

1998 AGDA/ISS Fellowship

in association with Fuji Xerox Australia

Carolynne Bourne

Director

International Specialised Skills

336 Glenferrie Road

Malvern Victoria

AUSTRALIA

Report prepared by Lucy Elliott, June 1999.

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1.0 Acknowledgements

1.1 Awarding bodies

AGDA

Established in 1988, the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) is the largest association in Australia dedicated specifically to the development of graphic design and its practitioners. AGDA runs a program of events, awards programs, seminars, publishing and general communication through a network of state-based councils. Current membership stands at more than 1500 members. The association's website is located at www.agda.asn.au.

ISS

International Specialised Skills (ISS) is an innovative, national enterprise which identifies constraints to industry development (skills gaps) in an holistic approach to design (problem solving), technology (traditional and leading edge) and management.

ISS' vision is to build, sustain and improve partnerships between designers, artworkers, artisans, trade and professional people, nationally and internationally towards an innovative and productive future for Australia.

1.2 Fellowship sponsors

Fuji Xerox Australia

Fuji Xerox Australia is a world-wide group of businesses dealing with hardware technology for graphic reproduction. The group has pioneered the development of digital printing from backgrounds combining lithographic and photostatic reproduction and are placed as a prominent force for provision of this new technology, not only to the graphic design profession, but to the process of communication in general.

The organisers and individuals involved with the program are grateful for the willingness and enthusiasm which Fuji Xerox Australia, as sponsors of the AGDA/ISS Fellowship, have placed into the Fellowship and look forward to continuing a relationship in years to come.

AGDA Foundation

The AGDA Foundation was formed in the mid 1990's to provide funding for professional development activities overseas, in the field of graphic design. It sponsors an annual student and professional Fellowship.

1.3 Professional acknowledgements

DMI

The Design Management Institute (DMI) is an independent non-profit entity which was founded in 1975 at the Massachusetts College of Art, in Boston. Its mission is to be the international authority, resource and advocate on design management. Its activities include providing conferences, seminars, quarterly journal and website dialogues. DMI's case study program aims to develop a clearer understanding of the exact role that design plays in business success. These case studies are distributed by Harvard Business School Publications and are used as teaching material at the following educational institutions: Harvard Business School, MIT, UC Berkeley, London Business School and INSEAD. Further information may be accessed through the institute's website at www.dmi.org.

Pentagram, London

Pentagram is possibly the most well known design studio in the world with offices in London, New York, San Francisco and Austin, Texas. It was established in 1972 by five partners, hence the name (Forbes, 1993). The studio produces work across a range of disciplines including graphic, exhibition and interior design, architecture and branding. In this year's Design Week (1999) survey of UK design consultancies Pentagram was ranked 26th, based on an annual fee income of \$3.8M pounds.

Wolff Olins, London

Wolff Olins has a strong reputation for creating high-end corporate identities. The company began in 1966 with two partners Michael Wolff and Wally Olins. Recent work includes the new identity for British Telecom and signage for Portugal's rail system. This year they were ranked 5th in Design Week's (ibid.) survey, with an annual fee income of \$11.7M pounds.

1.4 Personal acknowledgements

The following individuals provided a professional and/or personal recommendation for me to pursue research in the area of design management. They were willing to stick their hand up in recognition that design management is an under nourished field within the graphic design industry. For that, I thank them.

Andrew Ashton, Nelmes Smith Ashton

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Les Leahy, Cato Partners

David Pidgeon, Gollings + Pidgeon

Robyn Wakefield, Horniak & Canny

In addition, I would also like to thank John Frostell, AGDA National President, who encouraged me to apply for the Fellowship and Carolynne Bourne, Director of ISS, for her co-ordination of the Fellowship.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 What is design management?

In order to begin it is necessary to have an understanding of the terms at hand. The following definitions are provided as a framework to enhance the discussion of this report.

Design: to intend for some purpose; form, plan, intend, arrange (Krebs, 1981). Or perhaps, a working definition such as 'problem solving' is more appropriate.

Management: to direct affairs, to have charge of (ibid.), the process of achieving organisational goals through the planning, leading, organising and controlling (Bartol, Martin, Tein and Matthews 1995)

So, as a basic framework, design management involves planning, leading, organising and controlling problem solving activities. Exploring this idea, I see design management fall into three main categories. These are:

1. How to manage a graphic design studio
2. How to manage clients of a graphic design studio
3. How to manage the provision of graphic design services

The first seeks to improve the internal runnings of a graphic design studio. This encompasses areas such as staffing, work flow, budgets, business plans, filing systems, presentation skills, marketing programs and resource management.

The second aims to form a strong working relationship with clients. Short term issues are project management, including scheduling, budgeting and reporting for individual projects. Long term issues look at planning a calendar of forthcoming projects and developing a deeper understanding of the client's business. Another issue is the studio's client base. This requires analysis to determine whether to foster or conclude the relationship.

The third area takes the perspective of someone who would employ the services of a graphic design studio. Often this is the corporate affairs or communications manager. Additional skills needed here are an expert understanding of the brand and the ability to effectively position the company or product.

2.2 What is the position of design management in Australia?

Design management in Australia is part of an evolutionary process. Slowly awareness has increased but still only a handful of studios are taking a proactive approach to management. The broader context of this issue is that not only is it applicable to the graphic design industry, but to small entrepreneurial professional businesses in general.

Effective management in Australia is lacking. In 1994 the World Economic Forum's *World Competitiveness Report* ranked Australia eighteen out of forty-one nations on a measure of management practice. This placed us well behind Japan (1), USA (5), Denmark (6) and Germany (12). It revealed poor performance compared with world best practice.

Karpin (1995) in his report "Enterprising Nation" confirms the need for management development within Australia. He states:

'the majority of Australia's managers do not have the education or skill levels of those of the major trading nations, nor are most of our educational and training institutions providing world class service' (p170).

This identifies the skills gap within the design industry between Australian practices and those of our global competitors.

David Trewern (past AGDA Student Scholarship recipient) identified Australia as a creative equal of many other nations. Looking at Alliance Graphique Internationale membership, Australia is to be commended for its representation of six from a population of about 18 million. Compared to fifteen members in the USA with a population of 250 million our creative excellence is clear.

What we need now are the business skills to harness this creativity to its fullest potential. Australian designers deserve a stable and productive environment in which to work. This is the aim of design management.

Personal experience

For the past two years I have worked part-time within two different graphic design studios. The terms of my employment have not been as a designer but as a combination of project manager, business analyst, corporate researcher, new business and strategy developer. More recently I commenced work as the business manager of a Melbourne studio. This is evidence of the growing recognition by designers of the need for professional management skills within the industry. In particular, there appears to be a new generation of design principals (aged in their mid-thirties) who are switched on to the benefits of real management and who are actively integrating this into their studio practices.

Looking overseas

In comparison to overseas firms Australia, to a degree, displays less evidence of design management. Amongst the new breed of studios it appears on the agenda but, design management is not just about activity, it's also about thinking. This is where I see the main difference. America and England seem to have a greater collective awareness of the issues while in Australia some are oblivious to the concept altogether.

This is discussed further under section *2.6 Where is the skills gap?*

2.3 Who has impacted design management?

Really this question should be about who to involve in the future development of design management in Australia.

To begin, **educational institutions**. In this field it is important to think broadly about how design management may be developed. It is not just art and design colleges who should be responsible but management and marketing faculties too. Remember that marketing and business students evolve into the purchasers of design services. What impact would it have on client relationships if the client already had an understanding of what design could offer their organisation? Designers would spend less time explaining and validating their profession and more time collaborating with the client to achieve amazing solutions.

Clients deserve to expect the best from their studios and should demand professional service. Currently they are unclear about what to expect and therefore studios can get away with poor management practices.

Professional associations such as AGDA, AIM, DIA, MADC, FIAA, RAIA, CMAA* and ISS need to be involved in promoting design management skills through workshops, articles, seminars, conferences and scholarships. Currently there is some material present in this area but it is not clearly linked to design management.

*AGDA (Australian Graphic Design Association) AIM (Australian Institute of Management) DIA (Design Institute of Australia) MADC (Melbourne Art Director's Club) FIAA (Furniture Industry Association) RAIA (Royal Australian Institute of Architects) CMAA (Ceramic Manufacturers Association of Australia).

2.4 Where is the skills gap?

It appears there is a distinct trend within numerous industries. Let's take the graphic design industry as an example. Does this story sound familiar . . . ?

A graphic designer finishes college and seeks employment. Works for a few years for someone else and then decides to open up their own shop. Buys the gear, rents some space and whips up a business card. Before they know it, they're in business. A few clients find their way to the door. If they're lucky so will a few more. Soon, there is a stack of work and another couple of designers. It is now that the graphic designer wonders what

they are doing. They spend all their time in client meetings, dealing with the accountant, worrying whether there will be enough work for the next month and writing off bad debts. What happened to producing great design for great clients?

Often, it seems, graphic designers end up running a business rather than designing. This means that for all their entrepreneurial skills there are no formal business skills to support this. Also, as a creative industry it appears to have assumed exemption from the rigours of other professions.

Design management seeks to readdress these issues. Training in these skills would increase the overall professionalism of the industry. The skills and knowledge gap consists of three parts. These are:

1. awareness
2. attitude
3. behaviour

As illustrated above, there is little awareness of what is involved in running a business. Students, practitioners and associates of graphic design need to be made aware that solid business practices should be an essential part of a studio, and not just large studios. No longer can we afford to run a studio on a wing and a prayer.

The second issue is attitude. At the moment studios think they can exist without proactive management. They need to realise that this is a narrow view and to develop a positive attitude towards self-improvement.

Finally, behaviour. How many studio owners, senior designers or project managers have formal business qualifications? Or have even undertaken some kind of management training? The ultimate goal for the industry is to realise the importance of management skills and act on this.

