

getting  
an  
industrial  
design  
job  
by RitaSue Siegel, IDSA

SPECIAL REPORT

IDSA<sup>®</sup>

Industrial Designers Society of America

# getting an industrial design job

by RitaSue Siegel, IDSA

# ● IDSA

**Executive Director and  
Chief Operating Officer**  
Kristina Goodrich

**Cover**  
Arek Banasik  
New York, NY

**Graphic Design**  
Karen Berube; K.Designs  
Fairfax, VA

**IDSA**  
1142 Walker Rd.  
Great Falls, VA 22066  
P: 703.759.0100  
F: 703.759.7679  
E-mail: [idsa@erols.com](mailto:idsa@erols.com)  
Web: [www.idsa.org](http://www.idsa.org)

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The opinions expressed in this  
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# IDSAs membership application

Provide information as it should appear on your membership certificate and in the Directory. If your mailing address is different, please note it in the space provided.

Name		Title	
Employer			
Address			
City	State	Zip/Mail Code	Country
Business Phone	Fax	E-Mail	Web Site
Mailing Address (if different from the one listed above)			

**Citizenship:**

Are you a US Citizen?  Yes  No  
 If not, do you reside in the US?  Yes  No  
 If you are a foreign degreed designer residing in the US, you can apply for Professional membership during your US residency. Upon leaving the US, your membership status will convert to International

If you are a foreign degreed designer residing outside the US, you qualify for International membership.

**Membership Type:**

Dues include national and chapter dues for the first year; future dues will be billed on the anniversary date of your membership. Select the appropriate membership type.

- Professional Member:
- 1st year after graduation: \$100
  - 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th years after graduation: \$189
  - All other Professional Members: \$303
  - International Member: \$303
  - Affiliate Member: \$303

**Design Specialties:**

Provide two specialties you want noted in IDSA's Directory.

Specialty 1	Specialty 2
-------------	-------------

**How Did You Hear About IDSA?**

- IDSA Member; Whom can we thank? \_\_\_\_\_
- IDSA Student Chapter  IDSA National Event
- IDSA Web Site  Business Week
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Optional Demographics:**

IDSA advocates equal opportunity in employment and in access to opportunities. The following optional information will help IDSA better understand and serve the needs of members and the profession.

- Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_  Female  Male
- African American  Asian  Caucasian
  - Hispanic  Native American
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to:** IDSA, 1142 Walker Rd., Great Falls, VA 22066, USA;  
 phone: 703.759.0100; fax: 703.759.7679;  
 e-mail: idsa@erols.com; Web site: www.idsa.org

**Education:** If you need more space, please use an attached page.

School, Undergraduate Degree, Date and Major
School, Graduate Degree, Date and Major

**Type of Employer:**

If you are both an educator and a practicing designer, place a "1" beside your primary function and note where you teach.

- Independent Consulting Firm
- In-house Office of a Manufacturing Company
- Educational Institution I teach at: \_\_\_\_\_
- Government
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Check here if you are a Head of Office

**Professional Interest Section Membership:**

Please sign me up for membership in—(list as many as you want)

- Design Management  Environmental Responsibility
- Furniture  Communicative Environment
- Human Factors  International Design
- Housewares  Medical Design
- Universal Design  Materials and Processes
- Visual Interface  Gender & Cultural Diversity
- Product Development  Design Protection

Are there any other Professional Interest Sections you would like IDSA to establish? \_\_\_\_\_

**Application Certification:** I certify that the above information is accurate and complete, and that I agree to abide by the IDSA Code of Ethics.

Signature	Date
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**Dues and Payment Information:**

Please mail this signed application to IDSA with your dues payment. If you are paying with a credit card, you may fax the application and charge information to 703.759.7679.

- A check is enclosed
- Please charge my:  AmEx  MasterCard  Visa

Account #	Expiration Date
-----------	-----------------

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Directory of Industrial Designers** lists all IDSA members by last name, chapter, specialty and employer. The Directory is the major national resource for industrial designer networking, employment and consultant referrals. Sold at \$99, the Directory is sent free to IDSA members.

**Design Perspectives**, published monthly, reports on current issues, trends and events affecting design; and includes listings of design competitions, meetings and employment opportunities. A subscription costs \$35 (US) or \$50 (Intl); members receive it free.

**Innovation** contains feature articles and presents how-to, technical information on design process, management materials, human factors, design history and techniques. Published quarterly, a subscription costs \$50 (US) or \$75 (Intl); however, members receive it free.

**Getting the Word to Business Executives.** Regular letters and materials from IDSA to corporate executives who work with and employ industrial designers are helping to convince the top echelons of business to increase its investment in corporate industrial design staff and resources.

**Career Connections.** IDSA puts employers with job openings in direct, but discreet, contact with members interested in a new job. We connected more than 58 companies and some 80 potential candidates in '99.

**Lifelong Learning.** IDSA offers members a wide range of educational opportunities, including High Ground workshops and DesignAbout conferences.

**Studies**, issued periodically, provide statistical research on current industrial design compensation and the structure and financing of industrial design consulting firms and corporate offices. Members receive as much as 50% off on all studies.

**IDSA's National Design Conference**, held in different regions each year, attracts the largest gathering of industrial designers anywhere in the US. General sessions feature opinion visionaries from business, design, government and the press. Members register at a discount.

**IDSA's National Education Conference**, held in different regions each year, attracts the largest gathering of industrial design educators anywhere in the US.

**www.idsa.org**, IDSA's 2000+ page Web site, includes information on industrial design; late-breaking news and job listings; IDEA and Designs of the Decade galleries; many ID resources; a calendar of design events; and special areas for educators, students, business and media.

**District Conferences**, held in the spring, emphasize designer interaction and offer presentations by pacesetters in design offices, schools and related disciplines. Members register at a discount.

**IDSA Professional Interest Sections** are a great way for IDSA members to network and exchange information. Members are welcome to join as many or as few as they want. The sections are: Design Management, Design Protection, Communicative Environment, Environmental Responsibility, Furniture, Gender & Cultural Diversity, Housewares, Human Factors, Internationals, Materials & Processes, Medical, Product Development, Universal Design, and Visual Interface. In 2000, listserves were set up for each section.

**Industrial Design Excellence Awards (IDEA)** competition, sponsored by *Business Week* and conducted by IDSA, is held each year to choose the best designs in the US. *Business Week* announces the winners in a June edition, and IDSA presents the awards at its National Conference. IDSA publishes a Yearbook featuring the winners and distributes information to the business community and press. Members receive discounts on entry fees.

**Design Specialties Listings** This information is used in creating the referral list in IDSA's *Directory*. Only Professional and International members are included in the design specialties listings, which are used extensively by business.

**Equal Opportunity** IDSA advocates equal opportunity for all practitioners of industrial design and practices equal opportunity of access to volunteer offices, publication and employment.

**Membership Category** Dues include national and chapter dues for the first year; future dues will be billed on the anniversary date of your membership.

**Professional Member: \$303**  
**1st Year After Graduation: \$100**  
**2nd to 5th Year After Graduation: \$189**

Votes; can hold any office; can use IDSA after name. Must have degree and work or teach in ID or design-related discipline. US citizens and non-US citizens residing in the US.

**International Member: \$303** Available to non-US citizens residing overseas who are practicing designers. Can use I/IDSA after name; cannot vote or hold office; receives all other member benefits.

**Affiliate Member: \$303** Available to individuals who are interested in industrial design but lack the appropriate degree. Can be published and receive IDSA discounts; cannot vote or hold office; cannot put IDSA after name.

**IDSA Chapters** Every US member automatically becomes a member of the local IDSA chapter closest to them. IDSA has 27 local chapters: Arizona, Atlanta, Boston, Carolina, Chicago, Central Ohio, Central New York, Michigan, Florida, Indiana, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Mid-Atlantic, Minnesota, Northwest, New York, Northern Ohio, Oregon, Philadelphia, Rocky Mountain, San Francisco, Southern New England, Southern Ohio, Tennessee Valley, Texas, Western Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

# h

ello and welcome to a special edition of GETTING AN ID JOB. In the late '80s and early '90s, business employment opportunities for industrial designers were terrible. At that time, IDSA asked me to write a series of articles for INNOVATION, the Society's quarterly, about how industrial designers should go about finding employment. These articles were later published as a special issue of the journal.

## introduction

Today, business conditions are excellent. The advice in the original articles remains sound, but the Internet has definitely affected the process of getting a job. Hence, this special edition with a new, final chapter.

Ten years ago, designers were asking: Are in-house corporate design groups growing? What are the hot directions? Are there jobs for American designers in Europe and Asia? What kind of information do prospective employers look for in a resume? What is the best format for a portfolio and what should it contain?

Today, the questions are: Can I put my portfolio on the Web? On a CD? A disk? What is the design software that most companies use? Will I get stock options? And employers are deeply concerned with how to find, attract, reward and keep designers.

What is the definitive difference between now and then? There is almost a universal understanding in the US that design adds value, not only to the competitive position of products and services, but to the experience customers have with them. This is the result of relentless efforts by IDSA over the past decade, including the pivotal Industrial Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) co-sponsored with *Business Week* magazine, as well as the outstanding and highly visible performance of designers.

### Some Things Don't Change

Whether the times are boom or bust (or somewhere in between), the fundamentals in the original articles still apply. But, we've added a chapter on how the digital world, primarily the World Wide Web, affects the job search process. In this brave, new world, there are more resources to help you find opportunities, to research

companies and to present yourself and your work to prospective employers and recruiters. It also helps them to find and qualify you for the positions they have available. But you still have to assess your skills and communicate this information in a resume and portfolio.

The speed with which the world is evolving still requires you to develop a lifelong, self-education program to stay current. Read a newspaper, with good national and international business reporting, as well as the traditional and new business magazines. Keep up with technology, materials, lifestyle and demographic trends and design, on-line or in the flesh. Read literature, see movies and go to the theater. Attend art exhibits, listen to music and travel.

Educating others is still a very important part of being a designer. Although the awareness of design is now high, the understanding of the process and the time it takes to do it well are not. As you enable other specialists with whom you work to learn about your skills and knowledge, you will develop synergies with them.

### Will You Make an Impact on the Profession?

Design has heroes and role models who have helped companies—from the inside where it used to be difficult—to understand that excellent design can provide a competitive advantage. They built design departments that were an integral part of their company's success. These designers were—and are—highly motivated people, evangelists who didn't take "no" for an answer. In the '80s, they were Lou Lenzi, IDSA, at Thomson Consumer Electronics; Gene Sulek at Texas Instruments; Arnold Wasserman, IDSA, at Xerox; Bob Brunner, IDSA, at Apple; and Bob Potts, IDSA, at Ciba Corning. In the '90s, Morison Cousins, IDSA, did it at Tupperware; Tom Gale, IDSA, at what was then Chrysler; Frank Nuovo, IDSA, at Nokia; and Gordon Thompson at Nike.

### What's New? The Employment Outlook and the Business Climate

Ten years ago, companies were not as focused as they are today on developing new products and services. Jobs were not being created. Today, times are dramatically different. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 30 years. A shortage of skilled labor threatens the US economy's growth. The current accelerated demand for designers is the result of:

- Visibility and recognition of design as a legitimate activity that impacts business success.
- Increased investment in new product development.
- Heightened awareness of design's role in building brands.
- Transformation of old business models by electronic commerce.
- Development of interactive products.
- The phenomenal business momentum and soaring stock market.

Other factors include new ways of valuing assets: software as investment, not a cost; and a high regard for a person's intelligence and knowledge. Designers are recognized as a vital component in the drive for quality, in the use of computers and the Internet to increase productivity, and in the development of crucial technological innovations. The reshaping of business practices to take advantage of the networked world has just begun.

New design disciplines are evolving: user-experience design, information architecture, interaction design, user-centered research, design planning, entertainment design and branded environments. And, this is just the beginning.

### Who's Responsible?

In the past, when new products were written about in the general business press, product designers were almost never credited. Among designers, "style" was a dirty word. No more. Today, it's OK for products to be considered stylish. In a 30-day period in 1999, significant articles on design appeared in *Fast Company* magazine, *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Fortune* and *Business Week*.

### A Seismic Shift

Move over Italian design! The US has become the destination and focus of designers from all over the world. Design is ubiquitous here; everyone 'gets it.' Designers in Europe and Asia still complain about the shortage of clients who think design is important. Although foreign designers are welcome here, because of high unemployment and less robust economies, it's difficult for American designers to get visas to work in other countries, with the exceptions of Canada and Mexico (thanks to NAFTA) and the automotive industry.

### Debunking the Stereotypes

The universe in which you can find industrial design work is limited only by your imagination and your snobbery quotient. (Some designers look down their noses at those who design toys, point-of-purchase displays and wall décor. Before Nike made it chic, some looked down their noses at sports footwear design.) Since I cannot help each of you to research, assess and plan, I will do something a bit dangerous: make sweeping generalizations. Here goes.

