Interview #1

Sharon Hoffman, Graphic Artist

Copymat, Pleasanton

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1. What is the official title of your position?  
I am a Graphic Artist at Copymat in Pleasanton.  
How long have you held this position?  
Seven months but I have been in the industry since 1987.  
What experience did you have that directly impacted your being accepted for this position?  
Knowing both Mac & PC platforms. Having worked with Adobe Pagemaker, Photoshop & Illustrator on both OS platforms. Network training and HTML experience also helped out.  
How many hours do you work during an average week?  
35-40  
What are your typical daily responsibilities?  
Get the work out! I work in a very fast turn industry-at a place where the customer is not sure of what they want or can afford. It’s my job to help them find a “happy medium” between good design and affordability. Most work must be turned around in 24 hours or less. Most work is business cards, forms and business use, letterhead/envelopes, occasionally a logo design or brochure. We also do lots of “color work” –that is sending customer created files to our high-end color copier equipment. This is by far the most lucrative portion of our business. It cost the customer $10 and up to run just one color page of text and images. Another important aspect of my job is to provide customer service. Most off the street customers know nothing about the printing industry. They think they know what they want but have no idea how to create it. My job is to guide them, and listen to what they say (and often how they say it) to come up with ideas and designs that will suit their personal needs and tastes. I also do mundane things like keeping track of daily statistics for the desktop department & the overall copy side of the business, keep the printers in operation, keep my machine at top performance, and back up customer files to CD to store them off my machine.  
What education and training have you had prior to applying for this position?   
It started with a job as a real typesetter. I mean hand setting lead letter on a platen, in reverse, inking the type, placing paper (one sheet at a time) and running a roller across it to transfer the image. Then I got on-the-job training in traditional paste-up, stat camera operation, composite camera work, striping negatives and shooting halftone images (both negatives and positives). I was then taught on an Edit-writer and Compugraphic MCS computer how to do typesetting with film and computer coding. That was when computers were still not found in everybody’s home or office. I typesat blind. Meaning still could not view what I was doing until I ran the film and developed the stats-which means I did everything in my mind’s eye first. Then I got a Certificate in Visual Communication from the local Jr. college. Learning more about design, placement, rules of color, how to copy right and more about the offset printing process. Both web and sheetfed. Four color process work, black plus one, special finishes like varnish and embossing, etc. and I also took several classes in popular software programs. Years later I got interested in web design and took classes in HTML at the same time I was pursuing an MCSE education. Which by the way did not turn out to be what I wanted to do.  
What are some positives and negative to your job?  
Well I get to play with a computer all day. I get to draw pictures and create things for a living. I get to put vague thoughts and ideas onto paper as a finished product. But, I have to do ugly design work that the customer likes (something about they’re always right I think…?) I have do deal with the public in general which can be very trying. And, the double-edged sword- I get to hear people tell me how much they love my work…or how much they hate it. You can’t have too much of an ego in this business. If you do, soon someone else will have all your paying customers. And bottom line, its still all about the money, right?