These type of skills and knowledge are what set successful studios apart. This fact was evidenced by the findings of the AGSM/AGDA 1996 Graphic Design Industry Study which stated that:

‘Separate analyses of financially successful designers (defined as the top 20% of the industry in business income) in comparison with the general industry average found that these designers:

- took more personal responsibility for the management of the client/designer relationship
- had stronger selling and marketing skills
- practised better financial management’

Findings from the report suggested that development in areas such as marketing and financial management would provide graphic designers with both the respect their industry deserves, and the business success they desire. Please refer to the appendix for a summary of findings from the AGSM/AGDA 1996 Graphic Design Industry Study.

It is not suggested that these gaps will be solved by a single Fellowship, nor in the short term. However, the training gained overseas will serve as a platform to promote awareness of business practices as related to the graphic design industry.

3.0 The study program

3.1 Who, what, where, when and why?

Part of the Fellowship process involved creating my own study program. For a small area such as design management this was not as easy as signing up for a general design conference. I searched websites, asked colleagues and fossicked through journals to find a relevant conference. Then I struck the nail on the head, discovering The 3rd European International Conference on Design Management: *Managing Design for Strategic Innovation*. This conference was run by the Design Management Institute. It was the only conference where a broader perspective was presented within the discipline of design and one which went beyond a presentation of folios. It was held at the Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky, Amsterdam, March 14-16 1999.

In addition to the conference I was keen to visit a couple of the large and more established studios in London. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, being a large studio (global staff > 200) generally indicates there is some kind of system in place and someone managing staff. This however does not mean that the 'big studio way' is the right way. It just means they have had to deal with issues like how to structure their work space. This really isn't a major issue if there are only four of you in the studio. Also, having been around for a long time (20 years+) they have failed and succeeded in various aspects and are able to share this wisdom. I selected London because it is an epicentre of these types of studios.

Realising this would be a hit and miss situation I contacted a number of studios in the hope I would get a couple of bites. These studios included:

Pentagram, Identica, Tomato, The Partners, Wickens, Tutt & Southgate, Wolff Olins, Newell & Sorrell and MetaDesign.

I was successful in organising meetings with Pentagram and Wolff Olins which took place on 19 March 1999.

3.2 Who helped out?

Conference organisers

The Design Management Institute co-ordinated a most professional and well-run conference.

Studio visits

The following people met with me to discuss the studios they work within. I thank them for their time and comments.

Pentagram – Piers Allen, studio administrator and Julia, public relations.

Wolff Olins – Sarah Stevens, Sylvia Duvigneau, Tay Chong Huang and Doug Hamilton.

3.3 What did I learn?

This question is difficult to answer because design management, at the moment, is not a technical skill. It is not like a ceramic painting technique which can be disseminated through a series of workshops. I don't have slides of work or even a business plan to show for the journey. This does not mean I have returned empty handed. It's just that what I have come back with is a *sense of things*. Something more like a realisation, an awareness of the position of design management in Australia and therefore where we sit in comparison to the rest of the world.

Currently, design management is more of a collective thought at the beginning of a journey, rather than a fully developed set of instructions which have been tested over time. This is why I say it is not a technical skill *at the moment*. As we progress and develop this area it will become more systemised, refined and importantly practised. One display of design management which is being adopted by studios is the practice of writing a business plan. This is a tangible way to show active thinking about management issues such as projected revenue, competitor analysis and business strategies. Another display of these skills is represented by the ISS consultancy service, established to aid arts businesses with these matters.

The conference

The conference reinforced this view of the infancy of design management, even internationally. From the ten sessions presented over the duration of the conference there was one, in my opinion, that addressed design management directly. This was a case study examining Landor Associates' implementation of Lucent Technologies' corporate identity. This session was meaningful because the discussion focused on how the client/designer relationship was managed. It covered two of the three design management categories proposed earlier, 'how to manage clients of a graphic design studio' and 'how to manage the provision of graphic design services'.

The case study was presented by Professor Stephen A. Greyser, Marketing and Communications, Harvard Business School. It served to highlight the way in which Landor Associates dealt with the peculiarities of the project. These included complying with strict guidelines set by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (because of the company's impending Initial Public Offering - IPO) and a deadline of twelve weeks to name, properly position and identify the company in the global marketplace (Phillips, 1999). These issues meant that Landor Associates could not run a project in their usual manner. They changed their way of working to meet the requirements of the project. Rather than working in sequence with the client where the Landor team would do their work and then present to senior management (the industry standard) they worked in tandem. This meant that Landor and client senior management worked together, seven days a week to meet the very tight deadline. In this case, there was no time for standard procedures.

The important message from this case is twofold. Firstly, studios need to develop a set of procedures about the way they work with clients. Secondly, these studios need to know when these procedures are no longer appropriate and seek alternate solutions. This displays active management of the client/designer relationship. The key to the solution Landor provided was that they have set up their organisation to create an environment which is free to solve these problems.

Looking back to the conference, what was disappointing, but also illuminating, about the other sessions was that they focused on portfolio presentation. It was disappointing because there was not more discussion of management issues and I was really looking forward to hear how different studio managed their business. Despite this, the conference sessions did serve to illuminate. What it showed was that design management is still a pretty loose term with blurred boundaries. Some interpretations include: project management, creative direction, co-ordinating production and maintaining brand integrity (Design Management Journal, 1998).

Therefore, what we are left with is a sense of evolution. At the moment design management is a broad term applied to a number of activities. This is even after the establishment of the Design Management Institute over twenty years ago in Boston.

The studio visits

In addition to the conference, I conducted research meetings with staff from the London offices of Pentagram and Wolff Olins. We met for a couple of hours and discussed how the studio was run, its structure and philosophies. This formed the basis of the article 'Tale of two studios' which compares and contrasts the organisational structure and culture of the two studios. The article was published on the AGDA website, June 1999 and is reproduced in the appendix of this report.

The following presents a summary of key learnings.

Firstly, the structure at Pentagram operates as an adhocracy. Pure design teams are set up on a project by project basis led by partners who control all creative and strategic direction. This varies from a textbook case adhocracy as a hierarchy is present.

In contrast, Wolff Olins closely resembles a matrix. Cross-functional teams are built to project needs incorporating disciplines such as design, consulting and project management. The presence of disciplines other than design at Wolff Olins is a significant difference between the studios.

Secondly, when we look at culture within Pentagram we see it centered around the partners. They hold the power and influence. This stems from the founders' beliefs which have framed the organisation's culture from the beginning. Partners at the top are withering in their verve and not nurturing new talent. This is a business struggling to regenerate itself and faces the need to change.

Wolff Olins on the other hand seems to have successfully managed the transition from a founder owned business to one owned by a management team. The culture is based around the task which respects the contributions and talent of individuals. For the time being, the predicted growth will support this but it is an expensive culture to maintain.

Conversations

Throughout the journey there were a number of casual conversations, some of which I have noted below. They contain snippets of interesting ideas, facts and definitions.

- Earl N. Powell, President DMI, Boston
'Design management is the management of design. The aim is for us to be the managers *for* design, to make design thrive.'
- Michel King, Creative Director, KSDP Design, Amsterdam
'The hourly charge-out rate for a junior designer would be NLG\$210 (AUS\$168) and senior designers would be NLG\$380 (AUS\$304). The highest tax bracket for Amsterdam is 60%. Employees in Amsterdam can take 'stress leave' for up to 12 months at 100% of your salary. After this 12 months you receive 75% of your salary. The company adopts a profit-share program where principals and other employees receive shares in the company based in individual performance.'

- Gordon Miller, UK Design Manger, Johnson Controls Inc., Michigan
'Design management is about designing the process, being a facilitator. It is the balancing of possibilities (left brain creative) and probabilities (right brain rational).'
- Sanjeev Malhotra, Director, DMA Consultants, Mumbai
'In India the graphic design course takes seven years. Majority of students are female. My studio would be typical with nine females and four males. The pay is low, you would earn more as a clerk.'
- Deborah Schneider, President, Deborah Schneider Design, Chicago
'I only charge professional fees, no print commission. I have been in business for 14 years, with a focus on textbooks. Each designer is responsible for their own budgets which they check on a daily and weekly basis.'

The implications for Australia

The implication for the Australian design industry is that we are in as good a position as any other country to develop this area. We certainly have the creative talent, all we need to do now is support it with business acumen. While the UK and the US may have a greater awareness of design management at present, this position is not irreversible.

If no action is taken the Australian design industry risks negatively impacting other businesses through its inefficiency. This is unacceptable.

However, through understanding where the gaps are in Australia we can actively address them through the process of awareness, attitude and behaviour. This means that Australia has the opportunity to develop and lead in this field.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 What are the problems?

One way to define the problem is to imagine a vision of the future. This is achieved by taking the three categories of design management and the three stages of development to form a matrix. This outlines a realistic ideal for design management in Australia and shows what we should be aiming for. Each intersection creates a skills gap, some of which are greater than others.

A vision for design management

	Awareness	Attitude	Behaviour
Studio management	Studios would be aware of the need for professional management skills.	Studios would think it worthwhile to increase the level of management within their studio.	Studios would employ staff with these skills or increase training and education in this area.
Client management	Studios would develop a consciousness about how they manage clients.	Studios would see the value in reviewing client relationships and project standards.	Studios would seek feedback from their clients and review current relationships.
Purchasing design services	Clients would realise that studios are lacking management skills.	Clients would expect more than just design skills from studios.	Clients would explicitly demand professional management <i>and</i> design skills.

4.2 How do we fix the problems?

From the matrix above, it follows that each segment (1, 2, 3 etc.) lends itself to a recommendation. This is outlined in the table below. Where common recommendations overlap segments, the cells have been merged.

Recommendations to improve design management in Australia

	Awareness	Attitude	Behaviour
Studio management	Use industry associations to further define and promote design management through seminars, presentations at educational institutions and conferences. Identify and engage industry leaders in design management as advocates of professional management practice.		Provide training for current studio owners in studio management practices. Encourage studio owners to employ more widely. Create university and TAFE subjects which address the issues of professional management within design.
Client management			Provide training to studios on how to review their client relationships.
Purchasing design services	Create seminars for clients run through their industry associations to explain how to manage a design studio and design projects.		