Most recent grads, and those with only a few years of experience, look at the job universe and see it divided simply into consulting firms and corporate offices. They believe that more creative people work in consulting offices because of the variety of clients these have. They also believe that corporate jobs are more insulated from potential layoffs. Well, neither stereotype is true.

You can be just as boxed into a specialty in a large consulting office as in a corporation. Those who think all designers working in-house at Apple, Ford, Motorola, Thomson Consumer Electronics and DaimlerChrysler are less creative than designers in consulting firms should not voice this opinion too loudly. It's ridiculous. ■



By RitaSue Siegel, IDSA

RitaSue Siegel is founder and president of RitaSue Siegel Resources, a worldwide search company that fills key design management and staff positions in all aspects of product, communications and environmental design, including: graphic, industrial and exhibit design; corporate, brand, and retail identity; architecture; packaging; interactive media; usability; and interior design.

The firm also finds identity strategists, creative directors, design sales and marketing specialists, and educators. Additionally, it advises on design firm selection and mergers and acquisitions.

The client list includes: Philips Design, Sony, Apple Computer, Herbst LaZar Bell, Motorola, Fitch (UK), Nissan (US, Japan), ION Design, Terk Technologies, Whirlpool (US, Italy), John Frassanito, Amtrak, Group Four, Thomson Consumer Electronics (US, France), Renault (France), Rockwellgroup, Nike, NASA, Emilio Ambasz, Tupperware (US & Belgium), Landor, Ford, Donovan & Green/US Web CKS, Disney Interactive, Ralph Appelbaum, Art Center College, Lante, Gateway, and Wolff Olins.

RitaSue has been quoted by and has had articles published in *The New York Times*, *Business Week*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *DesignWeek* (UK), *AXIS* (Tokyo), *Form* (Germany), *ID Magazine*, *Design Management Journal* and others. She wrote *American Graphic Design, Thirty Years of Imagery* (McGraw Hill, 1987), was a juror for the IDEA Awards and *Communication Arts Magazine* and *ID Magazine* competitions.

She is on the board of directors of the Rowena Reed Kostellow Fund at Pratt Institute and the board committee of the International Design Network Foundation. RitaSue participated in developing a proposal for a White House Council on Design sponsored by the NEA and has served on committees for The Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum and The American Crafts Museum.

RitaSue holds Master's and Bachelor's Degrees in Industrial Design from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. From 1962 to 1969, she was director of placement at Pratt Institute's Schools of Art and Design, Architecture and Engineering.

**t**he rules for getting a job are changing. **You have to do much more and prepare much smarter than ever before.** Understanding the changes reshaping our economy is a key first step. Research is the second.

part 1: research

Everyone asks me, "How's business?" The employment game, you see, is considered a bellwether of the economy. But in today's economy it takes more than jobs to get a job. To that end, Innovation has asked me to write a series of articles on how to get a good job as an industrial designer, whether you are right out of school, have a few years of experience or a lot. Are in-house corporate design groups growing? What are the hot directions and are there jobs for American designers in Europe or Japan? What kind of information do prospective employers look for in a resume? What should portfolios contain? These are some of the questions I'll answer in this series.

Now, many of you are working for companies that have never been busier, but that doesn't mean the overall picture for industrial design employment is satisfactory or that the old rules of getting a job still apply. They don't. With very few exceptions, in

order to get one of the good jobs that do exist, or to talk an organization into creating one for you, you have to do much more and prepare much smarter than ever before.

**As you read my series, you need to consider the chaos of the current job marketplace as a condition of the time that cannot be ignored.** Similarly, the process of design is a relatively new one, and not everyone understands how to best use it or integrate it into their organization. Part of being a designer, and getting a job as one, is educating others. It only takes one highly motivated person who won't take "no" for an answer to help a company understand that excellent design can improve its competitive position. Lou Lenzi did it at Thomson Consumer Electronics, Gene Sulek did it at TI and Bob Potts did it at Ciba Corning. These people are our own design heroes and role models.

## The Employment Outlook and the Business Climate

To answer the question up front, business for us “head-hunters” is not too good these days. Companies are not asking us to find, nor are they hiring, industrial designers at the same rate as they did when business was terrific in the mid '70s to the mid '80s. Some of the reasons are:

- The ways companies operate and allocate resources have been fundamentally changed by the way they were financed or refinanced in the '80s by investment bankers. Rather than being focused on developing new products and services, many are crippled by the distraction of needing to find ways to pay off enormous debts.

- Demand for products is down because the majority of customers in the developed world has everything they need. (In a company that is thinking correctly, this should signal the need to hire designers.)

- Competition from products made by foreign manufacturers has altered the landscape of the type of products made in America.

Rather than innovate their way out of the situation, some American companies have decided to stop competing.

- New jobs, in general, are not being created, except in the healthcare industries.

- There has been a steady reduction in the percentage of revenues American companies invest in R&D.

- The American economy has had less growth in the first quarter of 1993 than ever before in recent memory, another good reason to hire designers.

- The market position of brand name products is being threatened by generic or store-branded ones. Rather than invest in new or improved products or packaging, companies are substituting promotions and price-cutting.

- The American educational system is in crisis, which affects the abilities of current and future members of the work force to think, read and figure at levels we took for granted in the past. This crisis is forcing companies to invest more in training than ever as well as in redesigning the process and equipment by which work is done. Not surprisingly, they claim to have less money available to spend on developing new products.

- There will be fewer competitors in some industries, like personal computers, where a few major producers of low cost clones are displacing the previous variety of proprietary products and systems.

- Concern with air quality, recycling, disposability and other environmental issues affects job development in some categories.

You probably know all this if you read a good daily newspaper, with national and international financial and business coverage. You should also read a weekly magazine like Business Week as part of your continuing self-education program. Plus plastics, electronics, design and lifestyle magazines.

## Debunking the Stereotypes

The universe in which you can find industrial design work is limited only by your imagination and your snobbery quotient. (Some designers look down their noses at those who design toys, point-of-purchase displays and wall decor. Before Nike made it chic, some looked down their noses at sports footwear design.) Since I cannot help each of you to research, assess and plan, I will do something a bit dangerous: make sweeping generalizations. Here goes.

Most recent grads and those with only a few years of experience look at the job universe and see it divided simply into consulting firms and corporate offices. They believe that more creative people work in consulting offices, because of the variety of clients these have. They also believe that corporate jobs are more insulated from potential layoffs. Well, neither stereotype is true.

You can be just as boxed into a specialty in a large consulting office as in a corporation. Juniors who think all designers working in-house at Apple, Nike, Ford, Thomson Consumer Electronics, Nissan, Chrysler or NCR are less creative than designers in consulting firms should not voice this opinion too loudly. It's ridiculous.

In corporations, it's company policy, not size or structure, that determines whether or not you will be laid off when business is bad. When preparing to sell divisions to show a more favorable cost picture, some companies will eliminate the design department among others. Companies as diverse as GM, IBM, AT&T and >



Corning have offered early retirement programs to long-term employees because they are restructuring their lines of business and have new labor requirements. Many designers were laid off by office furniture companies as the recession progressed, as were teachers in design schools with decreasing enrollment and increasing costs.

## Finding a Focus

From our perspective, there are many types of industries that can employ industrial designers. And the list is constantly growing. Building a list for yourself requires a willingness to read, think and do research.

**Reading is a way to get important clues and information about the world, which can inspire you to improve or create products people will need.**

One way to categorize the potential job-generating landscape is by industry. You can begin to map a personal job universe by selecting subjects or categories or types of work that interest you, as well as locations. The information should be prioritized

and have some relationship to reality. We have known designers interested in automobile design who will not leave the New York City area, where there are no automobile manufacturers.

Here are some lists to illustrate my point.

- *3-D Packaging:* aseptic, bottles-beverage, bottles-cosmetics, closure, corrugated, dispenser, disposable, pharmaceutical, sterile.

- *Computer:* accessories, education, home, industrial, information products, information systems, office, operations products, operations systems, portable, user interface, work station.

- *Consumer:* electronics, entertainment, home furnishings, home office, housewares, lighting, major appliances, small appliances, telephone.

- *Medical/Dental/Veterinary:* hospital furniture, instrumentation, lab equipment, measuring devices, prosthetic devices, surgical products, wheelchairs.

- *Exhibit:* artifact, biography, corporate, events, history, interactive, interpretive, museum, research, sales meetings, science, set design, showroom, theme park, trade show, visitor's center, world's fair, zoo.

- *Retail:* custom fixturing, fixture systems, lighting, point of sale, prototype design package, standards development, store planning, visual merchandising.

- *Signage:* airport, city, educational, fast food, financial facilities, health care, highway, hospitality, industrial development, institutional, kiosk, office, office park, residential development, retail.

- *Transportation:* accessories, after market, aircraft, boats, bus, car, cultivation equipment, earth-moving equipment, electric vehicles, exteriors, interiors, mass transit rail, military, motorcycles, non-motor, off-road ATVs, RVs, specialty vehicle, space vehicles, tractor, truck, van, yachts, water vehicles.

Another way to survey the territory is through materials and processes. Think of the job areas these words bring to mind: acrylic, aluminum, blow molding, brass, ceramic, china, color, corrugated, crystal, fiberglass, filters, foam, glass, injection molding, laminates, leather, metal, paper, plastics, porcelain, rubber, sheet metal, steel, textiles, tile, vinyl, wood.

There are companies who manufacture porcelain goods who hire designers to come up with new products and patterns. There are companies that simply design porcelain and tabletop prod-

ucts and either sell their designs to manufacturers or buy time from the manufacturers best suited to produce the goods they design. There are plastics companies that have internal groups of industrial designers who both call on and consult with designers and engineers in such industries as automotive, pharmaceutical packaging, office furniture and restaurant equipment. They try to inspire those designers and engineers to make the transition to or convert from the materials they are now using to the company's plastics.

## Finding Potential Employers

It's a bit overwhelming isn't it? **Looking for a job is not simple. It requires as much planning as any design project you embark on,** and the process of getting from idea to reality is not dissimilar. (Research, preparation, implementation.)

Here are some specifics about how to find potential employers in the categories and geographic areas that interest you as well as people who will understand what designers do. One of the best tools available is the *IDSA Directory of Industrial Designers*, updated yearly

and sent free to members. Members are listed by chapters, employers and specialties, from "Aerospace/Airlines" to "Wood."

Another, the *Design Firm Directory*, graphic and industrial design edition, also published yearly, lists consultants by state and specialty. *The Directory to Industrial Design in the US*, first published in 1992, lists consultants and design departments by state, service and activity. None of these directories contain photographs. There's no need to buy the last two: borrow them.

Other useful sources, with photos, are coverage of the Industrial Design Excellence Awards by Business Week and Innovation, the Design Review issue of ID Magazine and The International Design Yearbooks, published by Abbeville Press. (You don't have to buy the books. Just bring an index card to the bookstore and take notes.) Many trade show directories contain product photos. The *New York Market Directory*, for example, lists companies in tabletop, housewares, decorative accessories, general gift companies and kidstuff. If you cannot go to the trade shows in the product categories that interest you, ask an IDSA member in the product category if they will lend you their directory.

Trade magazines are excellent sources of information about trends in the industry. They show photos of products that may interest you or need a designer. Try to get or buy the previous year's worth of issues. If you don't know which trade magazines are relevant, ask an appropriate IDSA member for contact information of their most useful trade magazines.

The business magazines—Forbes, Fortune, Business Week, Inc.—continually write about companies that are failing or improving, industry trends and technology, from which you can develop leads, as well as listings of companies by industry, showing how they compare with one another in their category, as in the Fortune 1,000 or Inc. 100.

### Making the Contact

After deciding you are interested in medical products, for example, use the directories to find corporations and consulting offices that specialize in these products. Look for those within the geographic boundaries you've defined. Write a letter to one designer in each of the companies explaining that you are beginning a job search and would like to ask their advice about getting a job in medical products in their neighborhood. Enclose your appropriately detailed resume and a few color copies of projects that repre-

sent what you'd like to do, either stylistically or in subject matter. If you lack relevant on-the-job experience or school projects, design and develop them on your own. Also explain that you plan to visit to their area and would be delighted to take them to breakfast or lunch or visit them in their office (their choice) to gather information. Before sending the letter, call to be sure the person is still at the company and get their current title.

**If the company you are interested in doesn't employ industrial designers, write a letter to the chief executive stating your objectives** and your travel schedule. Enclose your resume, five color copies and, if you believe it helpful, an article from the business press or a design magazine that gives a broad picture of what the discipline of industrial design has to offer. (We get some of our best searches using this method. We don't sit back waiting for companies to find us, and neither should you.) When you make the follow-up call, some will have thrown your letter out, but others will have passed your letter to someone in human resources, engineering or marketing. Follow that up, too. And a few may want to see you!

