

CHAPTER 1

Interviews with Employed Graphic Designers

EMPLOYED GRAPHIC DESIGNERS are just that, people who get paid to do design work. They have the kinds of jobs that unemployed designers are looking for. These people have gone through the process of looking for work and have achieved success. They have done everything that was necessary to get the job. The people interviewed in this chapter provide insight into a number of ways one can break into the field of design. One participant began as an intern, another found a job in the newspaper, and others were fortunate enough to have contacts who were willing to give them a job. These talented designers reveal the techniques they used to become design professionals.



NAME: Melissa Derecola

JOB TITLE: Creative Director

COMPANY DESCRIPTION: Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations

DEGREE: Graphic Design Communications

PREVIOUS JOB TITLE(S): Graphic Designer, Marketing Coordinator

YEARS EMPLOYED IN THE DESIGN INDUSTRY: 3 1/2

Q: *How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into the arts?*

A: Growing up in a very small town, I did not think being an artist could be a job. When I was eight, I got real watercolor paper from a family friend who was an artist. At that point, art was something I wanted to do for fun, not actual work. It was not until high school that I realized art could be a job.

Q: *Was there a particular event or person that inspired you to become an artist?*

A: When I was a senior in high school, my history teacher, Ms. Fairbanks, let us do any sort of project we wanted on one of the cultures we were studying. I decided to create a newsletter about the Maya. I really enjoyed it, and before that point I had never realized that there were people who had jobs doing page layout.

Q: *How long were you without work before you found your current position?*

A: I had seven or eight months when I was employed in retail, not in the design field. I left that when I found this job.

Q: *Where did you look for job listings?*

A: The newspaper, Monster.com, and I mailed my information and samples to graphic design businesses I found in the phone book. I also went to almost all of the standard online career sites.

Q: *Where did you find the listing for your current job?*

A: The newspaper.

Q: *Did you do any research on the companies you applied to?*

A: I did some. Generally I would look at their Web sites. I wouldn't do a lot until I got ready for interviews. For the most part, I just

looked online and if they had a Web site listed, I looked up what they actually did before I sent in an application. Once I got a call for an interview, I returned to the Web site and did more research to prepare for the interview itself.

Q: When you applied for the job you have now, what did you include with your job application?

A: I sent a whole package in. It included my résumé, cover letter, and my sample business card, which I created. I sent samples of some of my college projects. I printed out some postcard designs and a poster, and I detailed what the projects were.

Q: When you applied, did you add any special design elements to your résumé?

A: I created my own stationery system for myself. I had one when I was looking for a job and I have updated it now that I have gotten further. I think that's important because if you are applying as a designer it is important to show that you can design.

Q: Did you tailor your work samples to match the work done at your current company?

A: I did not because I didn't really have that many samples. If I was doing it now, I would.

Q: So you just chose what you thought was your best work?

A: Right. Because, at that time, I only had a small selection of materials to choose from, so I just chose the best ones.

Q: How were you notified that you would be considered for the position?

A: I got a phone call. The owner called me and then we e-mailed several times trying to set up an interview.

Q: How long was the time period between you applying and being called in for an interview?

A: That was short. That was only like three or four days, because I mailed it to him, and he called when he received it. And I do know, having worked here with him, that part of it was that there were samples included. We get a lot of applications here from people requesting jobs and they just have a résumé. It's far more important to see samples and that's far more interesting. It lets us know right away whether we want to have somebody come in for a job interview.

Q: After you scheduled an interview, how did you prepare for it?

A: I reviewed my portfolio, because in order to graduate I had to create a portfolio anyway. So I just looked through it and made sure it was in order, checked to see if there were any projects that I would take out. I ran through my projects so that when I went in for a presentation I was familiar with them. It had been several months since I had worked on them.

Q: What items did you bring with you to the interview?

A: I brought a portfolio of my top projects from school. Some of them were projects that I had mailed off with my application, such as a postcard that was one in a series of five. I brought in the whole series for my presentation. I included a business card design when I applied and I brought the whole stationery system to the interview.

Q: Did you have to make some sort of formal presentation at the interview?