4.3 How do we action the recommendations?

The recommendations may be actioned through the following ways;

Australian Design Management Conference

This would be a biennial event to share and discuss design management issues, in particular, studio and client management. This would cover each gap of awareness, attitude and behaviour and serve to focus attention on the running of studios, not the work produced.

Inclusion in curriculum

University and TAFE institutions need to implement subjects which deal with the practical issues of starting and managing a design business. Even if this is not the aim of every student, it closes the first gap by creating awareness of professional studio management. Also, business and marketing students need to learn how to manage a design studio and what to expect.

Integrate design industry association activities

Continue to improve the implicit work currently underway with a view to explicitly labelling these items design management material. This work includes such items as Code of Ethics, debate on free pitching, time management seminars, copyright documents and studio practice articles. These disparate items need to be pulled together under the umbrella of design management. Also, provide tailored seminars to specific topic areas such as 'How to improve your studio systems'.

Client industry association activities

Create seminars for clients run through their industry associations to explain how to manage the purchasing of design services. An example of this may be a workshop held by AIM (Australian Institute of Management).

Research scholarship

Encourage further research into the area of design management and how it may be defined, developed and promoted.

4.4 Are there still gaps?

The biggest gap remaining is the definition of design management. While it remains a concept it is a difficult skill to learn. However, as awareness increases this will be refined and progress will continue.

As a whole small business practice need to improve within Australia, the design industry is only part of this picture.

If we do not adopt these skills Australia faces the risk of being left behind in a global race where it is possible to be one of the winners. It would be an opportunity missed if Australia did not jump to action these recommendations.

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AGSM/AGDA 1996 Graphic Design Industry Study.

Wolff Olins corporate profile, 'Creating Leaders' 1997

6.0 Appendices

- Tale of Two Studios - report on Pentagram and Wolff Olins.
- Summary of the AGSM/AGDA 1996 Graphic Design Industry Study.
- Schedule for 'The 3rd European International Conference on Design Management: *Managing Design for Strategic Innovation*'.
- Letters of support.

This paper stems from a research tour (as part of an AGDA/ISS Fellowship) of two unique graphic design studios in London. These studios are Pentagram and Wolff Olins. It is based on a two hour meeting with each studio and can therefore only fairly represent the London office of each.

Pentagram is possibly the most well known design studio in the world with offices in London, New York, San Francisco and Austin, Texas. It was established in 1972 by five partners, hence the name (Forbes, 1993). The skills of the studio are broad with each partner having a particular specialty such as architecture, interior, exhibition or graphic design. Based on an annual fee income of \$3.8M pounds Design Week (1999) ranked Pentagram twenty-six in their survey of UK design consultancies.

Wolff Olins enjoys similar notoriety amongst the industry, but within the more specialised field of corporate identity. It began in 1966 with two partners, Michael Wolff and Wally Olins (Corporate profile, 1997). Recent work includes the new identity for British Telecom and signage for Portugal's rail system. This year they were ranked fifth in Design Week's (1999) survey, with an annual fee income of \$11.7M pounds.

In summary, key terms will be defined followed by discussion of each studio's organisational structure and culture. These elements will be compared and contrasted between studios. The conclusion will present an overview of the key issues discussed.

To begin analysing organisational structure and culture, it is important to define key terms.

Organisational structure is defined by Robey and Sales (1994, p81) as 'a system of roles'. It describes the way the organisation is made up in terms of the different positions and their relationship to each other. Bartol, Martin, Tein and Matthews (1995) support this by describing it as a pattern of interactions designed by management to ensure groups or individuals achieve organisational goals.

Some of the more interesting definitions of organisational culture have described it as 'covert dynamics' (Smircich 1983, p337), 'blueprints of prescribed behaviors' (Schneider and Rentsch 1988, p181) and as determined by Schein (1985) organisational culture consists of the 'values that lie beneath the organization's routines' (Schneider and Rentsch 1988, p181).

Pentagram has grown up with its partners as gods. They sit above the studio providing all creative and strategic direction. It is something that has become ingrained since the company was formed. In the London studio there are fifty-six staff, seven of whom are partners. With this structure each of the partners deal directly with the client on a daily basis, there are no project managers. The type of design project determines which partner it will be assigned to. For example, an interior design project for a retail space would be assigned to the interior, or perhaps architecture partner. From here, they pull together a team of designers (senior and junior) to form the project team. In this organisation there are no project managers or production specialists, all administration and production is handled by the design team. To emphasise this design focused work, only four projects in the past nine years have used a coordinator to assist in running the project. As it was put quite bluntly during the meeting by the studio administrator (Allen, 19.03.99) Pentagram does not hire “big guys with slick mouths to do the talking”. They viewed this job function as an unnecessary cost that would only be passed on to the client.

Looking to Mintzberg’s five structural designs the structure of Pentagram most closely resembles an adhocracy (Robbins and Barnwell, 1994). An adhocracy is best conceptualised as a team. It is characterised as having little hierarchy, low formalisation (rules and regulations) and decentralisation (decisions are made close to the action). While it is true that Pentagram operates using teams, banded together on a project by project basis, there are differences from the textbook definition. For a start, there is definitely a strong hierarchy that exists. ‘Management’ per sé are the partners who handle the running of the business. Under them fall senior designers and then designers and support staff such as the archivist and public relations. In a sense, the organisation looks like partners up the top with everyone else mingling underneath.

Wolff Olins in London is set in a four storey building, with each floor housing a different discipline. There are distinct groupings of staff by job function. Designers occupy one level, project managers on another and consultants on yet another. The top floor is dedicated to one client, General Motors, who through the volume of work commanded necessitate their own work area. This is the only conglomerate of staff within the studio where different disciplines work side by side.

In general, team members work in their own area, meeting regularly to keep on track. However, the studio has not always been structured by function. According to discussion with Stevens (19.03.99) they used to mix up the disciplines, grouping by project team, but have reverted to the job distinctions. It is realised that this is not ideal as informal team communication is decreased, but then, the other way was not ideal either. With team members working on a number of projects, such grouping

became meaningless as the location of teams members was spread thinly. For example, it was difficult for one designer working on three projects to sit within proximity to three different project managers.

With this set up of functional departments brought together to form interdisciplinary project teams the organisational structure of Wolff Olins may be viewed as a *matrix* (Robbins and Barnwell, 1994). In this case project teams are pulled together laterally from across a range of disciplines such as design, consulting and project management. This structure facilitates teams which produce cross-pollinated solutions to problem-solving projects.

A matrix also produces a dual chain of command (Robey and Sales, 1994) as the employee reports to their functional manager and project manager. This arrangement gives project managers 'authority over project employees relative to the project's goals' (Robbins and Barnwell 1994, p285) while the functional manager handles issues of employee promotion, salary and reviews. These broad employment issues are handled by the executive creative director, client service director and the like.

In this case, the matrix is temporary as it is constructed on a project by project basis. One of the key conditions of a matrix is the strong interdependence of departments (ibid.). This is true of Wolff Olins where strategy consultants rely on the designers to visually interpret their given direction. Likewise, project managers would have no project without the work created by the designers. Each are completely dependent on the others for their existence. One variation from the model found at Wolff Olins is that the size of the company does not afford staff to work solely on one project. Staff generally work on three or four projects at one time. The result of this is that loyalties and priorities may be pulled in more than one direction. For example, a strategic consultant working on three projects may have responsibilities associated with three different project managers.

In comparing the two studios, we see in some areas they run in a similar manner. Both achieve their work through setting up project teams which are disbanded at the completion of the project. This structure represents an adhoc arrangement, common to design studios in general.

However, the even-keeled nature of an adhocracy is unbalanced in Pentagram. There is a definite hierarchy which is led by the partners. This is not to say that Wolff Olins is completely flat in their structure. They certainly have their functional managers, chairman and managing director. It's just that Pentagram is more overt in creating a power distance between the partners and other employees.

The biggest difference between the studios is found in the job functions present. This in turn impacts the structure of the organisation through changing the composition of project teams. Pentagram focuses on design roles, led strategically and creatively by the partner. Whereas, Wolff Olins assigns a project manager to coordinate design, consultant and production roles in conjunction with client liaison.

The bottom line is that if you work at Pentagram and are not a designer, you are support staff. But, if you work at Wolff Olins there are other roles that make up the team.

There are a couple of theories about organisational culture that lend themselves neatly to the studios at hand. The first is Charles Handy and his 'Gods of Management' (1991). This model proposes four styles of organisational culture, each presented as a metaphor using the characteristics of a different Greek god.

In applying this model to Pentagram, the organisation may best be represented by Zeus, the club culture, as depicted by a spider's web (ibid.). This culture radiates from the spider in the center of the web and is based on the relationship (proximity) with the spider. In this way each of the partners at Pentagram is at the centre of the web. They are the key ingredient to the organisation. Even the metaphor fits if one agrees that partners assume a god-like status.

Despite the hierarchy and web of connections, there are benefits of this style. The key advantage of the club culture is that it provides 'speed of decision' (ibid. p21). There are no committee review processes, rather, whatever Zeus decides is final. This is supported by the structure. Remember that all creative and strategic direction comes from a partner.

However, the negative aspect of this culture is that 'an incompetent, ageing or disinterested Zeus will quickly contaminate and slowly destroy his own web' (ibid.). This seems to sum up the current position of Pentagram, London. Partnerships offered in the past few years have failed (think of Peter Saville and Howard Brown). Aldersey-Williams (1997) proposes that the 'corrosive atmosphere' (ibid. p26) has something to do with the personalities. The big question hanging over Pentagram is whether the partnership is equipped to take on the future. There cannot be much faith left, one former designer suggests that 'it should die peacefully. It has made its mark' (ibid.) This clearly shows a culture in disarray, where it is no longer appropriate to the organisation. As expressed by Handy (1991, p43) 'the wrong god in the wrong place means pain and inefficiency'.

