Corp Certified, an exclusive certification that has only been granted to one other commercial print shop in the world. The certification recognizes Swift as a company that practices sustainable procedures when developing its products, provides livable wages for its employees, has deep roots in the community and fosters lasting relationships with its customers.

"It is important to us to make sure our values continue for generations to come," says Slaydon, who handles community relations for the company. "Having a third-party accreditation is something that is important to my generation, especially when it's easy for anyone to say they are being green or are good to their employees, when in fact they are not."

Customers first

Founded in 1950 by Walter D. Gutowski, Sr., and his wife, Lorraine, Swift is a full-service print shop that offers the latest in technology and customer service. If there is any secret to its longevity, it rests in Swift's passion for what it does and who it serves.

"From Day 1, my parents told us that you have to love what you do," Slaydon says. "I think people can feel the pride we have for our businesses and appreciate that we see printing as our vessel to change the world and make a difference."

These days, the relationship that Swift has built with its customers is based on trust and flexibility. "We're all about the relationship, and being a small to mid-sized business, we're the perfect place to do business with," Slaydon says. "For some of our customers, we do their projects from start to finish, while with others we work with their design team or design firm they're using. There is enough business to go around and we want to be a business all our customers can trust and other businesses can respect

Group shot: The Swift Printing team models with their newest press, which they like to call Annah. She's a Heidelberg Speedmaster 75 Anicolor.
Bottom right: Walt Gutowski Jr. and Jessica Slaydon chatting in the Swift Printing conference room and debating who loves printing more.
Top right: Twenty-year-plus employees Ben Kozminski and Steve Hale meticulously review a customer's press proof.

PHOTOS BY STEVE JESSMORE

because of our values and community involvement."

Being on a first-name basis with its customers is an important part of any business' success. At Swift, it is in the company's DNA. Slaydon says that having dual relationships within the region gives the company its strong sense of community. A typical day might involve printing a customer's menu and then have lunch there after delivering the order.

In the end, driven by its B-Corp certification, the Swift team remains committed to all aspects of sustainability. That means the long-term success of the company is the No. 1 driving force across myriad factors.

"I'm not thinking of the next five-year business plan," Slaydon says. "It's about the next 25 to 50 years. What can we do to make our industry better and have more sustainable practices? We ask our customers to save

our boxes if it's convenient for them and we reuse them. We turn old letterhead into scratch pads if a customer moves. Any

cost we can save, while being green as well, helps our customers save more and makes us better stewards of the earth."

With an eye on future generations, Swift Printing continues to set the tone others will be proud to follow.

PAPER NEVER FELT SO GOOD

Did you know sensory perceptions are just as important to your customers as visual perceptions? The sensation of touch is considered the most important stage of processing visual information and forming perceptions. The combination of eye-catching graphics with interesting and tactile surfaces leaves a lasting impression with your customers.

Convertible Solutions' Elite Soft Touch coating not only impresses with outstanding print quality, but also gives products a memorable, velvety, soft feel.

From a production standpoint, it doesn't get any more efficient. Avoid costly, time consuming post press laminations and coatings that require extended drying time and increase waste. The Elite Soft Touch coated products are pre-coated and ready to print. It's also resistant to fingerprints, scratching and rubbing to ensure products look as great in the market as they do

off the press.

With options compatible for dry toner and HP Indigo presses, Elite Soft Touch is ideal for any digital project and can be applied to virtually any paper substrates. The MutliLoft® Elite Soft Touch adds even more options with layering up to 64pt thicknesses. The creative possibilities are endless with Convertible Solutions' great lineup of products.
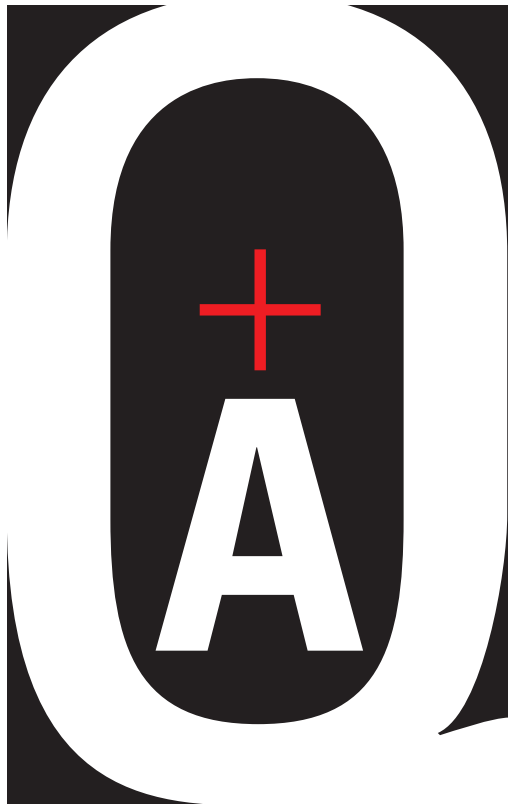
For more information on the Elite Soft Touch products and all of Convertible Solutions unique product lines, visit www.convertiblesolutions.com or contact us at 866-832-0217