### Researching the Companies

If you want more information than you will ever need about the companies you are interested in, you can ask them for it or look them up in Standard and Poor's directory of corporations or Dun & Bradstreet's directories or disks. Searching by SIC code in medical equipment will produce the names of 150 companies on the D&B Million \$ Disk, for example. The information about them can be downloaded from your university or business library onto a diskette. By law, all public companies must issue an annual report. The business librarian in special libraries or the main branches of public libraries can be quite helpful: it's wise to make an appointment with one to help plan your research. As you do it, bear in mind the designer's manifesto, "Nothing is immune from being improved upon," or, as Raymond Loewy said, "Never leave well enough alone!" ■

**m**aking cold calls for job interviews gives the strongest egos the jitters. But there are some straightforward rules of thumb that can make your approach to potential employers more effective.

part 2: how to get an interview

In Part 1, I suggested ways to focus your job search by industry and region. Assuming you've taken these steps, the trick is to use a methodology for getting a face-to-face meeting with potential employers where you'll have the opportunity to show your portfolio and demonstrate what a pleasant, smart person you are. In tough times, it may be difficult to finance a week of time in the location of your choice. If you can't, there are other tactics. If you can, take it four weeks after you have completed your research about companies, products and industries. You need a cover letter, resume and to obtain an interview, and these take time to prepare.

Let's say you have decided you'd like to live in San Francisco or the area known as Silicon Valley. This is a very popular choice, not only for Americans, but for designers from Asia and Europe as well. That means that you've

got a lot of competition for appointments. The design offices and companies in the area receive dozens of telephone calls and resumes each week from designers at every stage of experience who want to interview with them. How will you separate yourself from the crowd?

How will you get an appointment with the design manager at Apple, with a principal at IDEO, or one of their lieutenants? Or with second-tier stars? Remember, asking for an interview in a letter or on the phone with a total stranger who may not be looking for an employee is essentially asking a total stranger for an hour of time. It can be perceived as an imposition. You may be asking them to work an hour longer in order to see you because they have very busy schedules. So, I suggest showing them something memorable in advance to get them excited about seeing you.



"Now I'll try to read the resumes from the designers."

## The Vital Referral

It is often easier to get an appointment with your targets if you've come recommended by someone they know or respect. If you are a recent graduate, you may know a student who co-oped at the office or an alumnus who is in their employ, or a teacher who may have worked in their organization or with one of their people. If you have experience, you may have colleagues acquainted with someone in the organization. It is very difficult to refuse a request such as: "I showed my portfolio to Bob Darnit and he said I must show it to you if I'm out there." Or, "I am working with Janice Fidget and she said that you'd be very interested in the type of work I am doing with interaction simulation software." Or, "I heard you speak at the IDSA conference in San Francisco. Your ideas stimulated me to do my senior thesis on customer needs for perfor-

mance-oriented bicycles." (Of course, the reference must be truthful.) You must first put these things in your letter and then reiterate them to their assistants or secretaries when you call. They may be empowered to put you on their boss's calendar.

## Your Logistics Plan and Letter

Then you want to inform them about when you will be in their neighborhood. Since you'd want to avoid having an appointment on Monday at 9 a.m. in San Jose and one at 11:30 a.m. in San Francisco, the days and times of your availability stated in your cover letter and reiterated in your call must be selected with a logistics plan in mind.

You can start by drawing a matrix which shows the organizations in their neighborhoods in San Francisco, and the location of others in the surrounding cities. Then put together an appropriate, focused letter, such as:




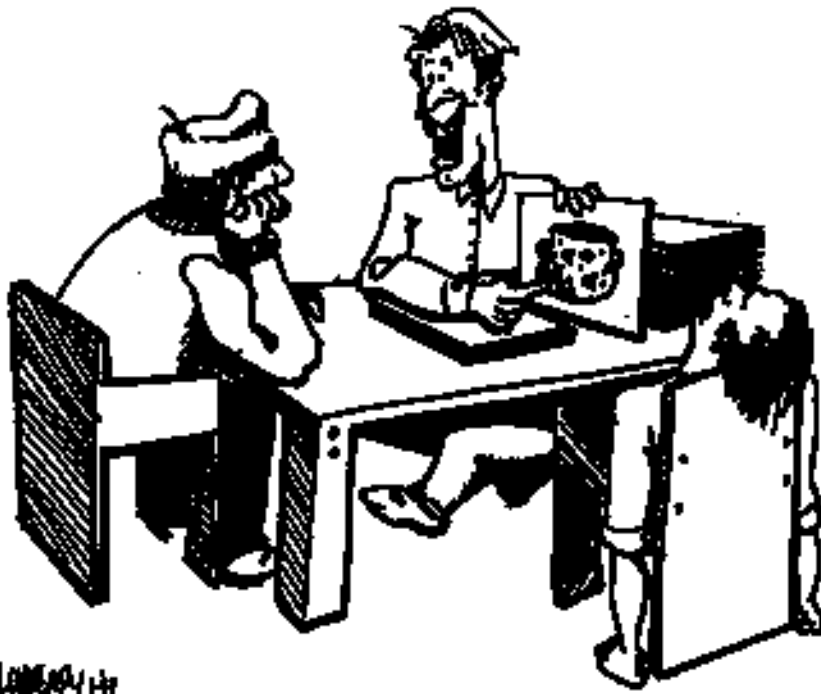
...and then, when I was 14...

*Recent Grad:* I have just graduated from the industrial design department of the University of the Pitts. My teacher, John Forgetme, your classmate at Cal State Dustmore, suggested I contact you. He believes you will be interested in the new closures I've developed for portable communication devices. I plan to be in your area during the week of September 9th, and would very much appreciate your taking the time to see my work. I will call you in a few days to set up an appointment.

*Some Experience:* I am an industrial designer with three years of experience. I am planning to move to the

West Coast in the near future. I am familiar with the work you are doing for the ophthalmic industry. I have been working on a product similar to the one you have completed for Variable Industries. Dr. Didit, the human factors specialist at Variable, suggested I show it to you. I will be in the Bay area during the week of September 9th and would very much appreciate an appointment to show you my work. I will call you in few days to schedule it.

*Heavyweight:* I am an industrial designer with over 20 years of experience. My children are grown and my spouse has been transferred to Mountain View. Since 



"This project from 2nd grade confirmed my destiny as an industrial designer."

*Boring portfolio presentations must be common indeed! When we invited Dave Tompkins, FIDSA, and Gerard Furbershaw, IDSA, to conceive cartoons depicting bad interviewing experiences, both independently came up with The Big Sleep! Dave drew his (on page 9) and Gerard asked Bret Lovelady to capture the feeling for him (above).*

graduation from State Polytech, I have worked in three large companies on the East Coast managing projects and teams of industrial designers and electrical engineers while designing small electronic measuring devices. My strength lies in project management, and I have a working knowledge of AutoCad Release 12 and ProEngineer. We will be in the Bay area on a house-hunting trip during the week of September 9th. I will call you in a few days to find out if you will see me.

### Differentiating Your Letter

To deal with the many designers who want the attention of these design managers, some organizations ask designers to drop off portfolios they can review later that day. This way they can look at the work and then see only those designers they believe can contribute to their organization. But you don't live nearby—dropping off your portfolio isn't viable. So, how do you differentiate yourself from all other designers?

With 8 1/2" x 11" black and white or color copies of your work. Did you ever know a designer who could resist looking at good work? I know I can't. Yet most designers don't send visuals when they write to ask for an interview.

We suggest five copies. We also suggest that one of the five shows your sketching style, provided you sketch well.

**Copies beat slides. They are larger and don't have to be projected.** They are also a relatively inexpensive way to get important visual evidence of your skills and sensibilities immediately into the hands of the people you want to influence to take precious time to see you. They don't have to find a VCR, a projector or a lupe. While we have nothing against a portfolio on a disk, five copies are the cheapest and most efficient way to get someone's attention. And, you don't have to ask for them to be returned, as you do with slides.

You can make labels for the back of the copies to describe what is on them, and what your contribution to the project was. Or, attach a cover sheet, state the problem and solution and number each of them, providing an index explaining the content and context.

## The Big R

Then there's the resume. There have been books written about how to write effective resumes, but, although an excellent resume is an important tool, it is not a difficult document to write. Here are some pointers.

- **Your resume is a prospective employer's first experience of your substance and style.** It's a good idea for you to prepare one that will be equally enlightening and appealing to the head of a mid-size company, the human resources director of a large one, the manager of an in-house design group, a vice president of marketing or a designer running a design office. It just takes careful planning, writing, editing and organizing. If you are from another country, use the American-style resume format.

- Don't fall into design traps. Design your resume for legibility and easy reading, faxing, copying, handling and storing. Don't over-design it. Use standard type styles and leading and a laser printer. One page is enough for a junior. Resumes are stored in standard-size folders by recipients, and are often copied and sent to others in an organization. Small ones get lost, large ones get

folded and are consequently messy and difficult to refer to. White 8 1/2" x 11" paper copies easily and best.

- Don't fall into any "assumption" traps. Not everyone who will read your resume knows what the company you work for does. Assume they don't. If you don't make clear who you are and what you've done for whom on a quick first reading, the resume will end up in the garbage instead of working hard for you. If you don't want to be called at work, indicate that messages may be left on your home message machine, fax or electronic mail. If the address on the resume is temporary, include a permanent one. If you are not born in the US, but have a work permit or are a naturalized American, say so. If you will need a work permit, this is a surmountable problem but there is no room to deal with that here.

- Don't fall into any "format" traps. Start your resume off with a short summary or objective only if you have something more interesting to say than that you are "looking for a challenge." And don't write that you are only interested in a consulting or corporate environment because you can't be sure.

I don't believe the style of resume that lists accomplishments, followed by a list of employers, works well for designers. Experienced people should provide an outline of professional experience, in reverse chronological order, last job first. Include dates of employment (both month and year), name of employer, location, your position and a relatively detailed description of your responsibilities. If you were working in-house, describe the company—"a mid-sized manufacturer of surgical staplers," for example, or "the Boston office of an international multidisciplinary design firm." Give details of the projects you worked on.

Describe your role, how many people you supervised or the team you were on, and what function you or it reported to. If you were an individual contributor, but in your next position would like to have the opportunity to manage projects, state that fact in your objective and describe your job experience in light of that objective. Juniors can describe their temporary, co-op or freelance employment or jobs they held prior to going to design school.

Education should also be outlined in reverse chrono-

logical order. If you don't list a degree, the assumption will be that you do not have one. Always give the month and year in which you graduated.

- Avoid the appearance of carelessness. Have a very literate person check your resume for errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage and typing. You cannot rely on a spell check program, because it can't distinguish between 'form' and 'from', a common transposition of letters, among others. And let the record show that "liaison" is spelled with two 'i's!

- **Above all, put yourself in the position of the people reading the resume and tell them what they would want to know.** Why is the resume so important? Decisions will be made about interviewing you based on the quality of information it provides. Does he use ProEngineer? Does he have any experience with OEM suppliers? Did she go through a TQM program? Did she have any mechanical engineering courses? Has he worked on teams with engineers? If he worked in a design office, did he participate in new business development? Did she present to clients? What was the value of the work she did and how was its success measured by the client? People assume ➤

that, if you don't write about something, you didn't do it.

### Get the Local Scoop

Before you call to set up appointments, ask someone you know for general information about the local weather, parking, rush hour traffic, local dress codes, cost of living, availability of affordable housing and so on. You can also ask about the local employment situation and if they know anyone who is hiring industrial designers. If you don't know anyone, call the Chamber of Commerce or one of the IDSA chapter officers or members—they're listed in IDSA's membership directory. Ask when the next chapter meeting will be. Attending it is a good way to meet local members. Ask what local design activities or exhibits you should attend or see when there.

For appointments in the city, plan on using taxis; street parking is usually difficult to find. You'll need to rent a car for an appointment in the surrounding areas. Get a map in advance—any good bookstore will have one. Once your itinerary is set, you can plan your routes from one appointment to the next.

### Calling to Set Up the Meeting

When you call to set up a meeting, the dialogue should be something like this. "May I speak to Mr. Draft? This is Johnny D. Lee. I wrote to him last week about my up-coming trip to San Francisco and that I'd be calling for an appointment. He's not in? Could I speak to his assistant or the person who keeps his calendar? Oh, he makes his own appointments? Do you expect him to call in? This afternoon? Well, I would appreciate it very much if, when he does, you'd remind him of my letter. I also sent copies of my motorcycle helmet design, which he might remember. I could see him on Tuesday, September 10th at 4 p.m. I can call you back tomorrow to see if he would be available. What's your name? Gee, thanks very, very much. Is ten a good time to call? Great. I'll call you then. Thanks a lot."