This does not mean that the Zeus philosophy of management and organisational culture (central power and influence) has always been inappropriate. In fact, history shows this culture is most frequently found in small entrepreneurial businesses (Handy, 1991) illustrating that it has its time and place. So, the message is not that a Zeus culture should never exist, but rather 'no culture or mix of cultures, is bad or wrong in itself, only inappropriate to its circumstances' (ibid. p20). What was appropriate for Pentagram in its formative years is no longer suitable. The trouble is it has not moved from this position. As it does not provide an atmosphere to nurture talent (Aldersey-Williams, 1997) it is paying the price through a high rate of attrition.

The second theory worth briefly touching on is presented by Schein (1992). His work focuses on the impact of leaders on culture and is particularly apt to a discussion of Pentagram. Schein (ibid.) views culture as emanating from three sources. These are: '(1) the beliefs, values and assumptions of founders of organizations; (2) the learning experiences of group members as their organization evolves; and (3) new beliefs, values, and assumptions brought in by new members and leaders' (ibid., p211).

What we see in Pentagram is a culture dominated by the first source, the founder's beliefs, values and assumptions. How this comes about is through the entrepreneurial vision of those who set up the company. Often they have strong opinions and assumptions about how the world runs, or rather, how they would like it to run. Therefore, as a founder, they assume control and impose their view on others. This role of founder has been transferred to the succession of partners in the London office. The problem at the moment is that while the Pentagram is struggling to find new partners to fit this culture (just take the title of Aldersey-Williams' 1999 article '*New blood wanted*' for example), the existing partners are clinging to old views. As identified by Schein (1992, p211) 'culture at times seems to resist change'. This is the position of Pentagram.

Looking back to the metaphor of culture as Greek gods presented by Handy (1991), Wolff Olins works within a task culture. The patron god is Athena and the style of culture is depicted by a net. The crucial element of a task culture is the intersection of the warp and weft of the net. This is where each team is formed and problems solved. This style of culture works cohesively with a matrix structure. Even the diagrams are the same; a matrix and a net a drawn in the same way with cross-hatched lines. However, the matrix focuses on what is in each box whereas the net focuses on where the corners of each box meet. Either way they each depict the drawing together of different parties, which is the way Wolff Olins works. This is visible in the different disciplines present such as design and consulting.

The benefits of this style of culture is that value is placed on expertise and talent (ibid.). This spreads power and influence throughout the organisation. It also encourages innovation because whoever comes up with the best concept/design/strategy wins. The task culture is very focused on the successful solution of problems (ibid.). Wolff Olins has weathered its maturity and is currently in a rejuvenation phase. The company is due this year to open an office in New York which spells growth and attracts the talent. Talent will follow the action.

However, the negative of this talent-driven culture is that it is 'staffed by experts who can demand their market price' (ibid. p29). Creativity is charged at a premium. Combine this with other factors such as the necessity for experimentation and meeting times for everyone to throw around ideas and what you have is culture that is expensive to run. This is fine at the present while the organisation is expanding. Though it is something to remember before you are in the position where the only option is to drastically reduce your human resources.

Referring back to Shein (1992) and the impact of leaders on organisational culture, it seems that the culture at Wolff Olins has emerged from a combination of sources. The founders may have set the tone at inception, but it appears their values promoted more of a group culture than one directed by them. It has developed as a culture derived from 'the learning experiences of group members' (ibid., p211) as the organisation has evolved. Since the management buy-out of the founders in 1997, the company has experienced a regeneration. Projections of fee income growth for next year stand at 20% (Design Week, 1999). This invigoration has produced a shift in the organisation's culture. The latest source of culture comes from the new. New leaders, new clients and new employees. This shows an invigorated team progressing confidently without the founders.

The most significant difference between the studios is the location of power and influence. Wolff Olins' culture is constructed like a net which is representative of people collaborating at each crossroad. The power is held at these intersections by groups of people focused on a task. In contrast, Pentagram hold their power at the center just like the spider in middle of the spider web in a Zeus culture. This depicts the central role played by each partner and the emphasis placed on personalities. These metaphors of net and spider web clearly illustrate the contrasting locations of power and influence between the two organisations.

Wolff Olins has evolved their culture to value the new while Pentagram has maintained the values, beliefs and assumptions of its founders. What worked for them in the seventies is no longer appropriate to their circumstances. This appears to have

stagnated a business that could have enjoyed the same revival as its peer. Pentagram is an example of culture resisting change while Wolff Olins has progressed and developed.

In conclusion, what have we learned about these two London studios?

Firstly, the structure at Pentagram operates as an adhocracy. Pure design teams are set up on a project by project basis led by partners who control all creative and strategic direction. This varies from a textbook case adhocracy as a hierarchy is present. In contrast, Wolff Olins closely resembles a matrix. Cross-functional teams are built to project needs incorporating disciplines such as design, consulting and project management. The presence of disciplines other than design at Wolff Olins is a significant difference between the studios.

Secondly, when we look at culture within Pentagram we see it centered around the partners. They hold the power and influence. This stems from the founders' beliefs which have framed the organisation's culture from the beginning. Partners at the top are withering in their verve and not nurturing new talent. This is a business struggling to regenerate itself and faces the need to change.

Wolff Olins on the other hand seems to have successfully managed the transition from a founder owned business to one owned by a management team. The culture is based around the task which respects the contributions and talent of individuals. For the time being, the predicted growth will support this but it is an expensive culture to maintain.

Finally, while there is no 'one-to-one relationship of any aspect of organizational culture with organizational performance' (Hofstede, 1998) there is 'little doubt it affects performance' (ibid.). It may in turn be the one factor to differentiate the success or failure of organisations in the future (ibid.). It is not really a question of one culture (or for that matter, structure) being better than another, but rather the alignment of the organisation's culture with its business strategies (Davis, 1997). If the *right* organisation has the *right* culture at the *right* time, it strengthens the odds for survival. As cited by Handy (1991, p20) 'No culture, or mix of cultures, is bad or wrong in itself, only inappropriate to its circumstances'.

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A G D A

AGSM/AGDA
1996 Graphic Design
Industry Study

**Prepared by the Australian Graduate School
of Management, UNSW, in conjunction with
the Australian Graphic Design Association**

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It is through collaborative projects such as this that the information base necessary to promote and support graphic design as a profession can be created. While we all have direct experience of the profession, it is one thing to 'know' and another to 'have the facts'.

The results of the study are sobering, and deserve some reflection. Reports such as this are essential for those developing a sound business plan and eye-opening for the merely curious.

Some of you will be able to congratulate yourselves on good business practices and incomes, but for many designers the news is not good—for the first time members can see where they and their firms stand with respect to the rest of the design community.

Additionally, clients are telling us in that outstanding creativity is not enough to earn their dollars, and more importantly, their respect.

A more detailed benchmarking report is being prepared from the industry database developed in this study and will be distributed via our web site and with AGENDA in early 1997.

AGDA is committed to building up this body of knowledge through similar projects in the years to come, and we ask for your continued support and participation in the annual surveys.

Andrew Lam-Po-Tang
AGDA General Manager

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Australian Graphic Design Association
National Secretariat
PO Box 283, Cammeray NSW 2062, Australia
Tel: 02-9955-3955
Fax: 02-9955-0566
Email: gm@agda.asn.au
Web: www.agda.asn.au

Executive Summary

The following report outlines the findings of the AGSM management project study into the Graphic Design industry. It is a general industry study, followed by a comparative study between financially successful designers and the industry.

The data sample consisted of:

- 138 randomly selected surveys out of 210 (-800 sent out)
- 10 client interviews in Sydney and Melbourne
- 10 graphic designer interviews in Sydney and Melbourne

The study estimates that there are 2,500 design firms employing over 10,000 people in graphic design in Australia, with the bulk of the activity centred in New South Wales and Victoria. The industry average turnover is \$125K per person.

Freelancers and owners had median incomes of around \$60,000 with employees' median coming in at \$45,000. While the median incomes for freelancers and owners were similar, owners had much greater upside earnings potential.

In all, there were very few hard and fast indicators for financial success. The survey found that only experience in graphic design correlated to higher salary but even in this case the correlation was weak. Neither age, staff numbers nor ownership experience correlated with income. A weak correlation did exist between business income and revenue. The answer to what makes a designer successful comes from indicators other than demographics.

The research shows that designers value 3 characteristics in their business:

- Creative work
- Profitability
- Interesting customers and relationships

Interestingly, the characteristics that clients value do not correspond to those identified by the designers:

- An understanding of the client's needs
- Attention to detail
- Strategic vision

It is in the first and third needs that clients find the design industry lacking. It is here that we can derive what makes a graphic designer successful. Successful designers were defined as the top 20% of the market in business income, as there was no way to quantify the creative quality of designer's work.

A study of the surveys found that the successful designers:

- Took more personal responsibility for the management of the client/designer relationship
- Had stronger selling and marketing skills
- Practice better financial management

This leads to a number of recommendations for the graphic design firms:

- Embracing a marketing mentality:
 - Understanding the client and their value-added needs
 - Understanding the potential client and selling to their needs
- Greater use of marketing and business plans
- Increasing financial management ability

On the issue of how important creativity is to clients, the study found that the market for graphic design discounts the ability to deliver creative product. It is in other areas, primarily marketing and financial, that graphic designers can gain both the respect their industry deserves, and the business success they desire.

Introduction

The Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) was founded in 1988 by a dedicated group of Australia's leading graphic designers. The purpose of the AGDA is to advance excellence in graphic design as a discipline, profession, and cultural force. The AGDA provides leadership in the exchange of ideas and information, the encouragement of critical analysis and research, and the advancement of education and ethical practice. AGDA is the most recognised organisation that represents graphic designers to business sectors, government bodies, and the community at large.

To increase interaction between students and the business community, the Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) offers a management project option which counts for academic credit towards a Masters of Business Administration (MBA). These projects enable MBA students to gain hands-on business experience through the completion of real-life projects with a variety of organisations, benefiting both the students and the sponsor organisations. The students gain valuable knowledge and learning experiences, whilst the sponsor organisation reaps the benefits of highly motivated and talented MBA students with highly developed business skills.