A: I did. In any interview I have ever done, I have done a formal presentation. Depending on the room and the number of people involved, I either stand up and present my pieces, or if it's a single person, I just sit there at the table with them and present my pieces. I feel that it's important to show that I know what I did and what my

projects are. Having interviewed people myself, when they come and they present something and I ask them questions like, “Well why did you choose this color or this design?” and they say, “Oh I don’t know, I just liked it,” that tells me nothing. We need to know more because in the future you’re going to have to make decisions. You can’t just say, “I like the color.” So I always give a presentation trying to show that I can present materials, that I have a thought process behind the materials I create, and that everything is well organized.

Q: How much experience have you gained at your current position?

A: I am the creative director. I do the same work, but at this point, where I am now, my position is more managerial, overlooking other people’s design progress. Before, I was just doing it on my own and somebody else was looking over my work.

Q: Do you believe that having a Web site is necessary for a graphic artist?

A: Today, yes. Of some sort. I think that so often, when employers are looking for people, they ask for a Web site; they ask to know where they can look at things. I think that it’s very important because, in a tight job market, by the time they receive samples you’ve mailed, they’ve already looked at other people’s Web sites and seen samples.

Q: Do you have any other suggestions for artists who are seeking employment?

A: A lot of people, like my husband, when he is looking for jobs, he can go online and he can just e-mail his résumé and everything is fine. I don’t feel that people in the design field can really do that. I feel that there is a better reaction when you physically mail a package, unless you are looking for a Web design job. If that is the case, the résumé, an e-mail, and a Web site seems to work. But, in any sort of print media, the e-mail résumé just doesn’t seem to

give as big of an impact. Mailing seems to make sure that your piece stands out.

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N A M E: Amy Spokas

J O B T I T L E: Senior Designer

C O M P A N Y D E S C R I P T I O N: Design Firm

D E G R E E: Graphic Design

P R E V I O U S J O B T I T L E (S): Designer

Y E A R S E M P L O Y E D I N T H E D E S I G N I N D U S T R Y: 11

Q: *How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into the arts?*

A: While I always enjoyed art and was a yearbook staff geek in high school, I never thought I could make a real career out of it until halfway through college, when I took two design classes to fulfill an “arts” requirement. I quickly switched majors.

Q: *Was there a particular event or person that inspired you to become an artist?*

A: Professors Michael Graham and Charlotte Story at American University were wonderful mentors and I have them to thank for my career.

Q: *How long were you without work before you found your current position?*

A: This is my second position as a graphic designer. I didn’t have any time off between the two jobs. But after I graduated college, I did have about six months of waiting tables and freelancing before I landed a full-time graphic design position.

Q: *Where did you look for job listings?*

A: I thought the most helpful were the AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) and Art Directors Club listings. Right after college I did apply for a few jobs through the newspaper classifieds, but I felt it

wasn't effective for me. It seemed like most of the newspaper listings were for in-house positions, and I knew I really wanted studio work.

Q: How many jobs did you apply for before this one?

A: Before my current position, I went on between seven and ten interviews. I did interview through Aquent (a placement agency), but I didn't end up taking a job through them. I think they sent me on four or five of the interviews. I also had contacted some studios on my own and asked if they would review my portfolio. I got one or two leads from that—those studios weren't hiring, but they knew of others who were.

Q: Where did you find the listing for your current position?

A: I knew the principal. We had worked together at another studio, and we kept in touch after she left to start her own firm. A few years later when I was interviewing, she decided to hire another designer. She offered me the job without a formal interview, and she didn't advertise the position.

Q: When you applied for your last job, did you believe that you exactly matched all the criteria listed in the job description?

A: I've never formally applied for a full-time position. My first full-time job was with the studio where I had interned during my senior year of school. After I graduated, I freelanced for them for a few months, maybe one or two days a week, before they offered me the full-time position. They didn't advertise my position before hiring me.

Q: After school, how did you decide what you would include as your work samples when applying?

A: Right out of school, I tried to pick projects that I thought either showcased my design process or projects that I thought might have "real world" application to them. After my first job, I tried to find out

a little bit about the firm I was interviewing with—if they did mostly print or exhibit or signage—and tailored the samples I brought based on their work.

Q: *Did you add any special design elements to your résumé?*

A: What's the point of being a graphic designer if you don't design your résumé? In fact, my boss was just advertising for a position and I don't think she even considered anyone who didn't send a well-designed résumé. If their résumé looked like it had been done in Word, she didn't even call them back.