Since Mr. Draft is apt to ask the person who answers the phone what kind of person you sounded like, **be upbeat and friendly, polite, efficient in your communication and brief.** If the answer person says: "What a disorganized guy. Getting information from him about why he was calling was like pulling teeth. And, he couldn't even pronounce your

name right," who's going to want to see you? And, when you call back to get the confirmation of the appointment, ask if the address you have is correct, if the office is easy to find and, if appropriate, whether or not special driving instructions are needed and where to park.

If your prospect can't or won't see you, ask if another person in the office or department would be available to talk with you and see your portfolio.

### What to Do If You Can't Visit?

**If you cannot afford to make a trip to the location of your choice, the documents you send will assume even greater importance.**

Your cover letter should state that you are not going to be in the area, but if your work is of interest, you'd like to arrange to show your complete portfolio when they are in your area or attending an IDSA function, a Design Management Institute conference, Aspen, NEOCON or another a trade show like CES or the Gourmet or Premium Show that you also plan to attend. In some cases, they might ask you to send a sheet of 20 or a tray of slides. If they like what they see and after a preliminary telephone interview, they might pay your interviewing expenses or offer to split them, so you can come to see them.

### Be Realistic

Please be realistic in your expectations. To get ten appointments, you may have to send 100 letters and resume/sample packets.

And recognize some hurdles to access that may be awkward but real. Specifically, there are many people who come to America with unusual names. For those industrial designers with names that Americans will have a very hard time with, I suggest you adopt a simpler name to use in business. Many Americans are shy about names and words they can't pronounce or remember with ease, and this may be reason enough for someone to "forget" who you are or not call back.

In one of the senior shows I visited this year, the name of one 'Rumparwan Sarmornkrisorakit,' caught my attention. I would suggest this person become Rumpar Sarmorn, or Ralph or Rick. There are some Asian names that are so common and beg for differentiation, like Young Kim, the name of about ten Korean industrial designers I know. On the other hand, if your name is David Brown, get a middle name or initial to distinguish yourself. In our office, when the caller is David Brown, we ask: "Are you from California, Boston or Indianapolis?" ■

Getting the job you want starts by taking a hard look at the skills you already have as well as the ones you want to acquire. And the ‘people’ and ‘personal’ skills are just as critical to develop as the ‘professional’ ones.

part 3: how to evaluate your skills

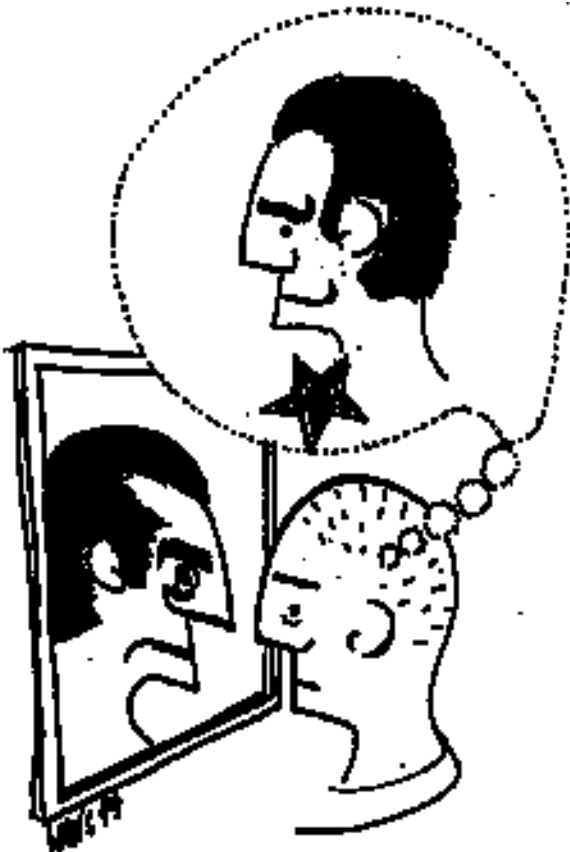
Many designers believe that getting the job of their choice depends on the quality of the work in their portfolios, who they know, going to the “right” school or getting the right “breaks.” Certainly all of these factors can play a role, but they aren’t the main determinant.

To get the design job you really want, you must master a spectrum of technical skills and develop a repertoire of personal skills that will allow you to work productively with other people.

This article looks at a critical step in the career-planning process: making an inventory and assessment of those skills. Once you’ve accomplished that, you’ll be ready to tackle portfolio preparation and the interviewing process, the topics of the next and final article in this series.

### Taking Stock of Technical Skills

When I meet with designers who are looking for positions, I ask them to tell me what they do best. Their surprise at the question and hesitation before coming up with an answer has made me realize how few designers think about what their strengths are. I suggest that you evaluate your skills, comparing them with those of successful industrial designers you know, so that you will understand what you do best. You must be able to describe your strong points to prospective employers and recruiters in your first meeting with them. You also need to recognize your strengths so you can design your portfolio to highlight them. An inventory of your strengths also will help you identify additional competencies you may want to develop to enhance your employability. ▣





# Industrial Design Evaluation

Technical Skill	Outstanding	Above Average	Good	Marginal	Unsatisfactory	Comment
aesthetics						
analysis						
color						
computer use						
design development						
design strategy						
drafting						
drawing/sketching						
driver's licenses						
economics						
engineering						
environ. impact						
estimating						
evaluating						
3-D form						
graphics						
human factors/ergo						
implementation						
innovation/invention						
interaction design						
marketing						
materials						
manufacturing						
model making						
pattern making						
photography						
planning						
point of view						
predicting						
protocols						
rapid visualization						
regulations						
rendering						
research						
sculpture						
semiotics						
sense of style						
technology						
texture						
usability testing						
user needs						
user scenarios						
well-read						
writing						

The most obvious set of skills to evaluate are the “technical” or “professional” ones. The chart on the left shows many commonly required design skills. Try ranking your competence in each.

It is a good idea to ask a fellow designer, especially one you have worked with and whose judgment you trust, to also evaluate your technical skills. While another designer’s assessment will not necessarily be more accurate than your own, it can provide a valuable point of comparison. For example, if you rate your skill in developing 3-D form as “outstanding,” and the project manager to whom you report rates it “marginal,” it should be enlightening to discuss the discrepancy. In the same way, if you believe you would be a good design team manager, ask a designer who has worked under your direction to evaluate your management abilities. In some cases, people are surprised by the feedback.

Almost every specialty within the field of design—like medical equipment or toys, for example—requires a

grasp of certain technical skills and specialized information. If you are considering moving into another specialty area, it will be helpful to talk with designers working in that specialty to learn more about the kinds of knowledge and skills that are required. **You might consider attending local IDSA meetings and regional and national conferences where you can meet members who work in the areas that interest you.**

It is wise to contact some of these experts in advance to arrange a time to get together and talk. Bring questions and a sampling from your portfolio so they can give you a reading on how your present skills stack up against the field’s requirements and on what other skills you may need to develop. This is also a good way to do a “reality check” on whether the specialty is what you imagine it to be.

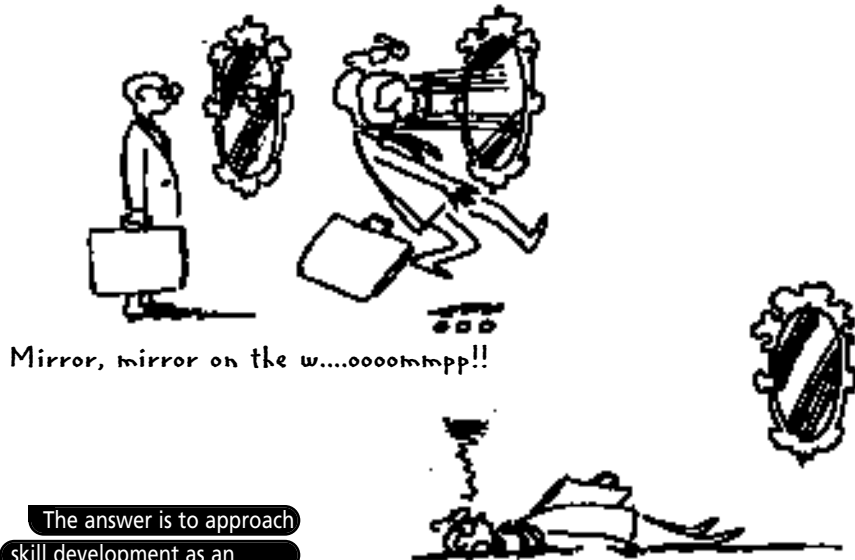
What do you do if you need to strengthen a few technical skills? It depends on the skills.

If you need to upgrade computer skills, contact local schools to see if they offer workshops or courses in

Alias, Pro Engineer or CAD. If you can't find a course, call the software companies and ask them to steer you to local training opportunities. If you need to sharpen your sketching or rendering skills, find a person who has the skills you need and offer to barter or pay them to teach you.

Professional organizations in the design or related fields are also possible sources of instruction. If you can't find a course for industrial designers, perhaps there's one for architects or engineers that could be adapted to your needs. Or, advertise in the local IDSA newsletter for other people who may be interested in organizing a course. Also, check out how-to books and instructional videos.

Job seekers frequently lament that they don't have time to look for a job and develop certain skills at the same time. No one expects you to put off looking for a job until you become a world-class Alias operator, a junior version of visualizer Syd Mead or as familiar with the principles of user interface design as an expert at IDEO.



**The answer is to approach skill development as an ongoing process.**

Decide that you will strive for continuous improvement throughout your professional life and incorporate skill development into your career planning. This strategy will position you to take advantage of fortuitous or sought-after opportunities. You will have the flexibility, confidence and skills to shift careers or specialties as change occurs in the economy or profession.

### Assessing Personal Skills

Another set of skills to inventory are the "personal" or "people" ones. Go through the characteristics listed on the next page to identify those qualities you possess and those you may want to acquire or enhance to improve the viability of your career plan.

For example, many designers think they'd like to be a design manager. To be a

successful one, they will need to possess or refine the characteristics listed on the chart under "management": developing goals, setting priorities, determining schedules, hiring and firing, and directing outside design firms.

You can get insights into your personality from the comments of others. Co-workers or supervisors may tell you, for example, that you are too outspoken, or that you're not good at meeting deadlines, or that you're calm under pressure or good with clients. You might ask people you work with and trust to critique your personal skills using as a guide the list provided on the next page.

You can also benefit by analyzing the personal skills of the successful people you work with. I've noticed that the people who become suc-

cessful in their careers tend to take advantage of opportunities that others forego. For example, when asked to give a talk, write an article, join an organization, meet new people, or go to a party or a trade show, they do. You never know where your next client or lead to a prospective employer may come from, or whose brother-in-law they might be. Successful people are also propelled by an enormous will to prevail, by their persistence and energy.

If you identify some personality traits that you'd like to develop, there are several approaches you can take. Individual and group therapy can provide you with insights and skills that will help you cope with situations that are difficult for you and present yourself in the most effective

# Industrial Design Evaluation

	Personal Skill	Yes	No	Sometimes Often	Comments
<b>Intelligence</b>	conceptual				
	organized				
	analytical				
	strategic				
	smart				
	independent				
	quick				
	resourceful				
	learns				
	flexible				
	sense of appropriate				
	visionary				
intuitive					
<b>Interpersonal</b>	team player				
	confident				
	competitive				
	ambitious				
	driven				
	balanced				
	persistent				
	dynamic				
	interested				
	helpful				
	outgoing				
	organized				
	reaches out				
	optimistic				
	courageous				
	sense of humor				
	polite				
	indiv. contributor				
	quiet				
	shy				
	slob-can't see clients				
	self-centered				
	incorrigible				
	star quality				
	assertive				
	enthusiastic				
	gives credit				
	good listener				
good presenter					
inspires					
loyal/trustworthy					
motivates					
persuasive					
praises					
says "thanks"					
supportive					
<b>Communications</b>	articulate				
	public speaker				
	writes well				
	listens well				
	speech impediment				
	English compreh.				
English speaker					

	Personal Skill	Yes	No	Sometimes Often	Comments
<b>Maturity</b>	cooperative				
	patient				
	understanding				
<b>Energy</b>	vigor				
	power				
	drive				
<b>Financial</b>	intensity				
	estimates				
	develops controls				
	sets budgets				
	tracks budgets				
	billing				
<b>Entrepreneurial Sales</b>	knows stock options				
	comprehends bonus				
	does marketing				
	builds relationships				
	has network				
	cold calls				
	develops mailings				
	closes				
	solo presenter				
	writes proposals				
<b>Management</b>	consults				
	prioritizes clearly				
	develops goals				
	achieves goals				
	analyzes time				
	plan work-own/others				
	schedules activities				
	coaches				
	hires				
	fires				
	does perform. eval.				
	selects/directs outside design firms				
<b>Other</b>	negotiates				
	nurturing				
	knows competition				
	does benchmarking				
	communicates upward & downward				
	delegates well				
	develops others				
	gives responsibility & trust				
	design society offices				
	lectures				
<b>Non-Design Pursuits</b>	publishes				
	teaches				
	arts				
	charities				
	culture				
	family				
hobbies					
local community					
other					
politics					

way. Or, you might explore workshops or courses in such skills as leadership, time management, organization or public speaking. Many people highly rate the Dale Carnegie and Toastmasters organizations.