The following is a report jointly conducted by a project team from the Australian Graduate School of Management and AGDA. AGDA has two major aims:

- to increase the awareness of graphic design across all areas of business, industry, education and the community throughout Australia and internationally
- to promote the use of graphic design and professional designers as important transmitters of visual communications, to the benefit of business, government and society in general

The purposes of the management project was to help AGDA achieve these aims. The three member team from the AGSM spent three months analysing the graphic design industry in Australia to generate a database and report to aid AGDA members and the clients they serve.

Issues and Challenges

AGDA's charter is to improve the business of graphic design in Australia by channelling the experience of individuals into a single resource for all to access. Until now there has been a distinct lack of information available for both graphic designers and their clients (and potential clients) with regards to the nature and quality of work in this domain. Since this report is the first of its kind for the graphic design industry, one of the primary aims of the project was to generate a general industry overview.

LACK OF INFORMATION

A challenge that arose very early on in the project was to find adequate sources of information. A library search revealed that there was no relevant information about the industry in general, and inquiries to the Australian Bureau of Statistics proved equally fruitless. Limited information was available through AGDA and through various websites, but none of it was directly related to the study. A CD-ROM search of the Yellow Pages yielded demographic data which was used, with further inquiries revealing that 90%–95% of graphic design firms are typically included in the Yellow Pages. A survey was developed to gather sufficient information for the study to be completed.

FOCUS OF STUDY

Another issue was deciding on what to focus on. After consulting with selected designers, clients and AGDA, it was decided that it would be useful to ascertain what clients want or expect from graphic designers versus what graphic designers are providing (or think they are providing). Additionally, it was decided to compare the 'top' design firms (determined by business income) to the industry as a whole. The top quintile (20%) of firms, as defined by business income, was compared to the industry average in their self-rating in two areas: client-designer relationship problems; and skills and knowledge. The self-ratings were used to generate profiles to identify the key differences between top earners group and the industry average.

Methodology

SURVEY

As there is a lack of information in any published form, a basis of comparison was needed for an industry analysis. The only method which was feasible given the time and financial constraints of the project was a mail survey. The goal of the survey was to develop a basic database from which to obtain an overview of the industry and selected analyses. The survey was sent to the AGDA members who were practising designers (-800 recipients). The questionnaire was circulated nationally to avoid any regional biases. Over 250 responses were received, a response rate of over 25%, much higher than typical industry or survey response rates. 138 were then chosen randomly and used for the analysis. This amount ensured that the findings and conclusions derived from the report are statistically significant.

DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Ten successful designers (both creatively and financially) were interviewed in Sydney and Melbourne to ascertain common business practices, special characteristics which may have contributed to their success, and to gather information on clients needs. These designers were nominated by the AGDA General Manager, Andrew Lam-Po-Tang. It was decided that an industry source should select the interviewees in order to provide a balanced cross-section of data. Melbourne and Sydney were selected as these are the two largest and most dynamic graphic design markets in Australia. The interviews lasted, on average, 90 minutes.

Ten clients was also interviewed in Sydney and Melbourne to assess designers' critical success factors from the clients' perspective. The clients were selected by both the AGDA GM and by referrals generated from the designers who were interviewed. Once again, a wide array of interview subjects ensured an even mix of information. The average length of client interviews was 90 minutes.

DATA ANALYSIS

General industry statistics and profiles were compiled and analysed for inclusion in the report. Interview and survey data was used to generate 'success' profiles from designer and client perspectives. Numerical analyses were conducted to identify any correlating factors between income, revenue and size of business. Analysis was then conducted to determine common practices among the top quintile of financially successful firms vs. the rest of the industry.

This document is the first of its kind in the graphic design industry in Australia and its main purpose is to stimulate understanding of the industry both by designers and clients. A presentation was given by the members of the management project team to AGDA representatives and academic representatives from the AGSM on the 14th of November, 1996. The presentation consisted of the results and findings of the project as well as conclusions and recommendations.

PROJECT TEAM

Louis Lipinski, AGSM MBA student
Marc Vallaincourt, AGSM MBA student
Tim Moran, AGSM MBA student

John Smith, AGSM Project Coordinator
Andrew Lam-Po-Tang, AGDA Project Coordinator

Industry Data

Table 1: General Industry Survey Results

Number of Firms*	2500
Avg size of firm (no. of staff)	4
Male/Female ratio	1.4:1 (58% male)
Avg age	35 years old
Avg experience in graphic design	13 years
Avg salary (all respondents)	\$56,000
Avg time owned (for design firms)	8 years
Avg years spent as employee	6 years
Avg years spent as part-time	5 years
Avg number of partners	2
Avg revenue per firm	\$520,000
Avg print billings	\$270,000
Avg expense (% of revenue)	43%
Avg software expense	\$5600
Nationality	88% Australian

Table 2: Geographic Distribution

NSW	885
Vic	692
QLD	253
SA	208
WA	200
ACT	85
Tas	48
NT	25
Total	2396

* The number of firms listed in Yellow Pages CD-ROM (1996 edition) was adjusted upwards to 2500 to account for the small percentage of firms that choose to not list in the Yellow Pages

Key Conclusions

DESIGNERS AND CLIENTS HAVE DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF A 'SUCCESSFUL' DESIGNER

Not surprisingly, all of the successful graphic designers interviewed shared common ideas and practices. They also shared many of the same professional desires. There were four goals mentioned most by these designers:

- 1 creative work which challenged their design abilities
- 2 running a profitable business
- 3 interesting customer mix
- 4 quality customer relationships.

The clients interviewed were also asked which were the elements characterising successful designers.

- 1 the most important factor was the designer's understanding of the constraints under which they are placed both internally and also with the clients' customers
- 2 attention to detail from the initial brief stage to the final product launch was another important aspect
- 3 clients also wanted designers to have a strategic vision for the clients' products and general business
 - this was further identified as the need for proactive behaviour, offering value additional to what is typically considered the designer's role, and the designer's need to understand the clients' product marketing strategy

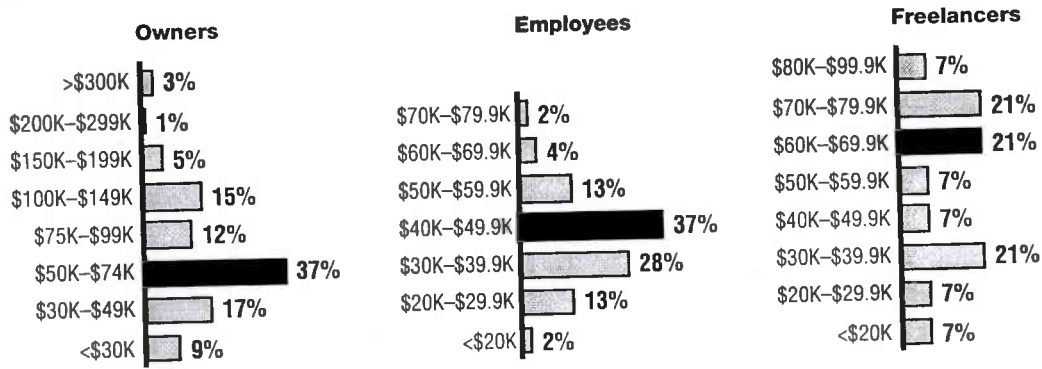
Clients surprisingly said that the design quality is not the primary criterion for the selection of designers. Further investigation revealed that clients believed that the quality of design is generally high and therefore is not a useful criteria for selecting between competing design firms. Many clients are willing to pay a premium for designers who understand the dynamics of their industry.

DESIGNER INCOME IS DETERMINED BY FACTORS OTHER THAN EXPERIENCE

Not surprisingly, owners and freelancers earn more (on average) than employees, however the difference between owners and freelancers is not as great as might be expected. Employees earned the least (average \$45K, median \$41K), as could be expected. Owners averaged \$80K vs. \$54K for freelancers. But owners and freelancers had median incomes that were largely equivalent (\$64K vs. \$60K). This tells us that while statistically speaking owners and freelancers will have similar incomes, owners have a much better opportunities at reaching the six figure incomes than do freelancers.

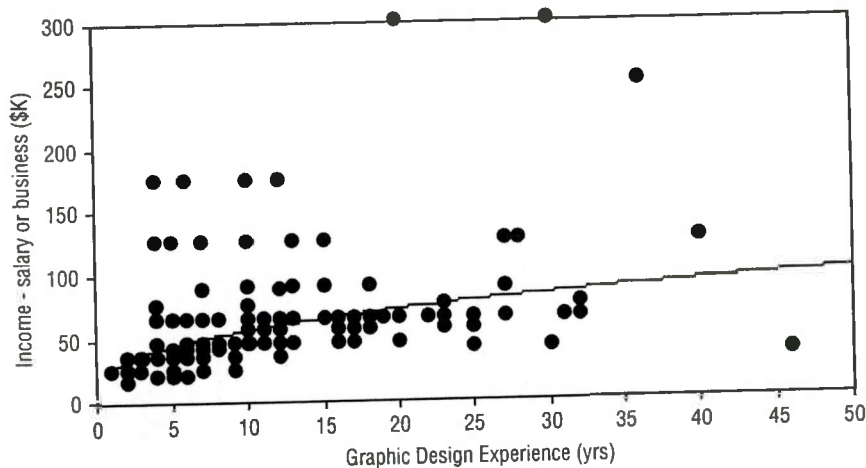
Chart 1: Incomes (dark bars indicate the median* income for each group)

Median is the halfway value in a data set ie. 50% of respondents are above this value and the other 50% are below. Medians tend to ignore extreme values at the high and low ends and can give a less biased picture of what is 'typical' than calculated averages.



Industry experience is not a good predictor of income. Experience among all graphic designers did not correlate with salary (see chart 2). From 10 to 20 years in there is a gentle up trend, but the variability in salary is quite high and a number of designers achieved incomes of over \$80,000 in under 10 years. It is clear that other factors are more important than simply experience in graphic design.

