the
STRATEGIC DESIGNER

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tools and techniques for managing the design process

DAVID HOLSTON

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With over 25 years experience, Dave Holston has worked in the fields of design management, advertising, marketing and public affairs for some of the world's largest organizations—helping them take a strategic design approach that integrates planning, research, implementation and evaluation.

As the Director of Strategic Design Management at The University of Texas at Austin, Dave is responsible for the development and management of the university's brand as well as leading a nationally recognized design team in the creation of print and web collateral, research, advertising and brand management.

Prior to working with the university, Dave served as lead designer for General Electric Services, Martin Marietta Services and Lockheed Martin Services companies. He has also held the position of Senior Art Director at the Philadelphia advertising firm Signature Communications, and later Creative Director for the European PC game developer Blue Byte Software. Throughout his career, Dave has focused on positioning design as key component of business success.

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foreword

A SHARED LANGUAGE

BY SHAWN M. MCKINNEY

Several years ago, over dinner with a mentor, I brought up the perennially difficult question of explaining to someone what we designers do for a living. How does one possibly explain design to someone unfamiliar with the discipline, without getting bogged down in an exhaustive, self-referential exercise in futility?

He laughed and began moving his silverware around. He caused his knife to trade places with his fork, then after a moment's consideration, returned them to their original positions. He slid his fork a half-inch to his left, then a few nudges north. He straightened his spoon to run exactly parallel to his knife and fork. He moved his water glass a bit to his left, to left-align it precisely with his knife. This, he suggested, is what we do.

In essence, as designers, this IS what we do. We move things about. We consider new combinations, new possibilities. We align one thing with another. We create physical (and psychological, and metaphorical) relationships. We consider size, weight, space, proportion, materiality and so forth. We utilize, knowingly or not, design author Robin Williams's catchy list of principles: Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, Proximity. We constantly add to the world's landfills while struggling to improve our visual environments. We do much, in fact, to order, organize, reinterpret, shape and communicate ideas, information and space.

Yet, we continue to struggle to communicate what exactly we do, and why it is of value and significance. In particular, we struggle to communicate the value of design to the business community. Our professional organization, the American Institute of Graphic Arts, has devoted many hours and resources over the past several years to address just this. Yet too often, designers perceive

business as fundamentally foreign to our way of thinking, while business leaders are often reluctant to credit the role design plays in their own success. We can hardly fail to acknowledge each other's presence, yet we often find ourselves without a clue as to how to join forces, how to find common ground and share notes. Business we tend to think of as a left-brain activity, while certainly design belongs to the right. Yet, we need both sides, working together, to function effectively. Designers stand to benefit immensely from strengthening their business acumen, while business people only increase their chances of success by thinking more like designers.

How then, to bring both sides together, to build bridges, to encourage a mutually beneficial dialogue and collaboration? It just so happens we share a language. That language is "process," as Dave Holston makes clear in the pages that follow. Both designers and business people have their own ways of doing things, particular processes and procedures for solving problems and achieving results. Yet, we share many principles in common.

In both the worlds of business and design, as in many other walks of life, repetition is a key element of success. What distinguishes the professional from the amateur, first and foremost, are degrees of skill, discipline, and experience that enable someone to repeat a process as a means of obtaining a desired result, again and again. In areas of practice such as business, medicine and food preparation, repetition and predictability are essential. Creativity and experimentation are perhaps emphasized more strongly and more often in the field of design, yet here, too, on closer inspection, we see the importance of repetition and process. Here, too, we can see the essential role that process and repetition play in producing success.

How, then, does one move from amateur to professional status? One route is several years of intensive on-the-job training, under the expert tutelage of seasoned veterans dealing with everyday challenges. Many design disciplines do not currently require professional certification, or even a college degree. A strong portfolio of work, solid references, and the ability to make a convincing presentation may still be enough to secure an entry-level position. Yet, such designers are often marked by a lack of critical perspective, an ignorance of design history and theory, a limited understanding of responsible practice.

Another path involves pursuing a formal design education. A key component sustaining the educational philosophy of the Savannah College of Art and Design, among the nation's largest such institutions, "process" is no ordinary design term. For example, as any graphic design professor at SCAD will verify, most projects in most courses require students to create and submit a process book, along with final work they submit for a project grade. A process book represents an organized journal or scrapbook that helps a student organize and articulate the journey that led him to solve a design problem or complete a design experiment.

SCAD students do not simply operate without restraint, or attempt to "reinvent the wheel" every time they sit down to a blank piece of paper or a glowing computer screen. Even ideation often takes place in a context of mutual observation, feedback, discipline, accountability and purpose. Students are asked not only to explain their ideas and solutions, but also, given specific guidelines and requirements, to document their process. While creativity is certainly emphasized, organization and focus are considered equally valuable. Every student is also required to complete a course in "The Business of Graphic Design," an integral part of the curriculum rapidly gaining favor in other institutions. As this book and current trends in global competitiveness should make clear, in the near future creativity alone will hardly guarantee success in a field as complex and essential as design.