Q+A

DESIGN MATTERS

The Debbie Millman brand comes with a lot of superlatives. "One of the most creative people in business" (*Fast Company*). "One of the most influential designers working today" (Graphic Design USA). Her "Design Matters" podcast has been running for more than 14 years. With six books and illustrations in *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Print Magazine* and *Fast Company*, Millman is everywhere. She even created the first graduate program in branding at the School of Visual Arts in New York City and was one of only five women to serve as President Emeritus of AIGA. Here she talks about succeeding in today's competitive branding environment.

With six books under her belt and illustrations that have appeared in the likes of *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Print Magazine* and *Fast Company*, there is not much that Debbie Millman cannot do. She is even the architect of the world's first graduate program in branding at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. If you want more, she also is President Emeritus of AIGA, one of only five women to hold the position in the organization's 100-year history.

We sat down with Millman to get her thoughts on what it takes to succeed in today's competitive branding environment and why criticism is a good thing.

FROM WHERE YOU SIT, WHAT DOES TODAY'S BRANDING LANDSCAPE LOOK LIKE?

I find the role of branding now incredibly, incredibly exciting. A lot of that has to do with the energy and intellect of the new generation of designers and makers. Movements such as "Black Lives Matter" is one of the most important instigators of change to enter our cultural discourse in a long time.

As is the use of the Pink Pussy hat. After hundreds of years of brands under the control of the corporation, design has finally become democratized, and these efforts are not about anything commercial. These efforts have not been initiated for any financial benefit, market share position or return on investment. They have been created by the people for the people to serve the highest purpose design has: to bring people together for the benefit of humanity.

This is creating an environment wherein design and branding are not just tools of capitalism; rather, they have become profound manifestations of the human spirit.

WHAT IS IT LIKE RUNNING A DESIGN BUSINESS TODAY?

It's hard, but nearly everything meaningful takes great effort. Creative people in all disciplines need to be polymaths now. In addition to their marketable skill, they need to be able to

Design Matters Live: Kris Holmes
TYPE DESIGNER / CALLIGRAPHER

2019

write, draw, code, design and market, position, brand and sell themselves. The business world is so much more competitive than ever, and employers and clients want to work with creative people who can create way more than one thing.

In many ways, I think being great at your specific discipline is now table stakes for any career in that discipline. In addition, there is no space between the categories of digital, social media, advertising, branding, etc. You must create on as many platforms as possible with arresting imagery, a strong, strategic message, and a distinct and engaging personality. And be better than almost everyone else.

You also must work hard to discover what it is you are passionate about. You have to experiment and take risks. It takes work to get the work you love. There is no other way. The first 10 years of my career were very much organized around avoiding failure. But my inadequacies were completely self-constructed. Nobody told me that I couldn't do something; nobody was telling me that I couldn't succeed at something. I convinced myself and lived in that self-imposed reality.

I think a lot of people do this. They self-sabotage and create all sorts of reasons for not doing things under the misguided assumption that, at some point, they might feel better about themselves and that will finally allow them to take that risk. I don't think that ever happens. You have to push through it and do it as if you have no other choice—because you don't. You just don't.

WHAT SHOULD DESIGN ENTREPRENEURS KNOW ABOUT STRIKING OUT ON THEIR OWN?

Be fearless when asking people for business. Find lots of clients. Because it's impossible to know which of them will be good. Work harder than anybody else that you know. Never give up if it is something that you really want. And don't lie about what you know and what you've done.

Also, the key to a good client is trust. Will they let you do good work? Will they listen to your insights and feedback? If you can create a good partnership with a client and they trust you to do your best work, you

will have a better client.

Finally, something I share with my undergraduate design students is this: Anything worthwhile takes time. Mastery is a process of years. If you are one of the few souls in the world that are actually able to hit it out of the ballpark before you are 30, you might want to consider how you are going to be able to sustain that success over the long term. The pressure to keep succeeding over and over will mount and you will likely feel that you must only hit the home runs. This is impossible.