I have two purposes in writing this series of articles. The first is to help you understand that the process of getting a job—or moving on to a better one—is something you can control. Of course, people will continue to “fall into” the perfect job, but the whims of Lady Luck are no substitute for career planning.

My second reason is to pass along one of the most important lessons I have learned as a recruiter: in order to be a successful designer, you need to have “people skills” as well as design talent. No matter how talented or motivated you are, in order to obtain the position of your choice, or achieve the career goals you have set for yourself, you must treat people with understanding, care and respect.

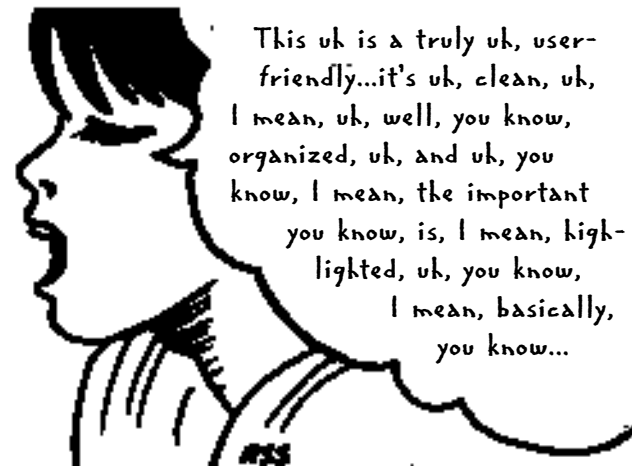
Most Americans have been taught to be highly competitive individuals and solitary performers (except in team sports). This makes it difficult for many American designers to learn some important behaviors essential

to success in the design field: how to use one another effectively and productively; how to perform in an orchestra of specialists trying to achieve a common goal; and how to care about others and take responsibility for them.

A particular challenge for many people today is the increased diversity of the workplace. I have met designers working in America who were born in Ghana, South Africa, Great Britain, India, Canada, the former Soviet Union, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand and many other places. This diversity can be exciting and enlightening, but it may also initially present difficulties for designers, both American and foreign-born, from more homogenous environments.

By actively helping to create a workplace based on mutual respect and acceptance, you improve the quality and productivity of the workplace for everyone. If others in your workplace don't do well, you can't do well.

The influx of women into the workplace has also required some designers to shift their attitudes and behaviors. Recently, I was in a neighboring country having lunch in a mall with the owner of a design firm and one of his American



investors. A tall, attractive 20-something blond woman in tight jeans walked by. The owner said to me, “Can you get me a designer that looks like that?”

The investor shot me an apologetic look and said to the owner, “You can't say that to an American.” That moment said a lot about how far things have come...and how far they still have to go.

A willingness to examine your personal qualities, attitudes and behaviors—and modify them, if need be, in response to changing circumstances and the goals you have set for yourself—will help you adapt to new situations and work smoothly and effectively with those around you. Also take time to identify and work on modifying self-defeating or self-destructive behaviors. Making these changes will give you the confidence that comes from feeling that you are in control of your life. It's never too later or too early to start, and it gets easier and

better with practice.

These are some behaviors and attitudes I suggest you think about when you are evaluating your qualities and characteristics and planning your career: We can treat people well or badly. We can think before we speak. We can volunteer to help others. We can be sensitive to how we affect and appear to others. We can put ourselves in other people's shoes. We can do more than what is asked or expected of us. We can try things. We can take risks and fail and recover. We can ask people if we can help them. We can ask people to help us. We can be persistent or we can give up. We can take responsibility for our situations or we can blame others for our unhappiness and play victim. We can see ourselves as having choices or being trapped.

The time invested in an inventory and assessment of your skills will enable you to better prepare your portfolio and yourself for successful interviews. ■

**a** successful portfolio is a memorable, self-explanatory strategic tool for enhancing your candidacy. Making yours successful takes planning, selectivity, breadth and a well-organized archive.

part 4: portfolio advice

Trust me: there is no need to ponder the creation of the greatest container of all times; it's the quality of the content that matters. And I know whereof I speak. I've seen over 60,000 portfolios. Here are some ways to make that content speak well for you.

A portfolio is a showcase of your technical skills, ideas, interests and experiences. You should avoid letting fancy presentation techniques overshadow the contents. Anyone from dumbos to aficionados may have to approve of your work and you before you get a coveted position. So your portfolio must be carefully planned to represent what you do better than anyone else, what you do very well, how you think and what you'd like to do more of.

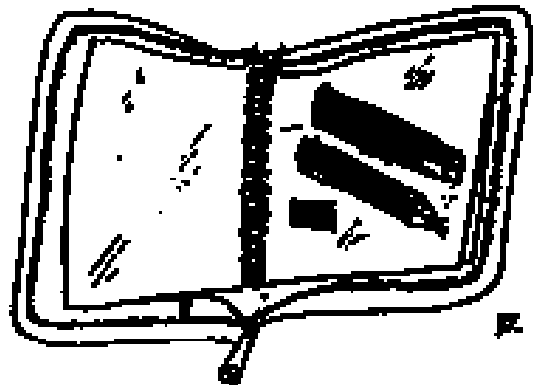
A portfolio is a work in progress; its content will evolve and change as you do. It is not a history book or a scrapbook: just because

you designed something, doesn't mean you have to show it to people.

A portfolio contains precious cargo. Design it to be safe from the wear and tear caused by weather and use, like coffee spills and greasy fingers. Make it easy to maintain, added to or changed and easy to keep fresh and clean. It should travel well, fitting into an overhead compartment or under an airplane seat.

Above all, make it easy to reproduce in case of fire or theft.

Everyone needs one. Even design managers, directors and vice presidents with no hands-on design responsibilities need portfolios to show the work that resulted from their direction. Teachers' portfolios, in addition to showing their own work, should contain examples or slides of the work of their students.



*I left it blank because I couldn't find the drafting before I left.*

## Starting a Portfolio

If you are a student, you should collect and carefully store in folders your best projects from the classroom, freelance and summer jobs and personal work. Label the folder covers with project name and dates. Inside, include the statement of the problem, your research, negatives, slides, Polaroids or photos of preliminary models, exploratory sketches, wireframe drawings, computer tests, drafting and all the other bits and pieces that you create before you select a final direction and finesse, detail and present it.

Begin to create your portfolio for getting your first job about five months before you graduate. To begin, lay your project folders side-by-side on a clean floor, large desktop or table. When you look through them to refresh your memory, eliminate any that contain work you are not proud of. Select from the remaining folders using the following or similar criteria to ensure a diversity of samples:

- Simple/complex (a serving platter/an environment for raising and harvesting talapia);
- Short/long (one-hour sketch explorations for a line of cutting tools/a one semester's research on ways to reorganize community transportation);

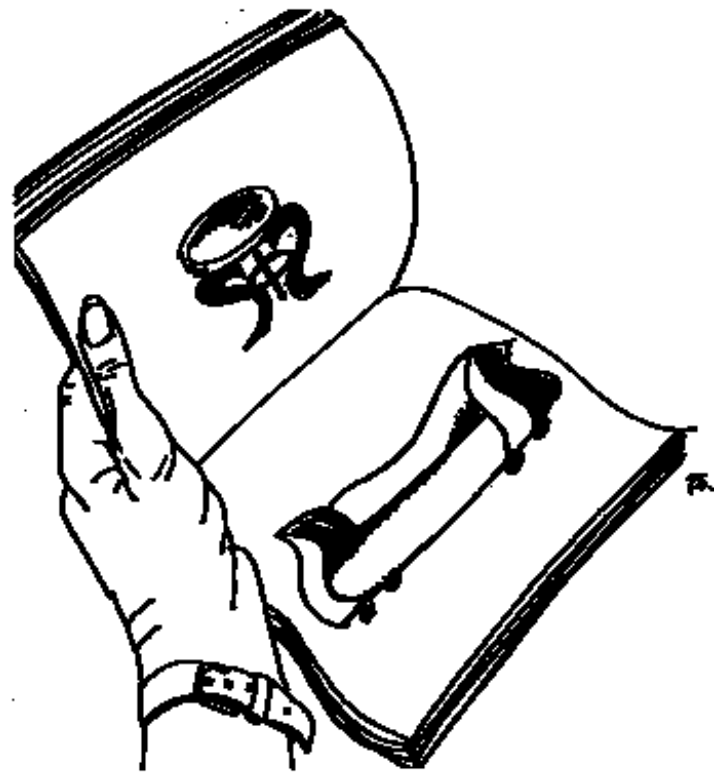
- Craft/digital (a carved infant's rocking chair/an animated sequence describing the interface for a portable copier);

- "Blue-sky"/limiting (a solar-powered individual water sports vehicle/a Phillips head screw driver made of recycled metals).

**Improve the work you did based on feedback. Make a list of what needs to be done to improve the quality of the work:** what slides need to be shot; draftings cleaned up; details added; final model retrieved from the school's archive and re-photographed; and adjustments made to the final design based on the last critique. What can you add that you've learned since doing the project that would make it more memorable? Then set aside time over the next several weeks to make the improvements.

Design the sequence to show projects as if you are designing a book with a beginning, middle and end. Use small layouts, on Post-its or something equally flexible, to sketch the work that will appear on each page. Anticipate the space you'll need for your final semester's work. Use the layout as a guide to put the content into place, making adjustments as necessary.

In addition to sketches, your portfolio should contain



**Designer:** I want to do exhibit design for museums...  
**Client:** So, where are your exhibit design samples?

some examples of personal projects, but not figure drawings or photos of fully or partially undressed significant others. (Yes, I have seen this!) These projects should emphasize the creation of complex form if you do this well, because clients are increasingly interested in seeing candidates able to transcend product shapes in the form of rectangles with rounded corners.

After you have put the portfolio together, ask your-

self: "Have I shown how I think? How I put down ideas and explore them? How I research? How I select a concept and work to finish it? The ways in which I draft, develop forms, make models, test them, sketch, do presentation drawings? Is it spotless?"

If there is anything in the portfolio you have to make excuses for or are not proud of, take it out. (When in doubt, take it out.) ▶

## Portfolio Q&A

**Q.** Do I have to show sketches or should I just show finished work?

**A.** **Always show sketches. The ability to draw well is magical and, if you have it, adds enormously to your allure and value.** A sequence of drawings is one of the best ways to show your thought process. Drawing is thinking through your hands. Good drawings help the ideas flow. Show drawings as well as your productions on Alias, CAD and Illustrator, or other computer-aided media.

**Q.** Why must the portfolio be designed to be self-explanatory?

**A.** Because you will often be asked to drop it off so that it can be seen before you are. (Abbreviated versions of portfolios or bound color copies can be substituted.)

**Q.** How do I get samples from employers or clients?

**A.** Ask for them. If they are not forthcoming, shoot slides of work in an unobtrusive manner, if possible, before it leaves your desk.

Some designers use evenings and Saturdays for this purpose. Run off two copies of everything if you are able. Some employers are not generous with samples for designers' portfolios and, by default, encourage devious practices. Obtain product literature from clients or distributors/dealers that show photos of finished products.

Ask sales people to photograph the trade show you designed.

**Q.** How many pieces should I show?

**A.** Enough to tell your story. Don't over-edit or overwhelm, but it's better to have too much than too little.

**Q.** I can't afford to make color prints. Are black and white photos okay?

**A.** Of course.

**Q.** How about a portfolio on a tray of slides?

**A.** We do not recommend 'all slide' portfolios. Everything looks better when reduced to a 35mm slide and everyone knows it. We believe that slides should be used to supplement a flat portfolio, to show what drawings, draftings, computer printouts and black and white photos cannot show, such as very large projects, magnification of details, scale, a walk-through experience and how something is used.

**Q.** How about portfolios on video tape, disk or CD-ROM?

**A.** These media can be used to supplement flat work, but not replace it. Use them to show sequences of user interface design, products in use, interaction design and animation or CD-ROM design work. It can be appropriate to show videos of human factors research. Always have flat back-up presentation material to show in case the people interviewing you don't have equipment to view the more exotic media.