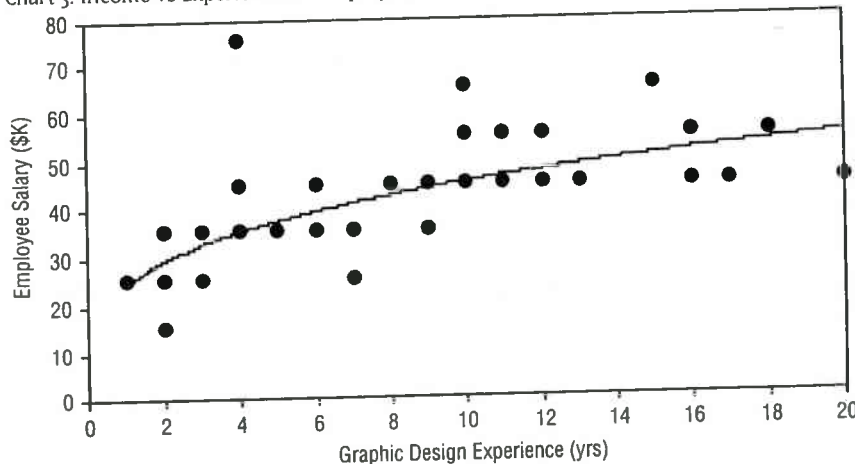
Chart 2: Income vs Experience (all groups)



Note 1: trend line is indicative only and is not statistically significant
 Note 2: income for owners was taken to be the greater of salary or business income
 Note 3: incomes and revenues are the mid-points of responses, eg. \$55K = \$50K-\$59.9K

Even for employees, experience is only a weak predictor of income. A separate analysis of employee remuneration revealed a slightly stronger relationship between experience and income (see chart 3), however even here there is extremely wide variation between pay scales for individuals of comparable experience.

Chart 3: Income vs Experience for employees

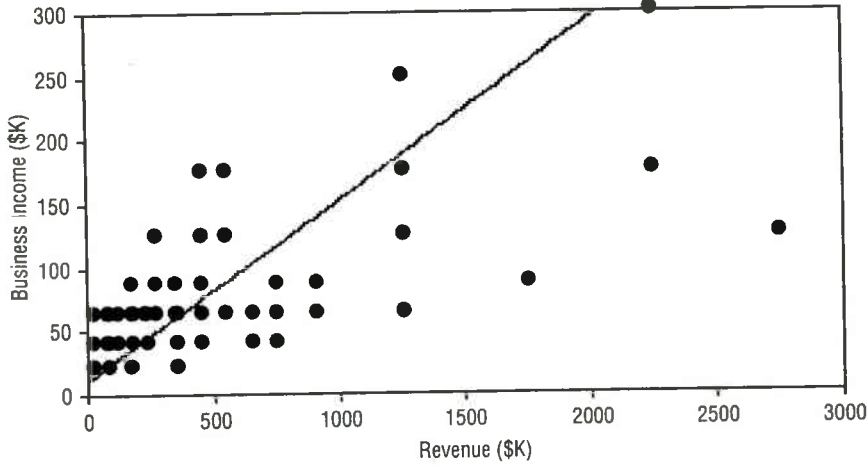


Note 1: trend line is indicative only and is not statistically significant
 Note 3: incomes are the mid-points of responses, eg. \$55K = \$50K-\$59.9K

BUSINESS INCOME IS DRIVEN BY FACTORS OTHER THAN REVENUE OR FIRM SIZE

Increased revenue does not necessarily mean increased profit. An analysis of owners business income versus revenue was used to determine if there was a strong relationship between how much a firm turns over in yearly revenue and how much income it generates from this revenue. Although it would seem logical that as a firm grows larger its total income should increase, the survey information suggested there is no correlation. This means that for many design firms, increasing revenue will not necessarily increase profit.

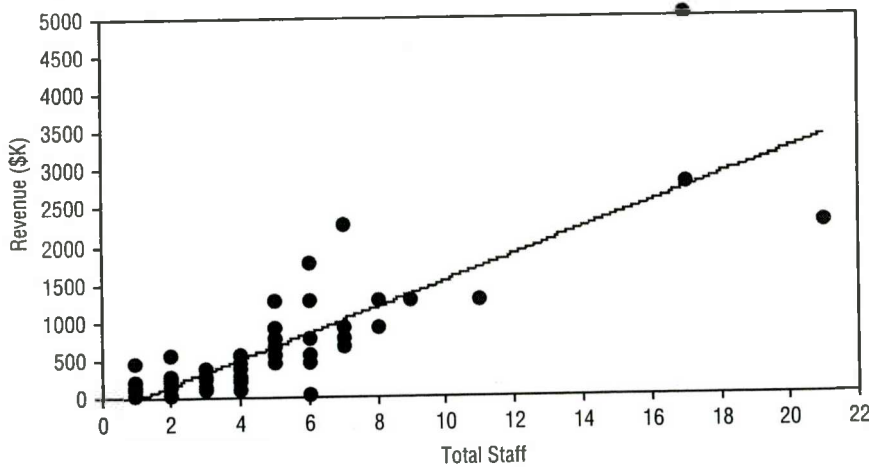
Chart 4: Business income vs revenue



Note 1: trend line is indicative only and is not statistically significant
 Note 2: incomes and revenues are the mid-points of responses, eg. \$55K = \$50K – \$59.9K

More employees does not necessarily mean more money. An analysis of the number of employees firms hire with how much revenue these firms generates shows that there is a weak correlation overall, with virtually no difference in upside and downside potential between the level of one and four employees. After five employees the downside potential decreases and the correlation become stronger, but it is still not very significant. When the number of employees was compared to how much profit a firm earns, the data again showed no correlation. This would indicate increasing firm size will not increase total profit dollars. Specifically, hiring an additional employee may actually cost a firm more money than that employee generates.

Chart 5: Revenue vs Size (number of staff)

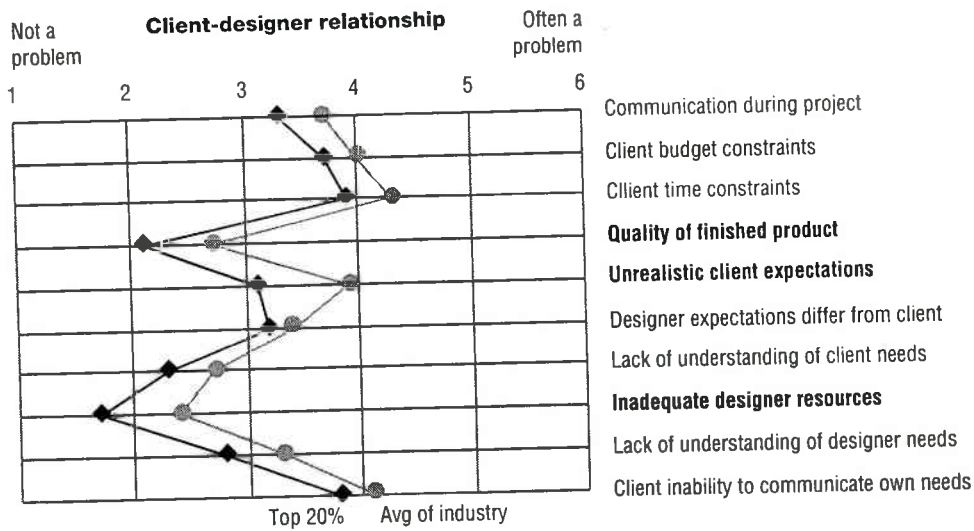


Note: trend line is indicative only and is not statistically significant
 Note 2: Total Staff includes both designer and non-designer staff
 Note 3: revenues are the mid-points of responses, eg. \$55K = \$50K – \$59.9K

TOP EARNING FIRMS TAKE MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIENT-DESIGNER RELATIONSHIPS

In the survey's data on client-designer relationship problems, differences between the top 20% (in income) and the industry become apparent (see chart 6). As could be expected the most successful firms overall expressed less trouble in dealing with the client and delivering the creative product. It is in three areas that they differ most from the general industry: 'quality of finished product,' 'unreasonable client expectations' and 'inadequate designer resources'. This indicates that successful designers take it upon themselves to make their relationships work, and when they don't they are less likely to blame the client for it.

Chart 6: top 20% vs industry average in client-designer relationships (lower rating is better)



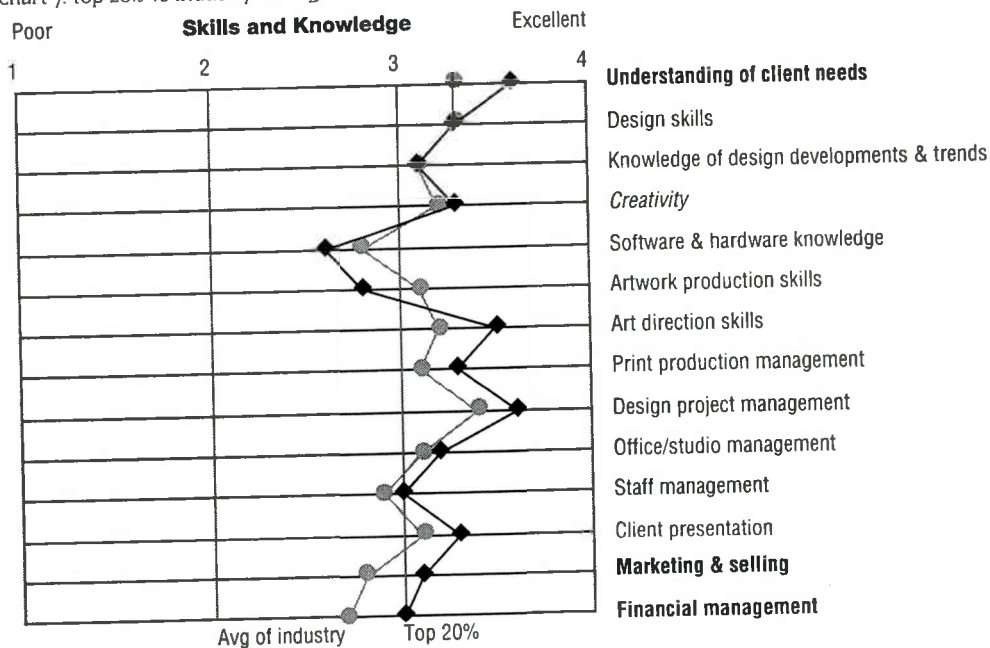
TOP EARNING FIRMS RANK THEMSELVES HIGHER IN BUSINESS SKILLS RATHER THAN DESIGN

Self rated skills covered areas from design skills to finance and marketing. In most areas, the top designers rated themselves only slightly stronger than the market did overall. But in some areas such as knowledge of design development and computer skills the top designers rated themselves lower.

