

Refuse to Work for Nothing

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Although I didn't actually attend D&AD Chairman Dick Powell's speech to young graduates at the recent New Designers exhibition, I did pick it up on the excellent Dezeen website, where there has been an angry outpouring to Powell's controversial views.

According to Powell, young people wanting to start a career in design should offer to "work for free." "Offer anything, do anything," he said.

"Work for nothing, make tea, carry bags, and learn, learn, learn."

"And you should stop at nothing to achieve that. Be prepared to do anything, anything at all to get into a business." He went on to add that doing an unpaid internship is "the easiest way to get a job."

So for all you recently graduated students, not only do you now have to carry the burden of a \$30,000 bank loan (plus 3% above the base rate compound interest) but you can look forward to working for nothing too.

Without a doubt, Powell's recommendation is the worst thing to come out of D&AD in recent times—I am surprised that no one in the organizations saw fit to question his views before he opened his mouth. As a body representing our industry, should be pushing for best practice and supporting very vulnerable graduates.

This attitude dovetails into the alarming increase in free pitching that now runs throughout our industry, from the smallest to the most prestigious firms. Every com-

pany that embraces this and the acceptance of unpaid work for graduates is devaluing the worth of what we do. Powell's active recommendation of 'working for free' simply adds to the view that what we all do is pretty low-grade, worthless stuff. A very sad state of affairs to hear this communicated by D&AD.

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Dick Powell also listed six tips for graduates, the first being: "Design is fabulously rewarding." Powell's own company, Seymour Powell, was acquired by the Loewy Group in 2007 for an undisclosed amount. Many millions were banded about the industry at the time. But whatever it was, I'm sure that there are no money worries for Mr Powell.

For what it's worth, my recommendation to any design graduate is to refuse to work for nothing. And while pursuing job prospects, keep active by initiating your own projects to keep the creative muscles sharp. When I first started out, I would visit bookshops, pinpoint badly designed covers and in my spare time at home I would redesign them. That act eventually led to a job. A paid job.

Don't give up: believe in yourself.