**Q.** If I want to do toy design but don't have any such projects, what should I do?

**A.** Create at least five toy designs for your portfolio, documenting all the stages of your design process. Speak to toy retailers and parents. Observe children. Include work for preschool, game, boys, girl and so on. Get critiques of your concepts from both parents and children. Make alterations where necessary.

**Q.** I've been working in the automobile business for five years and I never want to see another car as long as I live. What can I do to get out of this?

**A.** Select a few categories of products where what you have learned about designing cars is transferable: operator cabs and controls, tractors, lawn equipment, safety, metal forming and plastics, CAD/CAM, human factors, what appeals to consumers, color forecasting, finishes, digitizing, accessibility for repair and maintenance and so on. Then design at least five different nonautomotive products, carrying them through all stages of the design process, and add them to your core portfolio.

**Q.** The automobile business pays very well. Can I ask for a raise in the next job if it's not in that business?

**A.** Usually not. Don't expect to get a raise in salary when changing from one specialty to another; you may actually have to take a cut in pay. Just be thankful for the opportunity.

**Q.** All the work I've done in the past three years is considered confidential and won't be on the market for another year. What can I show?

**A.** Do not betray confidences. Rather, re-work school projects that relate to your current work, or develop projects that are similar to the confidential ones. You may also develop portfolio projects for this type of situation by strategically freelancing or volunteering.

## The General vs. the Industry-Specific Portfolio

Once you've graduated (or if you're graduating from a school with a very precise major like automotive design), you have to decide whether to show a range of abilities to a variety of potential employers, or to only show industry-specific employers what you have done in relation to those industries. Our experience shows that industry-specific portfolios can impede a career. What if there are very few jobs in the office furniture or toy industry when you graduate? What if a parent's ill health confines you to a geographic area where no firms are engaged in designing aircraft interiors? What if, after making the rounds, none of the automobile companies offer you a position?

**My advice is to prepare a balance of portfolio content, in case you need to seek employment outside your area of first preference.**

You may keep the wider range of work out of the portfolio until you need it. Or, you may find it adds quality and depth to your specialized portfolio. ➤

## The Portfolio Container

While you refine the content, you should choose a portfolio container. The most common are the attache case or plastic/leather case, with or without zipper, enclosing a binder for acetate sleeves. Decide whether you need a tray for slides to fit a Kodak Carousel projector (the lingua franca of projectors). Do you need plastic sleeves for 35mm slides or larger color transparencies and other presentation media like a video tape? (If you will show 35mm slides in a sleeve, be sure to carry a loupe.)

Select the size of your primary case or binder (yes, you can have more than one) according to the size of most of your samples, what you can comfortably carry and what fits into the overhead compartment of an airplane. (You don't want to trust your portfolio to baggage handlers.) For industrial designers, we recommend acetate sleeves that measure at least 11" x 14" but 18" x 24" is best.

The zippered binder-type portfolio protects samples, eliminates weight from mattes or mounting material (necessary in attache cases) and maintains the sequence as organized. When several people from a potential employer's organization look through loose samples, they get worn and can be lost.

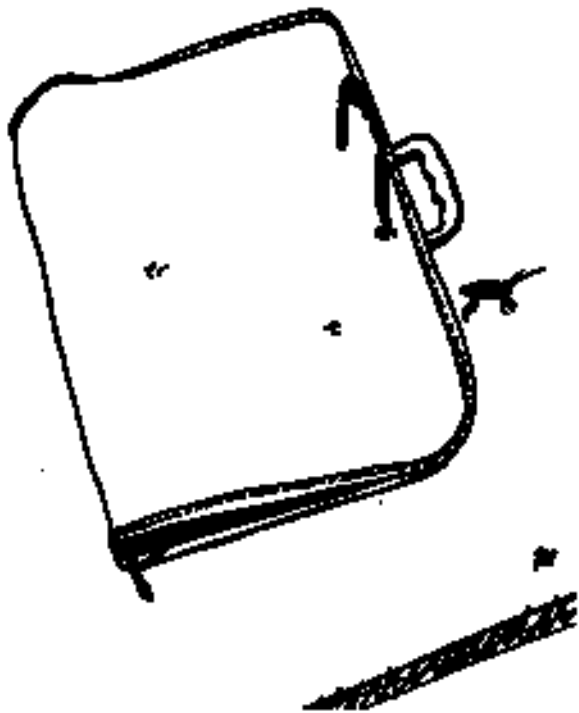
Combining ways of showing different types of content allows for maximum flexibility. Art Center graduates use a combination of flat work in acetate sleeve binders; several paper bound individual project work books that show the design process for each; and, often, a tray of slides. (The slides do not repeat images shown in the flat portfolio.)



## Portfolio as History

Experienced designers must think carefully about the appropriateness of showing examples of design work done much earlier in their careers. To many potential employers, especially those who are not designers, older work simply looks outdated, which may work against you. An interview is not the time for a history lesson.

Is showing school work appropriate once you've been out of school a few years? It depends. If you have three to five years of experience and the only project you have that relates to a prospective employer's needs is something done in school, by all means show it, if it is well done. If it needs a bit of polish, polish it. If you have ten or more years of experience, revisit an old project only if it has merit today, or can be reworked so that it does.



Ok sorry, I left it in the basement.

## Portfolio Ethics

**Never show to anyone, especially a prospective employer, any work considered confidential by your current or most recent employer or client.** Always

be clear about what you were responsible for on a project, say if you worked on it with others or if it was a revision of a previous design.

## Portfolio Evolution

By the time designers have three to five years of experience, you may have more than enough samples of professional work to replace the schoolwork in your portfolio. We suggest you continue the process of collecting work in clearly marked folders and keep it in a safe place. Make it part of your professional practice skill package.

With an abundant archive, you can select appropriate portfolio material based on whom you are going to interview with. Look for associations to make from your experiences with the needs of the potential employer/client (see the eighth Q&A) to select material. If you are really ambitious, do what is suggested in the seventh Q&A. Most designers have a core of portfolio work that they supplement from such an archive.

## Portfolio Additions Beyond Design

The ability to write well and clearly is another skill you can demonstrate by having available examples of proposals, contact reports and correspondence, vetted of course of confidential information. If you find yourself continually asked on interviews for certain types of materials, make sure you provide them on the next one.

## Portfolio Protection

Take slides of your portfolio and important project folders. Put one set in a safety deposit box, or in a different building from the one where you keep your portfolio, and update as necessary.

Along with a well-written resume, an excellent portfolio will go far in demonstrating your abilities, intelligence, sense of style and accomplishments to prospective employers and clients.

**The final step in getting a job involves mastering the art of interviewing.** ■

**a** brilliant portfolio can't ensure you'll get the job if your personal presentation and interviewing skills need polish. Here's a run-down of how to present yourself to any prospective employer in order to get that industrial design job!

part 5: interviewing advice

Prepare. Learn in advance as much as you can about potential employers' lines of business and how they are managing the design work they are doing. **Think about the best way to describe your experiences in order to interest, relate to and influence the people you are going to meet.** Develop ways to describe your selected projects so they echo the purposes of the prospective firm. They want to know what it is about your work and experiences that are relevant to their needs.

Talk their language. Some portfolio reviewers will not be designers. Develop metaphors to help them understand the value of what you do. Also be prepared to explain why a concept, design or system was a commercial success. Show that you understand that design is but one element in the success of a product, communication, service or environment by discussing



*I figured I could be casual for a Saturday interview.*

how your work increased sales, provided more value to the customer, opened new markets, helped establish a brand or whatever is relevant. These points are especially important if your design portfolio does not show solutions to similar problems that confront the prospective company's business or industry.

Corporate human resources specialists will interview you from a different point of view than the hiring manager and other people you may work with.

**Human resources staff want to ascertain your ability to fit into the company culture.**

(They leave the measurement of your professional skills to the hiring manager.) The human resource specialist will explain company goals, compensation structure, bonus system, stock options, benefits, housing and cost of living. They will try to learn how you adapt to change, how educable you are, your short- and long-term objectives, your energy level, your personal and lifestyle situation (within the bounds of equal opportunity standards), if you have the potential to grow and take on additional responsibility or a leadership role and whatever else is important to being successful in the company.

Smile. Be nice to everyone, including parking lot attendants, receptionists and telephone operators. Make as many friends as you can throughout the interviewing process. Say "please" and "thank you" more frequently than usual.

But the conversational ball. Establish a balance between talking and listening. Don't try to dominate the interview. Don't over-explain, pontificate or lecture to the people who are interviewing you.

Never "bad-mouth" your current or past employers or clients. (Need we say more?)

Be a sympathetic listener. Ask open-ended questions (questions that can't be answered with a simple "yes" or "no") that draw out people so you can learn about them and how you may meet their needs.



*My alarm didn't go off!*

Show genuine interest and enthusiasm. Be lively and expressive. Never speak in a monotone. Don't be afraid to laugh. Make eye contact. Establish rapport as soon as possible with your interviewer(s); one of the most important criteria you are being evaluated on is whether or not you will fit into the group.

Sharpen your conversational skills. Be prepared to discuss a variety of subjects most people are interested in, such as music, sports, mystery novels and so forth, especially if you are spending the day with a potential employer or dining with them. Remind yourself to be open, candid, direct and friendly.

Use simple, easy-to-understand language. This is especially important in multilingual situations. Speak slowly and clearly but in a natural manner to ensure that you are understood. Avoid jargon, trite expressions and clichés.

Rehearse. Ask your friends, associates or co-workers whose judgment you trust how you can improve the way you communicate. Ask them what they would want to know about people interviewing with their companies. Anticipate questions from the people who will be interviewing you and prepare appropriate answers.

Believe in yourself. If you're not excited and enthusiastic about your portfolio, no one else will be.

**Be honest and direct. If you are excited by and interested in the position you are interviewing for,** say so, and ask about the next steps.

Send thank you notes. Mail a "thank you" to everyone you interview with and follow up promptly on any requests made for additional information or samples. If you have not been interviewed for an open position, but the people you meet seem enthusiastic about you and your work, keep in touch. Call every six weeks or so, and send clippings or notes that may interest them.

## Personal Presentation and Other Stuff About Interviewing.

Project a positive attitude. On the morning of the interview, play music that's uplifting and makes you feel good.

Be well-groomed. For most of you, hygiene is not an issue. For the small percentage who were absent when these things were taught, I offer the following advice: Before you go to an interview—take a shower or bath; wash your hair; brush your teeth (carry breath spray or mints in case you need them just before your meetings); clean your fingernails (women's nails should be short to moderate in length); use a deodorant or antiperspirant and if you use perfume or after-shave lotion, apply it sparingly.

Dress appropriately. For men, suits are always appropriate. If you're not sure about what is considered proper interviewing attire, call the secretary or assistant to the person you are going to meet to check local customs, especially in Southern California.

For women, business-like suits and dresses are best. The color black, which is considered quite fashionable for every occasion in New York, does not always look correct in other parts of the world. Pants are usually not the best choice for a first meeting. Wear stockings. Shoes should be simple and closed—no sandals or very high heels. Exceptions can, of course, be made in the entertainment or fashion industry. In most situations, though, clothing should be neat, natural and not attention-grabbing. You want the focus to be on your mind and portfolio, not your outfit.

Know logistics. A few days before your scheduled appointment, ask the recruiter or receptionist for driving or any other type of travel directions if necessary, even if you are taking a taxi. If there is extreme weather, prepare your schedule and yourself accordingly. Get the location of recommended parking and a parking permit, if needed. If flying to an appointment at the request of a client, inquire about whether or not you will be picked up or are expected to rent a car, take a taxi or catch a bus. Ask if the client would purchase the ticket and overnight it to you. The recruiter should be able to arrange this. ➤

Arrive early. Plan to arrive at the site of your appointment between 15 and 30 minutes before the scheduled time. Planes and trains can be late, and traffic, especially in extremes of weather, can be unpredictable. You or the taxi may have difficulty finding the address, parking or the particular office once you are in a building or building complex. If it is very hot, you will welcome the extra time to get cool in the reception area or rest room. If it is raining, you will be able to unwrap the protection on the slide projector and/or portfolio you are carrying, remove wet clothing and footwear and have time to re-groom yourself. If it is cold and snowy, you can remove the protective gear you are wearing, change from boots to shoes and hide all of the wet stuff in a closet.

**Be patient. If you must wait for the person with whom you will be meeting, use the time wisely.** Read your resume. Go over the points you plan to make and the questions you want to ask. Read company materials usually provided in the waiting area. Be interested in your surroundings. Do not listen to a walkman. Do not become angry if the waiting time is excessive. Give people the benefit of the doubt. You want to be in a positive frame of mind.

Prepare in advance answers to the following frequently asked questions about portfolios:

- *Junior designers:* How long did this take to do; what was the problem you were asked to solve; how would this be made; what material would you use for this; what would be the retail cost; why is this bicycle better than those already on the market?

