

Module 6

The two questions I asked from the interviewers were: How have you changed your image throughout your career? How do you approach networking? I asked about the designers' image because I thought the changes they made might shed some light on how I might present myself as a designer without making the same mistakes they did at the beginning of their careers. I asked about networking since it's a very important skill that I have room to improve upon.

For the first question about image, a particularly relevant excerpt came from Caitlin, who said, "The portfolio that I have now is super different than the portfolio I had when I was a senior in college, and part of that obviously is that in theory you should always be cultivating new work so it'll be rotating as a living, breathing document. But in terms of the way that you organize that information and almost "market" yourself or brand yourself it can kind of shift the things that you include. I think the way that I approached it when I was still trying to settle on an industry or a discipline that I really wanted to focus heavily on I had it a little bit broader, where I organized different categories: web design, writing, content strategy, document design. Then I have one or two things where if someone was looking for something specific then they kind of knew how things were organized and as I've been out of school and focused in on my like kind of preferred skillset I focused my portfolio pieces more on writing content strategy and web design and the digital design because those are kind of the main things that I do." From this passage I learned that Caitlin ended up honing in on 3 main areas of expertise. Even though she had many skills out of school, she decided to keep her branding concise. This provides a lot of insight for the image I'm creating for myself. While I was hoping to get a sort of "shortcut" to circumvent my inexperience in this area, I realize that I will have to winnow down my skills to the three most relevant ones, which will only happen with time and experience as I find out what I like and am good at. Her answer also reminded me that my portfolio and image will change, meaning I don't need to have it perfect the first time. After all, she is a successful designer and definitely didn't have it perfectly right the first time.

My second question regarding networking was answered by both interviewees. First, Caitlin stated, "Networking was a big thing that I took advantage of when I was at MSU. I think something that their programs do really well is providing those opportunities. A couple of pieces of advice that I have are to cultivate relationships with your professors because they can help connect you with people who are interested in what you're interested in who are in the field you want to be part of and they can help be a part of your network as much as they can help kind of expand it. That's how I get connected with opportunities like this and how I hear about a lot of things going on in my field because I've maintained contact with professors and then also like if you see different opportunities on campus--I know there's a ton of different opportunities to get to know different professional fields, different industries you know like career fairs--take advantage of them. This is coming from someone who's super introverted and like hates like talking to people and like going out and kind of like getting out of my comfort zone I was at campus tour guide so I have a persona I put on that I'm currently wearing to make things like this less terrifying and figure out a way to cultivate that type of persona where you can like push yourself to go and take advantage of those things because if you don't your network isn't gonna build itself it's pretty much just go and do it and if you see someone who's doing work that you like you know like find a couple of companies or a couple of organizations that you really admire and get connected with the people in there who are doing the things that you want to do on like

when I was in school I think it was for my portfolio seminar we literally had an assignment that was to do that and reach out to people and see if you know you could ask them questions about how they got where they were and some of those people are still in my network that I still rely on and talk.” This was a long and substantial quote that provided a lot of insight. First, she mentions the resources MSU provides for networking. This includes things from professors to career fairs. What struck me most was the amount of different opportunities she was able to rattle off quickly, indicating that Michigan State really does have a wealth of resources for networking. This encourages me to start taking advantage of these resources so I can “put myself out there” professionally. Additionally, she mentioned fighting her introversion to successfully network. I found this part inspiring as I tend to be introverted and worry about my competitive edge compared to extroverted designers who may find networking more comfortable. However, Caitlin treated it like just a small hurdle rather than an immense challenge, which inspires a lot of hope in me. I think towards the end of her quote she really gives a concise description of how to network, which basically consists of reaching out to people who interest you and building your network because, as she says, it isn’t going to build itself.

Anderson also provided some knowledge on the subject of networking. He said, “I think networking is super important. When I was in California with Adobe last summer somebody said that 85% of the jobs you get are from somebody you know and only about 15% come from something on a resume so I would say networking is vital. They always say it's not about what you know but yeah in which internships specifically when I was on campus I had a couple of different internships and it's super important to again have cultivated relationships” Here, Anderson mirrors a lot of what Caitlin said while stressing the importance of networking. What stood out about his answer was the idea that over 80% of job opportunities come from networking, which is a striking amount, even if not a tested/proven number. This reminds me that I should start networking as soon as possible, even just to build my skill and comfort with it.

Overall, I found the interview very useful. I will definitely apply the insights Caitlin and Anderson provided, such as keeping your image concise and the importance of networking.