Process is a concept—a way of doing design, a way of doing business—that neither professionals nor students can afford to ignore. Process is the language of business. Process is the language of design.

—SHAWN M. MCKINNEY
eLearning Professor,
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December, 2010

introduction

THE NEW DESIGNER

NEW SKILLS FOR THE CONCEPTUAL ECONOMY

A few years back I had the good fortune of having lunch with a notable head of a design research firm. Our conversation ran the gamut from ethnography to corporate leadership to design's importance in business. When I asked whether his company employed designers, he responded matter-of-factly that they did not, and that "design is a commodity."

You may or may not agree with that statement, but consider that today just about anyone with an Internet connection and $300 can get a logo, brochure, or web design, all from the comfort of their couch, without ever having to meet with a designer. Companies like crowdSPRING, LogoTournament, Logoworks, IdeaBounty.com, and iStock can provide design customers with a range of options, quickly and cheaply through a crowd-sourcing strategy. In this model, designers compete against each other, and the client pays only for the idea he selects. These services are targeted at small to midsize companies that see value in developing visual identities, but either do not have the means or desire to engage with design agencies. Most significantly, these design clients do not see a difference in the value provided from crowd-sourced options and professional designers. When customers see products as similar and make their selection based on price, this is called commoditization.

For the design community this is unnerving on several levels. Not only is it seen as devaluing the design profession by allowing nonprofessionals to compete, but some of these services are seen as unethical and in violation of professional standards, particularly the concept of working on spec. However, for clients with limited budgets and limited thresholds for risk, these services provide a real value. To them, the value of a professionally designed logo,

website, or photo compared to one designed by an anonymous designer is negligible. Ultimately the market cares little for professional standards, and no amount of fist shaking and professional credos will stop the democratization of design that has been made possible by the availability of computers, accessible graphic design software and a desire on the part of people to participate in the creation of not only design, but the products, services, and experiences that touch their lives.

The question is: How do designers compete in this new environment?

GOOD NEWS FOR RIGHT-BRAINERS

The answer lies in the ability for designers to offer a unique value to their clients—specifically a value that rivals cannot easily copy. An area that provides opportunities for this distinction is design thinking. Whereas the craft of design is threatening to be commoditized, design thinking has gained in stature. In 2000, U.S. Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan said that technical know-how would be superseded by "the ability to create, analyze, and transform information and to interact effectively with others." This idea is echoed in Daniel Pink's book *A Whole New Mind*, in which Pink projects that the future economy will be driven by six key "senses": design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning. For designers with a collaborative spirit and the ability to collect and synthesize information, this is good news.

As competition increases and client needs expand, it is becoming clear that designers in this new era must not only be experts in form, as they traditionally have been, but they must be equally skilled in solving more complex problems by calling on a broader range of skills in the social sciences, technology, and the organization of teams. The ability to collaborate, manage the increasing complexity of design problems, to design "in context" to their target audiences, and to be accountable for design decisions through measurement transforms designers from "makers of things" to "design strategists." Along with the ability to create form, these skills complete the designer of the conceptual economy.

Anne Burdick, chair of the graduate Media Design Program at Art Center College of Design, has projected how design education can best prepare designers to take on these responsibilities. Burdick writes in her article "Graduate Education: Preparing Designers for Jobs That Don't Exist (Yet)," that designers are moving beyond traditional roles to take on bigger, more expansive responsibilities. Burdick goes on to say, "As researchers and entrepreneurs, they must be prepared to generate self-defined areas of investigation and opportunity. This expansion places a new set of demands on design education. Designers need the tools and skills to conceptualize people's lives, to visualize and understand the circulation of capital, people and culture at a global scale, and to intelligently envision the future."

Paul Nini, associate professor in the department of design at the Ohio State University, has been aware of the need to properly prepare students with a broader range of studies like research, social sciences, and business. In his design program at Ohio State, Nini makes a point of exposing students to these areas, showing them how these activities fit into the design profession. Nini describes the curriculum as a combination of courses like business, management, planning, sociology, psychology and other areas outside of the traditional fine arts curriculum.

Frank Tyneski, executive director of the Industrial Design Society of America (IDSA), believes that when imbued with a broader perspective that includes research, students can take their design to a new level. In a *BusinessWeek* interview, Tyneski says, "When it comes to problem solving, [design students] are going deep. They are doing research, contextual inquiry. They have the Internet now, so the tools are available to get a deeper understanding, and they really understand the process of design thinking with greater depth than previous generations."