I would highly recommend that people include a few work samples in some way. Include a page of logotypes or print samples, or even the Web addresses to sites you've designed. It gives you a chance to show off your work before you've even stepped through the door.

Q: *What would you recommend that people bring with them to interviews?*

A: As professional a portfolio as you can manage. I would tell people not to be too paranoid because they only have school projects to show. I think that showing your thought process and your personality is just as important as work samples. Just make sure you're organizing your pieces in some way that looks like you put some thought and care into it.

Q: *Has the use of print production skills been required of you in your current position?*

A: Oh yes, that's a big part of my job.

Q: *Do you have any other suggestions for artists who are seeking employment?*

A: Do a little of research. Call firms that you think you would fit into, work-wise and personality-wise. Ask if someone there would have ten minutes to review your portfolio. Even if they're not hiring, they may

know of someone else who is. And maybe a month from now they will decide to hire somebody and you'll be the person that they remember.

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N A M E: Sean Flanagan

J O B T I T L E: Graphic Designer

C O M P A N Y D E S C R I P T I O N: Graphic Design Firm

D E G R E E: Graphic Design / Communications

P R E V I O U S J O B T I T L E (S): Graphic Designer, Senior Graphic Designer / Art Director

Y E A R S E M P L O Y E D I N T H E D E S I G N I N D U S T R Y: 5

Q: How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into the arts?

A: I have always known that it was something I wanted to pursue. I took a printing class in high school and learned the back-end of the trade by typesetting with lead. However, it wasn't creative enough for me, so I elected to study graphic design.

Q: Was there a particular event or person that inspired you to become an artist?

A: My older brother Chris always told me how talented I was and to use my gift to the best of my ability. He is my inspiration.

Q: How long were you without work before you found your current position?

A: There was about a one-month period after graduation when I did not have work. I got a job that lasted three months after that period. When that ended, I found this job, where I have been ever since.

Q: Where did you look for job listings?

A: My main source at the time was the AIGA Web site. I was a student member at the time. That was the only outlet I knew of

for graphic designers. Since then I have found that there are other resources.

Q: *How many jobs did you apply for before this one?*

A: I applied to about ten after the three-month job ended and before I found the job I have now.

Q: *Where did you find the listing for your current job?*

A: On the AIGA Web site.

Q: *At the time you applied, did you believe that you exactly matched all the criteria listed in the job description?*

A: Yes, I did.

Q: *Did you do any research on the companies you applied to?*

A: If I could, yes. Sometimes they didn't list enough contact information.

Q: *Was it ever the case that you decided not to apply after doing research?*

A: Yes, there were a few cases.

Q: *When you applied for the job you have now, what did you include with your job application?*

A: Résumé, cover letter, and work samples.

Q: *Did you tailor your work samples to match the work done at your current company?*

A: Not really. As a recent graduate, there wasn't enough work to tailor to specific needs. It was a show of everything that I had done up to that point. It was a display of what I thought was my best work.

Q: *How did you make initial contact with the employer?*

A: I sent my work samples through e-mail. The résumé and cover letter were mailed. The company didn't ask for them to be mailed, but I figured the people reviewing my application would appreciate being able to hold something. You can tell a lot about people by the way they pick paper and typefaces. I think it was better to represent myself as a visual person by mailing my résumé and cover letter.

Q: *Did you include different kinds of work with the samples?*

A: Yes, I did.

Q: *When you applied, did you add any special design elements to your résumé?*

A: Not really. I tried to do a clean typeset job. I didn't want to over-embellish it. It wasn't a standard Word document, it was typeset in Quark. You could tell a designer did it.

Q: *How long was the time period between you applying and being called in for an interview?*

A: It was relatively quick, about a week.

Q: *After you scheduled an interview, how did you prepare for that?*

A: I made sure everything was in order for the interview. We had a portfolio class in school. At the time of graduation, almost everything that I wanted to put in it was already there.

Q: *Please describe the appearance of your portfolio.*

A: It was a black, standard portfolio case. All the pieces were mounted on black boards, and in sleeves. In the class I took, they had a system of how they wanted us to put the portfolio together, and that's what I followed. My portfolio had corporate identity

systems, packaging, page layout, and logo design—all of the core stuff we were being taught.