Take your time and build your skills. Refine your methodology over time and give yourself the opportunity to grow and develop. Use your 20s to experiment. This is a time when falling flat on your face is expected. Build something meaningful rather than build something fast. The length of time it takes for you to succeed is generally a good measure of how long you will be able to sustain and enjoy it.

DEFINE THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICISM.
It is invaluable. You must actively seek criticism. I often talk to my students about the three ways of "knowing things."

No. 1: We know what we know. For example, I know I'm a woman, I know I'm left handed and I know I'm a Scorpio.
No. 2: We know what we don't know. Again, for example, I know that I'm not a mathematician. I know that I'm not a brain surgeon.
No. 3: We don't know what we don't know. That's the important information to know. And the only way to be able to find that information out is to ask. You must actually seek out criticism.

Now, when I'm looking at the portfolios of entry level or young designers, I recommend

that they always ask this question: "What is the one thing in the portfolio that you'd recommend I take out?" It doesn't mean that you have to, but if you start to hear the same thing over and over, you should probably take it out.

WHAT ADVICE YOU CAN OFFER YOUNG DESIGNERS?
It's important to only include pieces in your portfolio that you love. Please do not have work in your portfolio just because you want to show somebody that you can do "that type of work." Only include a book cover (and only if) it is an awesome book cover. If it's a crappy design, nobody is going to hire you to do a book cover.

Same for everything else. It's better to have less work in your portfolio and have it all be work that you're proud of and that you can defend and talk about strategically than something that's filler. It will never impress anyone, and it will end up diluting the overall impact of your work.

Debbie Millman, founder & host, Design Matters

10 STEPS TO OVERCOME YOUR CREATIVE BLOCK

GOT THE CREATIVE WOES? HERE'S DEBBIE MILLMAN ON HOW TO RECHARGE YOUR CREATIVITY:

01 **Get enough sleep.** Sleep is the best (and easiest) creative aphrodisiac.

02 **Read as much as you can, particularly the classics.** If a master of words can't inspire you (See No. 3).

03 **Color code your library.** This is fun and you will realize how many great books that you have that you haven't read yet.

04 **More sleep.** You can never get enough.

05 **Force yourself to procrastinate.** Works every time.

06 **Look at the works of** Tibor Kalman, Marian Bantjes, Jessica Hisch, Christoph Niemann, and Paul Sahre.

07 **Weep.** And then weep some more.

08 **Surf the web.** Write inane tweets. Check out your high school friends on Facebook. Feel smug.

09 **Watch "Law and Order SVU" marathons** and marvel in the ferocious beauty of Olivia Benson.

10 **Remember how lucky you are** to be a creative person to begin with and quit your bellyaching. Get to work now.

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Design. Engage. Repeat.

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WAYS TO IMPLEMENT INTERACTIVE CONTENT

It's all about conversion rates these days. Today's content creators and designers are often tasked with high-end creative problems to solve. Enter interactive content, which helps engage visitors long enough to make your pitch. According to Snap App, 88 percent of marketers say that interactive content helps differentiate them from the competition. It also leads to four to five times more page views than static con-tent. Here, the 99designs team offers five interactive content strategies that will boost your designs.

1. USE RESPONSIVE CHARTS & INFOGRAPHICS

Data visualization represents a pivotal part of digital con-tent. People simply like to have numbers and statistics represented in a digestible, understandable manner while browsing their favorite sites.

2. INTEGRATE POLLS, SURVEYS & QUIZZES

The most direct form of interactive content is polls and surveys. You don't need extensive knowledge of design principles or web design to do this. Sites like Google Forms offer extensive, pre-made forms that can used.

3. UTILIZE INTERACTIVE VIDEO MATERIALS

When it comes to interactivity, thoughts rarely jump towards video production as the first association. But recent trends show an increase in popularity when it comes to interactive videos.

4. OFFER SITUATIONAL OR SELF-ASSESSMENT TESTS OR QUIZZES

Assessment tests are very popular in the online realm. These tests operate on a self-assessment base, meaning you need very little background knowledge to interact with them. They are highly approachable and require very little time to complete.

5. CREATE INTERACTIVE E-MAIL CONTENT

Interactive email content typically involve hyperlinks that lead to product pages, subscription forms or other conversion methods. To boost interactivity, emails often are packed with gifs and animation, depending on the industry, brand and campaign.

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