- *Experienced designers:* What was your contribution to this project; how well did this do in the market; is it still being sold; in retrospect, would you have done this differently; how did you get engineering to go along with this; I saw this product in another portfolio—is this your drawing; if these types of keyboards have caused repetitive strain disorder in the past, why design another one; how did these colors get selected?

Prepare in advance answers to the following frequently asked interview questions: Why did you leave your last position? or Why do you want to change jobs? Why are you interested in us? What do you do best? What do you think you could do for us? You've been working on your own for the last ten years, doing everything yourself, so what makes you think you can work under someone else at this point? What is the dollar value of the projects you handled in 1989? In 1993? How would

you describe your management style? You've been working for a corporation/consulting office for the last ten years, so what makes you think you can adjust to working in a consulting office/corporation? What was the most successful program you ever managed and how was the success measured? And, consultants may ask, Can you bring any business with you?

There are no right answers to the above questions, but there are ones that will work better for you than others. The same is true of your attitude; a positive one and your persistence are more important influences on your ability to get a good job than what seems like the lack of local opportunities, the bleak economic situation or how many restrictions are imposed by your personal situation. Don't give up. It is never too late to begin building good relationships with people to develop into a network that can be used to help others as well as yourself. ■



Would you like me to leave any of this with you?

### Optimize Your Online Career Search

There are many sites that post job openings. Limit yourself to checking out no more than two or three of the general ones. Too much information can be as useless as too little. At this point, there is no standard way of searching for industrial design jobs on general job-posting sites. The best general job boards are probably the ones with the most users. Currently, industrial design companies use them to find engineers and other specialists, but not to find designers. In the future, this may change.

My advice is don't start with the huge Web sites that list thousands of jobs, most not in your field. Instead, go directly to the ones aimed at finding and attracting you, especially [www.idsa.org](http://www.idsa.org). If

you specialize in graphics, user interface, interiors and/or retail design, other sites worth checking out are [www.commart.com](http://www.commart.com), [www.ac4d.org](http://www.ac4d.org), [www.segd.org](http://www.segd.org), [www.ispo.org](http://www.ispo.org), [www.dmi.org](http://www.dmi.org) and [www.nynma.org](http://www.nynma.org). Listings may be linked to the home pages of companies posting the jobs. If not, they provide e-mail addresses, URLs and other ways to make contact.

Next, go to [www.CORE77.com](http://www.CORE77.com), an ID community/resource site started by two Pratt industrial design graduate students in 1995. It will link you to my site, [www.RitaSueSiegelResources.com](http://www.RitaSueSiegelResources.com), which has valuable career-related information like resume writing and interviewing tips, as well as job listings.

### Online Career Resources

In the future, most design companies will probably post their job vacancies on their Web sites, but an informal survey of IDSA members in November 1999, revealed that few do presently. Most said they advertise on the IDSA and CORE sites, or work with headhunters. Large corporations also use these sites. But, be sure to do your research by going to the specific sites of companies for which you want to work. You can find many company URLs at [www.dotcomdirectory.com](http://www.dotcomdirectory.com). If there are no design job openings on the company's Web site, send the company an e-mail note with a resume.

Giant online job boards or banks like [www.Monster.com](http://www.Monster.com) provide good information on preparing resumes, doing research and interviewing. Most online job boards encourage free resume posting for company recruiters and headhunters to review. ➤

**J**ob hunters: The Web was made for you! It provides an unprecedented source of free information about the job market, the skills and experiences employers of designers seek and (many times) salary ranges. On the Web, you can see the work that companies are doing, look at resumes and portfolios of other designers and read conference presentations you've missed. There has never been a better way to see what is going on in your profession. And, it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition, some sites offer e-mail notification to let you know when jobs are posted that relate to your experience. Some allow you to apply for jobs instantly, to chat with recruiters and to look at company profiles. On some, you can complete online forms that are compiled in databases to be viewed by employers.

Companies can use services that select the best sites on which to post their job listings. These systems put resumes received in a database for future use. Services also exist that direct job seekers to jobs posted on corporate sites on the Web.

In addition, job listings aimed at recent grads and alumni are sometimes found on a school's career center or alumni office Web site.

You can find additional business information about corporations and those of their competitors at [www.Hoovers.com](http://www.Hoovers.com), [www.Thomasregister.com](http://www.Thomasregister.com), and others. Some are free some charge a modest fee. Investment advisory sites have information about public companies.

### Check in with Headhunters

Before contacting a headhunting firm, check out the headhunter's Web site to see if there is a particular position that interests you. If so, refer to it specifically in your response. Be sure to highlight your experience relative to the job you are seeking. Unless otherwise instructed, send your resume only once. If there is nothing posted

that directly relates to your interests, experience or geographic preference, e-mail your resume and briefly describe what type of job you are seeking, your salary range and relocation options.

### Technical Specialists

If you want to work with companies that use a specific technology or software, contact their online special interest groups, usually linked to the sites of companies that sell them. There will also be links to customers (potential employers) or success stories about them (another source of company names).

### Set Up a Career Search Tracking System

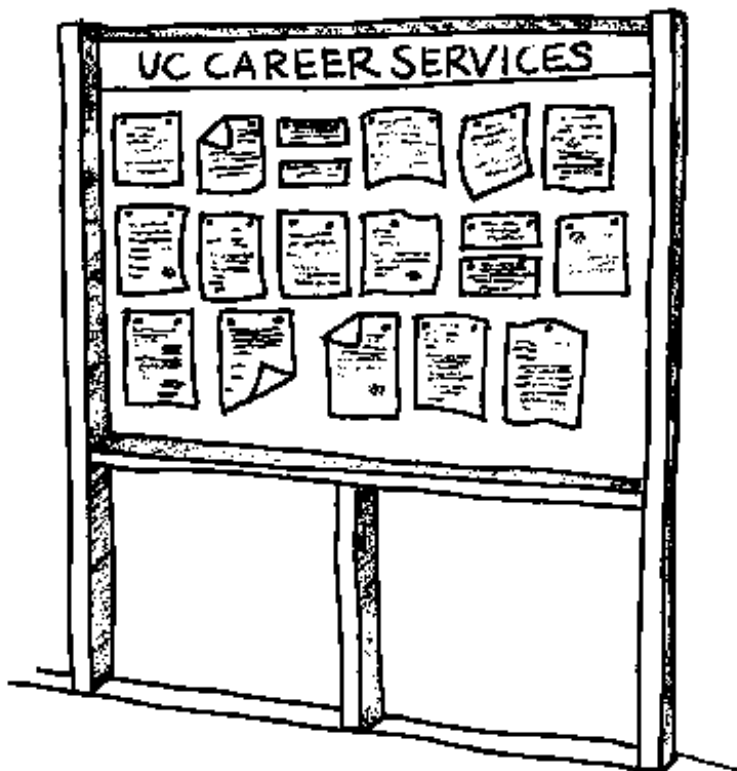
**Set up a system to track the employers and headhunters you contact, and make a note of what you send them.** Keep track of where you found the listings, the reference numbers, job titles, position descriptions, etc. When you respond, refer to the same information. Remember, hundreds of people may respond to a given job opening. You want to make the reason for your contact clear to the recipient. By keeping track of the jobs for which you apply, you will be able to communicate more intelligently when a prospective employer contacts you, especially if it's by

phone. Record the name of the person who calls, the content of the conversation and the next step in the process. Do the same with e-mail communication or other types of contact. Comply with requests for samples or additional information. After a few days, check to see if what you sent was received. No e-mail system is foolproof.

### Thinking of Moving?

Don't miss [www.CareerPath.com](http://www.CareerPath.com). Use it to search the classified ads across the country from most of the major US newspapers, as well as some potential employer Web sites. If the newspaper you want is not listed, go to the newspaper's site.

Find housing information online by location, amenities and price. Many real estate company sites provide local demographic information, crime level, school performance ratings and mortgage rates. Compare cost of living data for the US at [www.virtualelocation.com](http://www.virtualelocation.com) and [www.homefair.com](http://www.homefair.com). Find currency conversion information at [www.xe.net/ucc/](http://www.xe.net/ucc/). Runzheimer International (800.558.1702) can provide a comprehensive international cost of living comparisons.



How quaint! A real message board.

RIS

## Other Hints

Alert your friends and acquaintances by e-mail about your job search. Refer them to where your resume is posted and your URL. Referrals from friends result in many interviews and hires.

## Developing an Online Resume

I have read dozens of articles about how to write resumes that "computers can sink their electronic teeth into." Companies and recruiters are likely to ask you to send your resume by e-mail, put it into their electronic form or send it as a Web page. **A resume sent electronically has to be downloadable, uploadable and, in many instances, searchable.** Even if you mail or fax your resume, include your e-mail address, URL and cell phone and pager numbers if you are especially mobile.

In larger companies, it is less likely that the resume's first viewer and sorter will be a human being. If you send a resume to a human resources department by snail mail or fax, it may be scanned to be logged in, categorized and passed on.

Companies that hire hundreds and thousands of people a year are constantly striving to make the job placement process more efficient. In doing so, they prefer

resumes that are formatted for easy and accurate computer scanning; use appropriate nouns and key words for database searching; and are uploadable so that they can be stored in a file format that a computer can easily digest. Learn how to format. Learning how and why it's done will improve the way you present your skills and experiences, and your resume will be keyword searchable when prospective employers do eventually process industrial designer resumes in that fashion.

## Formatting

Consult the instructions on how to format resumes for all digital transmission situations, including scanning and system sorting, at [www.dbm.com/jobguide/eresume.html](http://www.dbm.com/jobguide/eresume.html), <http://cweekly.wa.com/grw.html> and [www.eresumes.com](http://www.eresumes.com).

At present, there are two simple, standard ways to format an electronic resume:

1. ASCII files (plain text) can be pasted into the body of an e-mail. This format is recognized by most operating systems, but plain text is not visually stimulating.
2. The resume can be formatted in Word (you can save it in a PC format even if you are using MAC) and send it as an attachment. This way is not foolproof due to the PC/MAC compatibility issue.

## Not All Companies Want E-Resumes

Many employers ask candidates to e-mail resumes. **If the employer or employment ad does not specifically ask for an e-mailed resume, send the resume by mail.** Many employers are not yet prepared to handle resumes via e-mail. If a resume via e-mail is requested, plain text simplifies the process of uploading, copying and sending it. If systems are compatible, send your resume in Word. It will look better and be easier to read. When responding to job postings, customize the resume to the needs of each prospective employer.

If you have a Web site, you can format your resume in hypertext so that the receiver can link to it from your resume. Find hyperlink information in AOL on the Write Mail screen under the Mail Extras icon. If AOL is not your server, check with your internet service provider (ISP) about how to do this.

## Test It

Test the viability of your resume as a digital document. E-mail it in all formats to yourself and friends who use different ISPs, browsers and operating systems. Make adjustments accordingly.

## Posting Resumes Online

If you want to post your resume online, the sites you select will state the required formats, as well as the way to respond to their listing of jobs. Sometimes the job listing will state a preference. Online job descriptions tend to be longer and provide more details than classified ads. Pay attention to the needs of the prospective employer when responding. Target your cover letter and resume to what they are seeking.

## Confidentiality

If you want to keep your job search a secret from your current employer, use initials or your first name or disguise your name. For an address, use a PO Box, mailing service, a friend's address, or none at all. Describe what your employer does without naming the company. Get an e-mail address and voicemail for job hunting and contacting purposes that don't disclose who you are. Some of the large job posting sites describe other ways to maintain confidentiality.

## Cover Letters

E-mail cover letters should state the type of position wanted or refer to the specific job to which you are responding. Also, note why you left your last job or your motivation for making a change, as well as the salary range desired and geographic preferences. ➤



E-mail cover letters need to be as clear as printed ones, and they must have the same characteristics as those described in Part 2 of this booklet. Fight the temptation to respond too casually in the back-and-forth e-mails that may take place between you and the potential employer during the qualifying process. The 'telephone tag phenomena' often makes e-mail communication more efficient than a phone call.

And it's a great way for prospective employers to see your language skills and your ability to think clearly.

E-mail is often the most efficient way for prospective employers and headhunters to make initial contact with you, especially if they have failed in their first attempt to reach you by phone. They can ask questions, request samples, suggest appropriate times for you to contact them and describe the next step in the application process. Most prospective employers and headhunters do not have time to respond with a rejection. Note: **E-mail is not perfect; always check to see if your resume was received.**

### Scanning: The Potential Enemy

Scanning can be the downfall of resumes that are faxed or mailed even when carefully prepared for the process. Today's scanning technology is imperfect. To increase the chance of your resume scanning well, mail an original, unfolded resume

to a prospective employer or a recruiter. A copy or a fax will not scan as well. To help your resume survive, it should be in black letters on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Avoid background graphics and drop out type. Also, check guidelines on the "how to prepare a digital resume" on the Web sites noted earlier.