Q: *How many people did you interview with?*

A: I interviewed with two people. The first time, I interviewed with the owner. I came in for a second interview with an employee who was going to be my mentor. The interview was just to see how we meshed personality-wise, since we would be sharing projects.

Q: *Were you asked any questions that you were not prepared for?*

A: No. They were standard interview questions. At that level, there wasn't much expectation as far as job responsibility and prior history of work related to the field.

Q: *Has the use of print production skills been required of you in your current position?*

A: Definitely. I took one class in school, but it did not cover enough to really make me competent. I was more prepared than students that did not take that class. There was a lot of on-the-job training involved.

Q: *Do you believe that having a Web site is necessary for a graphic artist?*

A: I would say yes. I am saying that and I don't have one myself. I do believe that it is important, and I do need to get myself one.

Q: *Do you have any other suggestions for artists who are seeking employment?*

A: I would advise them to get a Web site. Only show what you *know* is your best work, not what you *think* is. If you can, try to tailor it to the company that you are seeking employment with. I know that's difficult for students. They might only have a few good projects, so they have to use what they have. Use all the resources available to you. There are plenty of resources available today by way

of the Internet. Try to get an internship prior to graduating. That was something that I did not do. That would have really helped me to open some doors in the design community. Stay in touch with the people you went to school with. When they go out and start working at places, it will create a professional network.

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NAME: D. Sherene Offutt

JOB TITLE: Creative Director

COMPANY DESCRIPTION: Internet solutions and multimedia communications company

DEGREE: Fine Arts

PREVIOUS JOB TITLE(S): Creative Director, Chief Creative Officer, Vice President of Creative Delivery, Senior Designer, Design Instructor, Creative Services Director, Art Director, Designer, Sign Painter

YEARS EMPLOYED IN THE DESIGN INDUSTRY: 17

Q: *How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into the arts?*

A: I was always involved in creative activities. I don't remember making a conscious decision to pursue a career in the arts.

Q: *Was there a particular event or person that inspired you to become an artist?*

A: I guess my brother inspired me. He's always been a prolific painter.

Q: *How long were you without work before you found your current position?*

A: I have never really had a period without work.

Q: *How did you get your current position?*

A: I joined this company in '99 as their vice president of creative delivery. I worked with them for two years. At the end of those two

years, this company was acquired by another company and I decided to take a break. I left at that time and worked for an advertising agency for a while, about six months. Then I freelanced for about another six months and then I came back to this company.

Q: *Did you have to apply for the creative delivery or advertising job you mentioned?*

A: Not really. I had contacts. At the time I first worked with this company, I was an instructor at a college with two of the partners that owned the company. I had a previous relationship with one of them and he knew of my skills and asked me to join the company.

Q: *Do you believe that having a Web site is necessary for a graphic artist?*

A: I don't think that it's necessary, but I do think that it's tremendously helpful.

Q: *What advice would you give to someone when they are selecting work samples to send to a potential employer?*

A: If you are talking about someone who is coming straight out of school, most of the samples are going to be project work. I would encourage people not to be afraid to show work that is not necessarily professional work. It could be project work or work that they have done independently. I think that is fine. As far as selecting the samples, I know that a lot of work will be mockups, things that haven't actually been printed at an offset printer, but things they have made on their own. So I would say to select the cleanest presentation possible. I think it's really important when you are presenting your work that the presentation be very clean. If you've created a mockup and you've cut out with an Exacto or paper cutter, make sure edges are really clean. Good craftsmanship is critical.

Q: *Is it important for somebody applying for a design position to design his or her résumé?*

A: Yes. I can say that in the past when I have been interviewing designers, typically I would get a tremendous response. I would get a huge stack of résumés and my first cut would be any résumé that was just in Times Roman and clearly not thought out. I didn't even look at those.

Q: *What items would you recommend that people bring with them to interviews?*

A: It's important, obviously, to bring your résumé and portfolio. If you can leave something behind, that's nice. My experience as an art director has been that, typically, when I'm so incredibly busy that it's difficult for me to pay a lot of attention, I am more likely to remember people who have left interesting things like booklets or CD-ROMs behind. Even if I am not able to employ them at that point, I will always keep a leave-behind that is appealing. And then when I am looking again, I will remember them.