The New York Times's creative director Khoi Vinh has echoed these ideas, stating in a *BusinessWeek* interview with design educator and author Steven Heller, "The new designer is adaptable across multiple media and multiple disciplines. She can design in a way that's truly native to the web, to mobile devices, to print, to environmental projects. And she can think in terms of concept, execution, and the business equation as well. She's used to doing it all herself, but she can reach out to others when she needs to—and orchestrate those teams to achieve her goals."

In their book, *The Design Experience,* professors Mike Press and Rachel Cooper observe this trend as well, pointing out, "Designers are a combination of craft maker, cultural intermediary, and opportunistic entrepreneur. And of course they are other things as well. They are skilled researchers, lifelong learners, who understand that design—as a very process of change itself—must be informed by knowledge."

Clearly the design profession is starting to put more emphasis on a broader set of skills. However, the idea of a well-rounded design professional is hardly a new concept. In 1957, Henry Dreyfuss said, "A successful performer in this *new* field is a man of many hats. He does more than merely design things. He is a businessman as well as a person who makes drawings and models. He is a keen observer of public taste, and he has painstakingly cultivated his own taste. He has an understanding of merchandising, how things are made, packed, and distributed, and displayed. He accepts the responsibility of his position as liaison linking management, engineering, and the consumer and cooperates with all three."

THE FOUR PRINCIPALS OF THE NEW DESIGNER

The thought of orchestrating the diverse disciplines that make up business, research, social sciences, and design into the design process can seem daunting. However, we see that these areas can be captured in four basic principles.

PRINCIPAL 1: THE NEW DESIGNER EMBRACES COMPLEXITY
How do designers move from the realm of "makers of things" to that of strategists? The first step is to embrace the complexity of design problems. Design is not solely about creating good-looking artifacts, but requires multiple considerations when solving problems such as audience context and the client's business environment. The ability of designers to dive deeply into complex problems takes them from decorators to problem solvers.

PRINCIPAL 2: THE NEW DESIGNER IS COLLABORATIVE
How do designers bring expertise and insight to bear on design problems? Elizabeth Sanders, founder of the design research firm MakeTools, says that,

"The market-driven world has given way to the people-driven era." Sanders points out that a great deal of people without design backgrounds are actively participating in design, and that the distinction between the various aspects of design disciplines are blurring. These factors have put a great deal of emphasis on the collaborative nature of design, particularly on the front-end phases of the design process. Designers are now co-creators with people from other disciplines. Search engine optimization (SEO) specialists, shopper marketing consultants, design researchers, systems analysts, copywriters, and even other designers. In addition to these work teams, clients and audiences must also be engaged. As designers participate more collaboratively, they need to be able to explain their work processes and how they create value. By providing a framework for working together, designers elevate themselves in the hierarchy of teams and organizations, and become valued strategic partners. In the face of increased competition, collaboration is one advantage designers have when working with clients. Designer and author Ellen Shapiro points out that "even the least informed clients with the lowest budgets need to meet with and work personally with their designers." As Shapiro said, only through real human interaction and collaboration can design position itself to go beyond the realms of commodity.

PRINCIPAL 3: THE NEW DESIGNER DESIGNS IN CONTEXT

How do we ensure our design solutions are meaningful? The short answer: By providing a solution that embraces both the business needs of the client and the needs of the audience. Business and audiences are the foundation for design problem solving. Research provides valuable tools for gaining insight into the organizational needs of these two groups. Business tools, like competitive and situational analysis, help designers understand the business environment, allowing them to develop design solutions that are strategic. With audiences, designers can call upon visualization exercises, word games, prototyping and participatory design, actively engaging users in the development of ideas. Traditional tools like focus group, interviews, and ethnography can also provide valuable insights. To paraphrase communications guru Don Schultz, communication is about people, and when we lose sight of the individual, we lose sight of the objectives of communication.

PRINCIPAL 4: THE NEW DESIGNER IS ACCOUNTABLE

How do designers prove their value? The price of a seat at the decision-making table is accountability. For designers, this means being able to communicate the value of design in terms of a return that is meaningful to their clients. Whether tracking changing attitudes, behaviors, sales numbers, the return on investment of design activities, or customer satisfaction, designers elevate their work by establishing metrics for their projects. Although design does not exist in a vacuum and can be a challenge to measure, design metrics help clarify the value of design and provide a way to track the effectiveness of design activities. These four principles flow through the framework of design process. What follows is a typical design process.

1. **Project initiation:** This phase is focused on aligning stakeholders toward a common goal and requires collaborative planning to address complex design problems.

   Skills: Business, interpersonal, organizational, and communication planning skills.

2. **Design research:** This phase defines the context for making design decisions. Centered on the needs of business stakeholders and audiences, this phase relies heavily on collaboration as a means for gathering insights and understanding meaning.

   Skills: Social sciences, interpersonal, qualitative, quantitative, and analytical research skills.