In three areas top earners expressed more confidence than the general industry: understanding the client, selling to clients, and financial management. This is significant because even though a certain level of bias can be expected in self ratings, the differences in these three areas are substantial in comparison with the other dimensions.

When the highest earning designers express significantly more confidence in areas of management and marketing, it identifies these areas as important for further development in less successful operators. In fact, in the area of creativity the top designers rated themselves only equal to the industry as a whole. This supports the clients' view that the major differences between financially successful designers and the industry are non-creative, business-oriented activities.

Chart 7: top 20% vs industry average in skills and knowledge (higher rating is better)



FINANCIAL SKILLS

Financial management appears also to be a problem of the general industry. As comparison of stated earnings vs. imputed earnings (stated revenues-stated expense) show an average difference of over \$60,000. This suggests that either graphic designers do not know their revenues, or they do not know their expenses. Since revenue is an easier number to ascertain, it may be concluded that most designers have relatively little knowledge of their costs (and therefore profitability). An old saying in sales states: 80% of the profit comes from 20% of the clients. Can graphic designers identify their 20%? It seems unlikely. Adequate bookkeeping and financial management must become part of the graphic design process for all designers, not just the top 20%.

COMMUNICATION

It is from this study that the importance of communication is affirmed, but in a different manner than most designers may think. The most important type of communication that most firms do not employ is in marketing to new prospects. Just how does the firm market itself to new clients? Does it have a plan? Communication to prospects consists of networking, referrals, and/or cold calls. Firms must build a plan to do some or all of these in their marketing plans. As of now, most apparently do not.

Secondly, are most firms tailoring their proposals and sales pitches to each prospect? The clients say they are not. What value-added does the designer offer? It is ironic that an industry so reliant upon marketing does not appear to market itself effectively.

Finally, firms must realise the communications power of pricing. Clients said repeatedly that lower prices meant lower quality. Whether or not this is true is not the issue: the client believes it so it is true. If the graphic designers want to be respected for their creative product they must make the client respect it, and price is the first aspect the client sees. If a service is sold primarily on price then that is how it will be measured. Greater effort on the part of the designer must be made to educate the client in the process and skills involved in creating graphic design. Clients are more likely to pay for effort and skill when they know it is there.

Next Steps

This document is the first of its kind for graphic design in Australia and its main purpose is to stimulate further understanding of the industry, both by designers and clients. It is clear from the findings that the graphic design industry is in dire need of data for its members to be able to develop better business practices. This project has served to highlight many of the aspects of the graphic design industry which create success both in the mind of the designers and in the mind of the clients. This document is intended to serve as a starting point for the graphic design industry to develop an appropriate data bank to enable designers to make better business and design decisions.

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Peter Jansen, *Chief Designer-Interior, ISD-Centro Stile, FLAT AUTO S.p.a.*

Level 12 403 George Street Sydney
New South Wales 2000 Australia
PO Box A2457 Sydney South
New South Wales 1235 Australia
Dr Bombay Ink Pty Ltd ACN 062 549 544
Trading as Nelmes Smith Ashton
Telephone 02 9279 3600 Facsimile 02 9279 3611
E-mail nation@magna.com.au

Nelmes Smith Ashton
with MaD House Design

24 November 1998

AGDA /ISS Fellowship
304 Drummond Street
Carlton Victoria 3053

Attn. Carolynne Bourne

Ms Bourne,

Lucy Elliott has requested a professional reference for her AGDA /ISS Fellowship application.

Lucy's proposal, will play an important role in the development of the Australian design industry in the coming years. An improvement of professional design practices is essential, if the graphic design industry is looking to be accepted in the greater business community.

In the last decade, design management has been practised, by only a handful of Australian design groups, with the resources and foresight to develop their own management systems. This investment represents in most cases, decades of trial and error. This knowledge has proved to a valuable asset to these firms, and can be measured in several areas:

- staff numbers
- turn over
- client lists (made up of leading business Australian organisations and a growing list of large international clients)
- strong client relationships.

In 1996, Australia's first independent graphic design industry study was conducted by Australian Graduated School of Management. For the first time all design professionals had evidence, that development and growth in design lies, in the implementation and practise of sound design management systems. The study also found, only a handful of studios had a design management process in place.

Lucy's proposal, will be invaluable to all design groups small to large, looking to put better design management skill sets to use. Her knowledge will help a large sector of the industry, that can not afford decades of trial and error.

Lucy is a graphic designer who decided she would be better design manager. She has a design degree, completing a full time business degree, works as a design manager at one of Australia's leading design groups and serves on AGDA Victoria Counsel.

Lucy is committed to design at all levels, helping designers to understand the needs of business. Lucy's exploration of the design management process will fuel her design causes and not doubt benefit the design industry in the future.

I believe she will be an excellent candidate for your fellowship programme.

Kind regards



Andrew Ashton
Director

Vice President, New South Wales, Chapter of Australian Graphic Design Association



EXPERTS IN VISUAL LANGUAGE

22 November 1998

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR LUCY ELLIOTT

It is my belief that Australian graphic designers, especially those who are young and operate either on their own or in studios of less than six members, would benefit enormously from a deeper understanding of the role of business in design— and of the role of design in business.

Any organized activity which brings attention to and fosters a greater understanding of modern business practices gets my support, especially if the information can be passed on to the graphic design community and applied in practical ways. Hopefully this will benefit not only graphic design but the business community as well.

As a founding member of AGDA I have been amazed at the popularity of the business seminars arranged by AGDA. These are always very well attended compared to other topics. There seems to be a real thirst for this sort of information, especially when people who also understand design present it.

I would encourage and support the efforts of people like Lucy Elliott to bring an international perspective to the business of Australian graphic design by going overseas to learn more about the nexus between design and business.

Yours sincerely

Mimmo Cozzolino, director

TELEPHONE (03) 9882 9711
EMAIL Info@cedesign.com.au
FACSIMILE (03) 9882 9779

8 EASTERN PLACE
HAWTHORN EAST
VIC 3123 AUSTRALIA

COZZOLINO · ELLETT
DESIGN D'VISION PTY LTD ACN 006 719 580

Level 16
239 Bourke Street
Melbourne 3000
Victoria Australia

GPO Box 2476V
Melbourne 3001
Victoria Australia

Tel +61 3 9925 5919
Fax +61 3 9925 5960
Website www.bf.rmit.edu.au/Management

21 November, 1998.

Letter of support for Lucy Elliot

Research into the management situation within Australia¹ has demonstrated a strong need for development of management understandings and skills. That need exists not only within business and government but also within the professions. It is a need which embraces strategy, accounting, and HRM issues but, importantly, goes beyond those functions to interpersonal skills.

My own experience with the professional body for Australian architects, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, supports this claim. The RAIA called upon myself and others to develop a postgraduate course in management skills that it now offers to its members. That course was developed because, as a professional body, the RAIA recognised the needs of its members for skills which enable a practitioner to manage a business in an effective and efficient manner. As a cousin profession to graphic design, the situation faced by architects may well mirror the situation faced by graphic designers.

I consider Lucy's desire to pursue international management knowledge, as appropriate to the graphic design industry, a good fit with the national issues of professional development. The more Australians who are prepared to look beyond their initial professional training and bring new knowledge and insights back to their professions the better.

My experience of Lucy in an academic environment is that she is sensibly conscientious in her application to tasks. This semester she has presented work of a high distinction level, demonstrating a clear writing style

¹ Karpin, D. 1995, *Enterprising Nation*.

supported by extensive research. Her participation in class discussions displayed enthusiasm for learning and for sharing ideas with others. In particular, her ability to call upon her design background in the discussion of management issues was seen by myself and her fellow students as a source of additional insights to our learning.

I strongly support Lucy's application for the AGDA/ISS Fellowship.

Yours truly,



Paul Gibson

BA (Hons) *Monash*, DipEd *Bendigo*, MBus *Swin*.

Lecturer, Department of Management – Higher Education RMIT
University.



20 November 1998

Lucy Elliott
23 Wishart Street
KEW EAST
3102

To whom it may concern,

RE: AGDA / INTERNATIONAL SPECIALISED SKILLS FELLOWSHIP

Lucy Elliott successfully completed her graduate year in graphic design at Monash University in 1996.

A strong performer in all subjects, Lucy responded well to the rigours and demands of the course. Her development as a designer was reflected in the quality of work produced in her final year. A year where Lucy received the coveted 'AGDA, Most Professional Student Award'.

Lucy's chosen area of investigation for the AGDA / ISS Fellowship is a worthy one. Design business management has been undervalued in Australia for many years. Both in graphic design education and within the graphic design industry itself.

Monash has plans to expand its studies to incorporate applied business management specialisations at post-graduate level. We welcome Lucy's investigation in this area and would be most interested in reading the results of her research. This is a timely and well-considered area of investigation from our point of view.