Q: *Do you believe it can hamper an artist's ability to be hired if his or her appearance does not match that of a typical professional?*

A: It depends. It's really a judgment call. It's important when you're going on an interview to make sure you do your homework on that organization. For instance, once when I was a freelancer, I was interviewing with placement agencies in Manhattan. I went to all my interviews in a suit. Although it did not keep me from getting offers, I definitely felt out of place because the people at the agencies were a lot more casual. I don't think it's ever really a mistake to dress professionally, but I think you have to use your judgment. I remember there was a job I wanted years ago with a company that built exhibitions for museums. I showed up professionally dressed to the

interview and in that case it was a deterrent because they didn't want someone who was afraid to get dirty. Being a female and being well groomed kind of made them shy away from me. I didn't fit the role. But, that's not your typical designer situation. When in doubt, I would say dress professionally and conservatively. Not extremely conservatively. But cover your tattoos, take your earrings out, stuff like that.

Q: *Where did you find freelance work when you were looking for it?*

A: I had a long career as a designer before I became a freelancer, so my initial freelance work was with a previous employer. The freelance work I have found in my career has been through my network of being active in the design community. When I say that, I don't necessarily mean participating in director's clubs and things like that. It's just being known in the industry, working with people. When people move on to other companies, they'll remember you, they'll call you when they need design work done. So if you perform well, people will remember you and stay in touch with you for future projects. That has typically been how I have gotten all of my work, through word of mouth.

Q: *Has the use of print production skills been required of you in your current position?*

A: Yes.

Q: *How about presentation skills like cutting, pasting, and mounting?*

A: Yes.

Q: *Do you have any other suggestions for artists who are seeking employment?*

A: I would say that as far as employability goes, the thing that makes you the most employable is quantifiable computer skills. I don't say that to detract from the importance of your creativity

and ability to design, but I would encourage all people who are interested in getting into this industry to really focus on their computer skills. Do homework as to what the primary industry-standard programs are, like the Adobe Suite of packages, and stay up to speed with them. What I have recommended in the past to people who are new to the industry and having trouble being employed is that a really great way to get your feet wet is to sign up with a temp agency. There are a number of good temp agencies in the area that will give you steady work and help you with training. A lot of them provide health benefits. They test you on a regular basis, rate your skills, help you keep things up to speed, and then you get to temp in a lot of different organizations like advertising agencies and government contractors. So it gives you exposure to the potential employment landscape. You get to meet people and develop your skills and network while you are making money. You can also, risk-free, check out different work environments to see what might be best for you.

Q: *Have you gotten jobs through temp agencies?*

A: I haven't personally, but as a creative director, I have hired temps throughout the years. I know a number of people who have had successful careers working exclusively with temp agencies. When it comes to being hired for a permanent position, often the individual reviewing your résumé will be comparing you with someone who may have more experience. More than likely, the people with real work experience are going to be more desirable candidates for the job. That can be really discouraging when you're getting started. Working for a temp agency sort of levels the playing field. For instance, if I had a specific project that I needed help with, I would call an agency and say, "I need somebody who is an expert in Quark Express who can use Photoshop fairly proficiently." If you are registered with a temp

agency and know those programs really well, even if you are straight out of school and have no work experience, it doesn't really count against you; what's important are those skill sets. So you will have the opportunity to begin building your experience based solely on your skills. It helps you build that base of experience so that you can compete for the better positions.

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NAME: Ann Jordan

JOB TITLE: Graphic Designer

COMPANY DESCRIPTION: Graphic Design Studio

DEGREE: Graphic Design

PREVIOUS JOB TITLE(S): Freelance Designer, Intern, Junior Designer

YEARS EMPLOYED IN THE DESIGN INDUSTRY: 5 including internships; 2 in full-time permanent positions

Q: *How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into the arts?*

A: I was always interested in art, but never found the time in high school to pursue it. I did a lot of work in architecture and randomly thought graphic design would be a fun field, but had no idea what it entailed. My school had both departments, so I could easily switch majors if necessary. Within the first month I knew this was the right field because of my intense passion and readiness to learn.

Q: *Was there a particular event or person that inspired you to become an artist?*

A: My parents were both math teachers, and although I could do math, I always rebelled against it. Once I was given the freedom to experience art in college, I fell in love with the idea of communicating without words in ways that are highly conceptual.