### Sending Samples Before Interviews

Minis: The images in minis are usually too small and do not make it easy for a prospective employer or headhunter to accurately review your work. In addition, they are difficult to store. As an initial mode of contact, minis communicate a lack of common sense. Minis are, however, a good "leave behind" after an interview.

Although some job applicants are sending samples on disks or CDs, potential formatting problems make this endeavor risky. For now, using high-resolution, 8 1/2" x 11" color copies is the most efficient way to show a few samples. Once prospective employers or headhunters see relevant samples, they are more likely to look at your Web site or disk.

By the time broadband is a fact of life, or maybe before, most designers will have personal Web sites. This may not eliminate the need for samples on paper, but it will be seamless for a recruiter or prospective employer to go from an e-mailed resume to a Web site.

In the future, PC/MAC compatibility will not be an issue.

**At present, after reading a designer's cover letter and resume, half the prospective employers I polled said they would go directly to a Web site without first requesting samples.** Some still want to see samples first. One employer said to me: "We set aside some time every week so that, as a group, we can look at all the resumes and samples that come in. This way, we compare them to one another."

### Create a Web Site

An industrial designer from the Netherlands said to me that he came to America in 1996 thanks to the fact that he created his personal Web site using a simple html tutorial. One free downloadable tutorial is Netscape Composer available at <http://home.netscape.com/communicator/composer/v4.0/>. It is a word processing program into which you can add links to other pages. It saves information in html. After testing the pages of images and text with links to each other using the Netscape Navigator browser, the pages can be posted on the Web. Contact an ISP to find free memory space to post your personal pages. Once online, anyone with a Netscape Navigator browser or Microsoft's Internet Explorer can view it. In addition, the tutorials and archives on [www.CNET.com](http://www.CNET.com) and [www.Webmonkey.com](http://www.Webmonkey.com) provide all the information

you need to build your own Web site.

### Characteristics of a good Web site:

- It should download easily and quickly;
- Avoid elements that make it hard to navigate within the site;
- Include images that are not too big or too small; jpeg and gif formats are preferred;
- Create a good balance between text, images and information structure;
- Clearly identify the work presented (school projects vs. job-related projects); and
- Use clean typography—such as Times, Arial, Geneva, Helvetica, Swiss—which most browsers recognize.

Suggestions: **Design the viewer's experience without compromising the site's ability to load quickly.** Animate products to show how they function. (Or use stills from different angles.) Web-site viewers are generally scanners, not readers. Present information using key words, subheads and bulleted lists. Include your resume. Make links from your resume to particular images.

Not every designer has the skill to design and make an excellent Web site. If you can't, make a deal with someone who can. Give them credit so prospective employers will not assume you have that skill.

## On Guard for Interviews

Now that you've applied for jobs electronically, expect calls from strangers. Be on guard. Don't act surprised when you answer the phone. The caller may be an assistant to a hiring manager, a human resources person, a corporate recruiter, the person doing the hiring or a headhunter. Refer to your tracking system. The calls are a natural outcome of making so many contacts using the Internet.

## Preparing for Calls

Telephone interviewing is an increasingly important part of the qualifying process. If you receive a call at work and are unable to talk, say: "Thanks so much for calling. I really want to talk with you, but this is not a good time. Can we make an appointment to talk later?" If you get a call at home at an inconvenient time, make the same response.

When you are job hunting:

- Remove silly messages from your voicemail.
- Put a message on your voicemail noting the best days, times and numbers to call in order to reach you.
- Answer each call as if it were from a prospective employer.
- Have paper and pen near the phone to take messages.
- Have easy access to your job search tracking system.

- Tell those with whom you live that you may receive calls from potential employers so that they can respond and act accordingly.
- Tell young children not to answer the phone.

## Telephone Demeanor

Telephone interviewing is a sport with its own rules. Be pleasant, upbeat and cooperative with the caller. The caller may be an assistant setting up a conference call or a human resources person wanting to verify dates of employment. Few potential employers are experts at telephone interviewing.

Be prepared to answer and ask questions. See Part 5 of this booklet for some questions that may be asked. It is not unusual for calls from company recruiters or hiring managers to last over an hour. **Ask about the company and position, especially if the caller doesn't sound like an experienced telephone interviewer.** You don't want to take off two days from work to fly across the country for an interview to find the job is not a good fit for you or to be asked the unexpected. Be enthusiastic, responsive, articulate, courteous and good humored. If after the call you are very interested in the position and the company, say so and try to convince the caller to meet you. At the end of the interview, find out the next step in the process.

## Calls From Headhunters

If you receive a call from a headhunter you haven't contacted, be nice. If you are not looking for a position, say so, but hear them out. You may know someone who qualifies for the position about which they are calling. Describe a job that might tempt you in the future. Build a relationship with a headhunter by providing names and becoming a source of information. It may pay off in the future with a call about a great opportunity that you might not have otherwise received.

After you contact headhunters, they may call you to ask questions, get samples or set up an interview. If there are lots of questions, they may suggest making an appointment for the call. Exhibit the same clarity,

enthusiasm and courtesy as you would with an employer. Think of headhunters as surrogates for prospective employers.

## Other Interviewing Technology

The Internet has put a few new twists on interviewing procedures. Flying a number of applicants in for personal meetings is expensive. There is software available to allow recruiters from large companies to conduct interviews on the Internet in real time. It also allows for broadcast quality video transmission and, with faster connections, a smooth flow of conversation. Video conferencing is a reality and not overly expensive. ➤

## THE BERLITZ GUIDE TO EMPLOYER-CANDIDATE FAMOUS LAST WORDS

EMPLOYERESE	ENGLISH
Seeing lots of people.	Don't call us.
Won't be happy here.	TOO ambitious.
TOO Creative.	Not too bright.
TOO expensive.	got to be kidding.
Decided not to hire.	Lost the business.
Great to hear from you.	Who is this person?
Needs people Skills.	Boring!

By  
Robert P. Grant

## Interviewing with Real and Virtual Portfolios

The promise of seamless technology is still a promise. The most reliable form of portfolio is still the “regular” one, as described in Part 4 of this booklet. Sketch books are best shown in person, as are large-scale images or a set of drawings.

### “Mixed Media” Presentations

If you plan to do a “mixed media” presentation during the interview, call ahead to find out what equipment is available. If what you need isn’t available, bring it with you or arrange to get it there. **Keep in mind that something can always go wrong during a presentation of this type, so be sure to print out some screen captures to have on hand.** Make sure to rehearse your presentation.

If you are planning to use a mixed media presentation, make it interesting. Orchestrate the down time when you “jump media.” For

example, arrange for the last item in your portfolio to require discussion while you set up the media presentation. Select each form of media for its intrinsic abilities to present different aspects of your work.

### To Be Continued...

In the November 22, 1999, issue of *Fortune*, Warren Buffett noted that in the early 1900s there were over 2,000 US companies that made cars and trucks, all of which had names followed by ‘Motors.’ Similarly, today, most career-related sites, search engines and e-mail and music providers and shopping sites are followed by ‘.com.’ That said, by the time you read this, the sites recommended might be gone, but there will be others to take their places. **As you discover good career-related information sources on the Internet, share them with IDSA.** IDSA will post them on its Web site. ■

## In Concluding this Series

After reading the articles in this six-part series, several friends asked me: “Why are you giving away your secrets? You’ll put yourself out of business.” Wanna bet? I believe my business and track record of successful matchmaking will significantly improve if you use the information in these articles.

**In my work, there is little time to coach candidates on self-assessment, interviewing behavior and fixing up portfolios.** Many of the matches I try to make are thwarted by such reasons as: “She showed up for the interview in a pants suit and that simply isn’t done around here;” “He just doesn’t have the energy level we think a person in

that job should have;” “The stuff he showed us was too conservative; he’s probably got the talent to do what we need, but he isn’t showing it in his portfolio and we can’t take any chances.” Much of the information in these articles is common sense. Yet many designers self-destruct in interviews because no one ever explained positive interviewing behavior to them.

In the job market, by showcasing your unique abilities you can demonstrate rather than explain how, as an industrial designer, you can make the world a better place. I am happy to provide you with the information necessary to gain a competitive edge in this profession. Use it well, and good luck. ■





IDSAs are dedicated to communicating the value of industrial design to society, business and government. IDSA provides leadership to and promotes dialog between practice and education. As a professional association, it serves its diverse membership by recognizing excellence, promoting the exchange of information and fostering innovation.

**IDSAs communicate the value of design by:**

- publishing *Innovation*, the professional journal of industrial design practice and education in America;
- organizing a national conference each year, the largest gathering of industrial designers, educators and business executives in the US;
- organizing a national education conference, held in different regions each year, attracting the largest gathering of industrial design educators anywhere in the US.;
- conducting the annual Industrial Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) under the sponsorship of *Business Week* magazine, and distributing information on the winners to the business, general and international design press;
- providing statistical research studies on professional practice and the structure and financing of consulting and corporate design organizations;
- speaking for the industrial design community to federal agencies and state governments, and testifying before Congress on design-related issues;

- serving as the primary information resource for national newspapers, magazines and television networks;
- acting as a clearinghouse for design information requested by the general public; and
- maintaining a regularly updated World Wide Web site at [www.idsa.org](http://www.idsa.org).

**IDSAs provide leadership to and promote dialog between practice and education by:**

- providing definitive guidance regarding curricula structure and essential competencies for professional education through its membership in the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD);
- organizing five annual district conferences in concert with the education community;
- sponsoring the annual Student Merit Awards for the outstanding graduating senior from each industrial design program;
- conducting annual Student Chapter Officer Orientation Programs (SCOOPs) in each of the districts;

- funding and administering both undergraduate and graduate scholarships;
- maintaining a national network of student IDSA chapters and faculty advisers at accredited schools;
- sustaining an on-going roster of volunteer professional designers as student mentors;
- providing a substantial base of information specifically for students and educators on its World Wide Web site;
- producing and distributing to all schools an annual student informational poster about IDSA resources; and
- providing copies of the "Getting an ID Job" book to all graduating seniors at no charge.

**IDSAs serve their members by:**

- revising and publishing the annual Directory of Industrial Designers;
- supporting a network of 27 active chapters located in cities across the US;
- distributing *Design Perspectives*, the monthly newsletter to members;
- organizing the annual national and district conferences, prime venues for networking and information exchange;

- establishing and keeping current a professional Code of Ethics and Ethical Practice;
- maintaining member groups focused on specialized practice and broader issues, such as ecological responsibility, human factors and user interface;
- recognizing outstanding contributions to design through the Fellowship, Education, Personal Recognition and Special Awards;
- serving as the central national source for design information, including government and business activities, employment opportunities and design competitions;
- maintaining a substantial presence on the World Wide Web; and
- performing as a vital member of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) and fostering international membership in a dialog with IDSA.

IDSAs mission & values

# special student discounts

## 2000 IDSA Directory of Industrial Designers

This quintessential networking and business referral tool is always in demand by members, non-members, students, vendors and clients. Last year over 150 potential clients seeking to hire designers purchased the directory. In addition to design firm advertising, the directory lists members alphabetically, by employer, by specialty and by location. These are easily cross-referenced so you can find just the contact you need.

Students \$25.00  
Non-members 99.00

## 1998 Compensation Study

The tenth in a biennial series of these surveys, the 1998 edition of the IDSA Compensation Study contains the information everyone needs to know. How does your compensation compare to your colleagues? How can you convince the corporate big shots to review their salary policies? The information you need to make your case is in here.

Students \$25.00  
Members 75.00  
Non-members 150.00

## Innovation:

### IDSA's Quarterly

Dedicated to expanding the body of knowledge about industrial design, *Innovation* is the profession's only juried journal. It includes the annual IDEA case studies issue, plus insightful and practical articles on usability, design management, the environment and more!

Student Subscription \$30.00  
(a \$20 discount)

## Design Perspectives:

### IDSA's Monthly Newsletter

Chock full of the latest design news, views and employment listings, this 16-page resource is published 12 times per year.

Student Subscription \$20.00  
(a \$15 discount)

Item	Member	Student	Non-member	Quantity	Total
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1998 Compensation Study	75.00	25.00	150.00		
Innovation IDSA's Quarterly Journal of Industrial Design	free	30.00/yr.	50.00/yr.		
Design Perspectives IDSA's Monthly Newsletter	free	20.00/yr.	35.00/yr.		
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				VA residents add 4.5% sales tax	
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● **Industrial Designers Society of America**

**1142 Walker Rd., Great Falls, VA 22066**

**703.759.0100; Fax: 703.759.7679**

**E-mail: [idsa@erols.com](mailto:idsa@erols.com)**