Lucy is a self-motivated, enthusiastic individual who was a pleasure to teach. She is a well organised, well presented individual who possessed excellent written, oral and presentation skills. Lucy has a bright, friendly personality combined with a quiet determination to succeed. I wish her all the best in her pursuit of the AGDA / ISS Fellowship and have no doubt that Lucy will excel in this valuable area of research investigation if given the opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Russell Kennedy

Lecturer/Year 3 Coordinator
Department of Design
Faculty of Art and Design

From: Lam-Po-Tang Andrew <Lam-Po-Tang.Andrew@BCG.com>
To: Elliott, Lucy <CAmgt@c031.aone.net.au>
Subject: Re Letter of Support for ISS Fellowship
Date: Friday, November 20, 1998 9:21 AM

Hi Lucy,

Here is my letter of support regarding the importance of closing the gap in design management.

=====

To: Carolynne Bourne
AGDA ISS Fellowship

ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S NEED FOR DESIGN MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Australia needs to improve its expertise in design management, specifically within the field of graphic design. We need to bring professional management skills and depth to our world-class graphic design community. It needs to grow out of its cottage industry roots into a fully fledged profession, and it needs to do this quickly.

As the world wide web and e-commerce consume the world's fascination and money, it is "intangibles" such as branding and communication that come to the fore - what else is there to set competitors apart in a space where everyone is only a mouse click away?

As you may recall, I held the post of General Manager of the Australian Graphic Design Association (AGDA) in 1996, while taking a one year sabbatical from The Boston Consulting Group. Prior to doing an MBA at INSEAD in France, I had a successful graphic design studio in Sydney. Having experience in both graphic design and business has made me quite passionate about the importance of injecting professional management discipline into our local design talent.

While Australia is recognised by the international creative community, we are still woefully underdeveloped in business skills to establish that talent for a global market. In this regard, we are well behind the creative professional communities in the USA, Europe and Japan. Our incredibly creative designers need to be able to operate in a stable, well-managed business environment in order to compete successfully, and over the long term.

ABOUT LUCY ELLIOTT

Lucy is a highly committed, motivated, community-minded and results-oriented person. Anyone who would become an AGDA State Councillor (and previously an AGDA Student Councillor) has to be, because it would be an utterly thankless task otherwise. Lucy demonstrates in a very concrete way her commitment to developing design management skills by undertaking a degree in business administration at RMIT in addition to her degree in graphic design from Monash University. She is also an articulate, communicative person, as evidenced by her recent presentation to students at Monash University. I am confident that Lucy would learn from a Fellowship, and be able to share her learnings with the Australian design community in an effective manner.

Regards,

Andrew Lam-Po-Tang
AGDA National Treasurer
AGDA Website Editor

THE BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP
Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney NSW 2000,
Australia
Tel: 02-9323-5600, Fax: 02-9323-5666, Mbl: 0414-323-560
E-mail: lam-po-tang.andrew@bcg.com

I have seen the future, and her name is Lucy ¹

by Andrew Lam-Po-Tang

Just met an amazing person. Former AGDA student Councillor and recent graduate of Monash University design program. This year started at RMIT in the undergraduate business administration course!

Personal digression: one of the design firms that I have been watching with keen interest is Seigel & Gale (US) because they have met the strategic thinking challenge head-on by incorporating MBAs into design teams. In their own words, these people "help unify a company's communications, drive its behaviour, and marshal its people behind the unique personality, principles, and goals they share."

Now, what was I saying? Lucy decided to forego an honours year in the Edinburgh University design program in favour of business administration. Les Leahy of Cato Design was influential in this decision (which tells you a lot about what Cato Design Inc. thinks of the future of design consultancies).

I am reminded of the words of a senior partner at the Boston Consulting Group (the management consultancy I worked with previously and am now back with). He said, "we expect to be terrified by each new group of recruits - terrified by their ability and knowledge - and that is a good thing." If a company or community is to keep pace in this crazy, rapidly evolving world, then being 'terrified' by each successive generation of members is a great way to ensure that that happens.

Lucy is one of Australia's next generation of designers and design managers. These people will spring fresh into our design community with the skills, knowledge, passion for learning and fearlessness to meet and work with clients on their own turf.

Rob Black (AGDA's webmaster, with a background in computing and a Swinburne graphic design graduate), Martine Zajacek (AGDA QLD President, leader, coach and communicator extraordinaire) and David Ansett (partner in Storm Design and Advertising and recent instigator of a conference for young Melbourne designers) are other examples of the new generation. They are all recognising the importance of skills beyond design. There are many more and their ranks are growing.

Think of the power that will result when the depth of design language, craft and expertise of people like Ken Cato, Gary Emery, John Nowland, Lynda Warner and others is fed into this new generation!

Even if these extraordinary people stumble as they climb a very steep learning curve, the spirit that they embody should be recognised, encouraged and supported. If you're a studio owner who in the near future comes up against this kind of designer in a competitive situation, at least be grateful that they are actively driving the Australian business community's appreciation of design with the management and communication skills that this design community needs.

Am I 'terrified'? You bet!

Am I excited? Totally!

¹ AGDA Website article, March 1997.

23rd November '98

Carolynne Bourne (Director)
International Specialised Skills
304 Drummond Street, Carlton 3053

Dear Carolynne,

With this letter I request the Selection Board of International Specialised Skills to consider a candidate with an unusual field of intent. It can be assumed that ISS has so far championed the cause of design artisans and unique craftspeople.

In the field of Corporate Design (and this includes graphics, multi-media, industrial, 3D and exhibition design) we are experiencing a radical and wide-spread shift. That shift is to the importance of management in the Corporate Design process.

To most observers of the industry, Design Management means creative people becoming more aware of the importance of running their small studios more efficiently, of interacting professionally with clients and learning to balance the petty cash.

This view is as out of date as last year's newspaper.

Major international and national design opportunities will now only reach agenda level if they receive the support of global consultants or senior executives within the ranks of the client.

No corporate support, no creative. The equation is as simple as that.

And what are our design faculties within the universities doing about it? Absolutely nothing.

Year after year in Melbourne alone we turn out two hundred design graduates who will achieve nothing more than shuffling type around on a monitor at the whim of a client who has no formal training or appreciation of the power of design if used effectively.

We need design-trained people with the initiative to take on the corporate positions which control the purse strings.

To this end I have been encouraging, for several years, young designers with strong organisational and management skills to consider eventually 'becoming the client' or at least the client's representative.

Lucy Elliott is one of these young people. Lucy spoke to me from Monash University in 1996 about her desire to undertake additional design study interstate or overseas at the completion of her degree. Having some idea of Lucy's natural abilities, I suggested she make a very serious commitment to the future of design by adding business management to her skills.

Melbourne
Sydney
Perth
Singapore
Jakarta
Auckland
Wellington
Buenos Aires

London
New York
Tokyo
Taipei
Hong Kong

Cato Design Inc
Pty Limited
ACN 006708418
254 Swan Street
Melbourne

Telephone
61 (3) 9429 6577
e-mail
catodes@iaccess.com.au

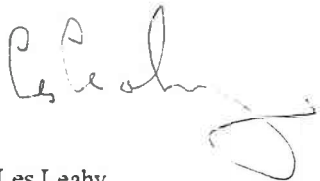
Here is a brief outline of Lucy's career path so far . . .

- She has a BA in Graphic Design from Monash University (1994-96).
- She is now entering her 3rd year of a degree, Bachelor of Business at RMIT University, specialising in Business Administration.
- From 1994-96 she was a member of the AGDA Student Council.
- She has attended 5 AGIdeas international student conferences (held in Melbourne).
- During her current studies she has taken on the role of 'events spokesperson' as a member in her second term of the Victorian AGDA Council.
- Worked with the Melbourne company of Gollings + Pidgeon at Account Management level.
- Worked at the Sydney corporate brand management company of Horniak & Canny in both project management and internal management, and continues this role part-time at their Melbourne office.

Lucy Elliott is serious about the future of design in this country. A future that must be aware of the power of corporate and government business strategy in shaping its success.

I commend her to the Selection Board of International Specialised Skills.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Les Leahy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Les Leahy
Operations Manager and Director of Cato Design Inc. Pty Limited.

23.11.98

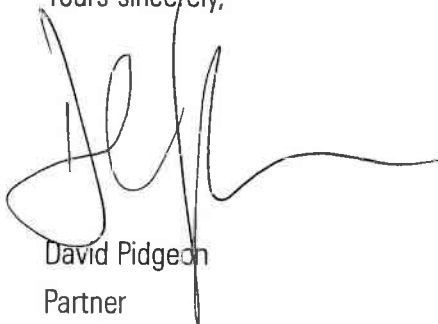
To whom it may concern,

When you study Graphic Design the last thing they mention is the fact that you may end up owning and managing your own design studio. Designers are very good at ordering information and solving communications problems but terrible managers.

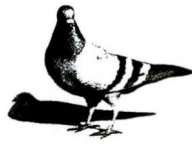
A design studio needs good designers but also good management. The Design Industry in Australia has become more and more professional in the last few years and has gained respect from other industries because of their professionalism. However, we need to take the next step and recognise that the development of strong design management is integral to the growth of the design profession as it expands into the next millennium.

To this point, I think individuals such as Lucy Elliot should be encouraged to explore the possibilities of management in design and forge a new way of thinking in an industry that is often slow to react.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Pidgeon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Pidgeon
Partner



HORNIAC & CANNY

19th November, 1998

Carolynne Bourne
Director of ISS
304 Drummond Street
Carlton VIC 3053

Re Lucy Elliott's application for AGDA Scholarship

Dear Carolynne,

As Managing Director of one of Australia's largest design companies I can strongly suggest the area of design management is very under developed in Australia.

Any focus in this area would be of great use to the industry and I suggest it is necessary to ensure the growth of the design profession as the market develops and becomes more competitive.

I support Lucy Elliott's application with enthusiasm and look forward to her bringing some much needed design management expertise back to our isolated shores.

Lucy Elliot has worked for Horniak & Canny for the past year on a part time basis and her contribution to our business is highly valued. I feel the opportunity to further her education would be most valuable and I can confidently recommend her as the most suitable applicant for this most valuable scholarship.

Yours sincerely,



Robyn Wakefield