Q: *How long were you without work before you found your current position?*

A: Not very long. I graduated two years ago, and then worked for two other design studios. I recently found this company through word of mouth. I knew Christopher, a principal at the studio, who asked me to join the firm. I actually interviewed here after my graduation, but the timing was off. It definitely paid off to keep up my connections.

Q: *Where did you look for job listings?*

A: When I was searching, I looked for jobs on Craigslist.org, Commarts.com, AIGA.com, and by word of mouth.

Q: *How many jobs did you have before this one?*

A: I had two design positions as well as several internships while I was attending school.

Q: *When you were told about the position you hold now, how was it described to you?*

A: Christopher mentioned they were looking for someone to produce annual reports and other collateral, and he wanted to know if I would still be interested in working with them.

Q: *When you were applying for jobs, what did you include with your application?*

A: A cover letter, résumé, and portfolio. I often followed up with a sample portfolio for the studio to keep on file. I submitted all of these items for the job I have now.

Q: *How did you decide what you would include as your work samples when you were applying for jobs?*

A: When I apply, I hand deliver a portfolio for the people at the company to review. I would try to keep my submission between ten and

fifteen pieces. I tried to show my conceptual side as well as my professional work experience. It was a combination of schoolwork and professional work.

Q: *When you submitted your application, did you tailor your work samples to match the work done at the company you were applying to?*

A: Yes, I did.

Q: *Did you add any special design elements to your résumé?*

A: Yes. I designed my résumé, cover letter, and portfolio within the same file. I sent the same résumé with each application and tried to tailor both my cover letter and portfolio to meet the needs of that particular company.

Q: *Did you have to do an interview as part of the hiring process for your current position?*

A: Since I interviewed with them two years prior and because I had continued to stay in touch, I didn't have to interview with them the second time around.

Q: *When you interviewed with your current company the first time, what items did you bring with you to the interview?*

A: I brought my portfolio, résumé, and cover letter. I also included actual samples of schoolwork in case they wanted to look at them more closely. My regular portfolio is a mix of computer prints and photographs, all of which don't always show subtle details.

Q: *What other preparation did you do before the interview?*

A: I researched their Web site. I also looked at several of the design annuals to get an idea of what awards they had won, and what work was in the award books.

Q: *How many people did you interview with?*

A: Two people. They were both in the same room at the same time.

Q: *When you were interviewing, were you asked any questions that you weren't prepared for?*

A: No, I had interviewed for internships with several studios prior to my current position and had a good idea of what questions might come my way.

Q: *How much experience did you have in design before you got your job?*

A: I had four years of schooling. For three of the years while I was in school, I was interning. I did internships at three different places. Upon graduation, I worked for two studios as well as freelanced on my own time.

Q: *How did you find the internships you had while you were in school?*

A: I found them by looking at annuals and finding work I liked. Once I saw a studio that was doing good work, I contacted them about internship opportunities.

Q: *Was the application process for your internships the same as it was for full-time work?*

A: It was the same process, but less pressure because they were looking for a designer that had less experience. They weren't expecting me to be a great designer at that point.

Q: *Has the use of print production skills been required of you in your current position?*

A: Yes. I wasn't taught them in school, but you definitely pick them up on the job. My internships were very helpful in getting on-the-job experience.

Q: *Do you believe that having a Web site is necessary for a graphic artist?*

A: No. I don't have one. It's definitely helpful, but not necessary.

Q: *Do you have any other suggestions for artists who are seeking employment?*

A: Be persistent. Studios will not call you back; they have many more important things to do. Don't take it personally; just be sure to continue contacting them and reminding them you're out there.

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NAME: Andrew Sherman

JOB TITLE: Senior Designer

COMPANY DESCRIPTION: Graphic Design Firm

DEGREE: Graphic Design

PREVIOUS JOB TITLE(S): Freelance Designer, Designer

YEARS EMPLOYED IN THE DESIGN INDUSTRY: 3

Q: *How old were you when you knew you wanted to go into the arts?*

A: I knew when I was seventeen.

Q: *Was there a particular event or person that inspired you to become an artist?*

A: No. I just found that it was a subject I excelled in and never became tired of.

Q: *How long were you without work before you found your current position?*

A: After school, there was about a year when I was freelancing and waiting tables.

Q: *Where did you find freelance projects?*

A: Usually through word of mouth. People I did work for in the past would refer me when they heard about projects.

Q: *Where did you look for job listings?*

A: The AIGA site. Also word of mouth from different design shops in town.

Q: *How many jobs did you apply for before this one?*

A: Somewhere around twenty.

Q: *Where did you find the listing for your current job?*

A: I found out about this company through the AIGA Web site. I got the company's address and visited them to look for employment opportunities.

Q: *At the time you applied, did you believe that you exactly matched all the criteria listed in the job description?*

A: Yes.

Q: *Did you do any research on the companies you applied to?*

A: Always. I always did research to make sure I was prepared for any questions they may have asked me.

Q: *Was it ever the case that you decided not to apply after doing research?*

A: Yes, for sure. I didn't apply if I didn't like the work, or if it looked like something I wouldn't be into. The big thing about graphic design is, not only does your personality have to match, but also your design style. The type of work has to be something you are interested in.

Q: *Did you tailor your work portfolio to match the work done at your current company?*

A: I spent a few months building my portfolio. I chose the top ten pieces, and put them in the order I wanted them to be presented in. I tried to show all the variety I could.

Q: *When you applied, did you add any special design elements to your résumé?*

A: Yes. My résumé was designed. When I was applying, I thought about the fact that ninety-nine percent of résumés are filed away for later. No one ever acts upon it right away and calls you. I decided to make it easier for employers by designing a file folder. That way, the actual résumé could hang as a folder in their cabinets.

Q: *How did you make initial contact with the employer?*

A: I have never e-mailed or faxed a résumé. I would always mail it and follow up with a call a few days later or hand deliver it. I never mailed or delivered work samples because I wanted to show my portfolio in person. I thought it was important to be able to sell my personality along with my designs.

Q: *How long was the time period between you applying and being called in for an interview?*

A: I had an interview a couple of days after I applied. I came back later for a second interview.

Q: *After you scheduled an interview, how did you prepare for that?*

A: I already had my book prepared, so I looked over my pieces. I did as much research as I could on the company. I knew exactly what I was looking for. I practiced and I looked over my stuff. A lot of it I just went with. If you are overprepared, it shows. I would wing it a lot when I interviewed.

Q: *Please describe the appearance of your portfolio.*

A: Mine was too big at the time. The actual case was big enough to hold posters. It was a giant portfolio case with individual sheets that I could take out. The work was mounted to individual art board sheets that had a clear covering around them.

Q: *How many people did you interview with?*

A: The first time it was with one. The second time it was with three.

Q: *Were you asked any questions that you were not prepared for?*

A: No, not really. I knew the type of job that I wanted when I went in there. I knew about the company. The questions that were the hardest were related to how much I wanted to be paid.

Q: *Did you do research on salary before your interview?*

A: I tried. A lot of the sites out there seem to speculate a lot. Salaries depend on the economy. They update that kind of information every year, but I still don't think they are very accurate.

Q: *Has the use of print production skills been required of you in your current position?*

A: Every day.

Q: *Do you believe that having a Web site is necessary for a graphic artist?*

A: It helps if you have a few samples of your work up there. Just enough to intrigue. If you put too much of your work up there, people have no reason to ask you to come in and show your portfolio. They never get to meet you. They just look at your Web site and put you in their file. If you have a bad Web site, it can hurt. I would only create a Web site if it's going to be really well designed. The site should be as good if not better than any other piece in your portfolio.

Q: *Do you have any other suggestions for artists who are seeking employment?*

A: Do your research. Find out what you want. Look into companies, and don't take a job you don't want. Know what you want and know what the employer wants. Don't try too hard. If you go in there and you are wearing a tight shirt, and you are uncomfortable, you will make your interview difficult. A lot of art directors, and senior

designers, and those in charge of hiring are not just looking at your portfolio, but also your personality. We get people in here who are uncomfortable when they interview. That really hurts them. If you are relaxed and act the way you will act once you get hired, you will have a better shot. You should hand deliver your résumé. Don't ever e-mail or fax a résumé. Sometimes those get discarded before your name gets read. As a graphic designer you should take pride in your work. Your résumé should be as good as any of your portfolio pieces. If you are faxing or e-mailing, it means you haven't put in the necessary effort. Either hand deliver it, or mail it in a customized envelope. Always customize letters. Find out exactly to whom you need to send it. Take the time to learn who they are. If you don't, they are not going to care who you are.