3. **Concept development:** This phase synthesizes the research into an idea and requires divergent and collaborative thinking from multiple perspectives.

   Skills: Creative, ideation, and facilitation skills.

4. **Design development:** This phase is focused on convergence of ideas and developing an aesthetic that is relevant to the audience and the business goal.

   Skills: Design, production, and manufacturing skills.

5. Evaluation: This phase makes design accountable through the measurement of outcomes, whether they are financial, attitudinal, or behavioral.

Skills: Business, accounting and marketing skills.

By looking at design systemically, as a group of interacting skills brought together to create a whole, designers can think about their work in new ways and bring their inherent creativity to bear more broadly. Through process, designers can better orchestrate the needs of business and audiences, manage the complexity of design problems, and provide a framework for collaboration.

THE NEW DESIGNER IS A BUSINESS PARTNER

Darrel Rhea, CEO of Cheskin Added Value, has said that one of the biggest challenges designers face today is making themselves relevant to business. Unfortunately, designers are often brought in at the end of a project and asked to articulate a strategy without understanding what the strategy is or how it was devised. In these scenarios, design is seen as a support service. To break this pattern, the New Designer must exhibit an understanding of how business strategy is developed, and must provide tools to better understand audience need, and be fluent in the basics of business language. By spanning this gap between business and design disciplines, designers build credibility and trust with their clients.

The good news is that the business world is poised to embrace design. John Byrne, editor-in-chief of *Fast Company,* has observed that companies like Samsung and Target use design to achieve an advantage over their competitors. Byrne projects that in the next decade, design will offer a greater competitive advantage than technology has in the past because it is easy and quick, and offers the best chances for return on investment.

Consider how Starbucks and Walmart have both used visual design as part of their competitive strategy. Both companies faced business challenges that they addressed by employing a design solution. Starbucks, dealing with declining sales and closing stores, reverted to their original logo, with the goal of reminding patrons why they sipped their coffee there in the first place.

After an eight-year hiatus, CEO Howard Schultz brought back the old logo, which features a rustic Norse-inspired woodcut of a twin-tailed mermaid, developed by Seattle advertising and design agency Heckler & Associates. The company had phased out the original logo in 1987, when the more familiar modern style was introduced. Similarly, Walmart, in a bid to acknowledge its newfound greenness, updated its logo in the fall of 2008. The new logo is friendlier, softer, and features a flowerlike star, no doubt to put a kinder, gentler spin on a company that has faced concerns over its treatment of employees, environmental practices, and women's rights.

Beyond aesthetics, these updates were flags indicating significant change in the organizations' competitive strategy. What impact these updates will have remains to be seen; however, it represents a significant investment on the part of the companies, and illustrates both businesses' commitment to the power of design.

Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, is reshaping his entire MBA program around the principle that "design skills and business skills are converging." Martin says, "It's time to embrace a new value proposition based on creating—indeed, often co-creating—new products and services with customers that fill their needs, make them happy, and make companies and shareholders rich." He also says that the design skills of "understanding, empathy, problem solving" are what businesses needs today.

On the design side of the coin, designers are reaching out to business. Dave Mason, principal of the Chicago/Vancouver design firm smbolic (formerly SamataMason), speaks of forging the link, with an emphasis on the value of design process. Mason says, "Businesspeople are a lot more aware of design now, and these businesspeople are process driven. And they believe, as they have been taught, that if they follow certain processes they will be successful." Mason points out that what business doesn't like is to work on instinct. "If you've taught all your life that process equals success, then you will naturally want to know that the people you are engaging with have a process that you can understand so you can make a rational judgment."

In addition to providing a transparent design process, it is also critical that designers are able to communicate the value of their work and include specific

steps for measuring design. Rob Wallace, managing partner of the Manhattan-based brand and package design firm Wallace Church, believes that designers are still only speaking to themselves, and not to business. "Designers need to relate to businesspeople in the one measure of success that they have, which is the impact on sales and profit." Wallace says, "It's important that designers learn the language, learn the vernacular, and start speaking in terms of financial investment and design's impact." Process offers a shared language and methodology that businesspeople understand, and when it includes a measurement phase, designers step up and become accountable like other disciplines in the business world.

HOW DESIGN PROCESS PROVIDES VALUE TO THE CLIENT

Business is competitive. Firms jockey for advantage while navigating an ever-changing social, financial, and political environment, struggling to continually refine processes, products, and services; keep abreast of changing consumer demands; and work in emerging markets. To stay on top, firms try to capitalize in the areas of innovation, speed to market, risk management, and effective work processes. These areas are relevant to designers as well. Consider how the design team at Kraft must react to the constantly changing needs of over 220 brands, or how websites like Amazon must constantly monitor and modify their online presence to stay ahead of the curve. Process offers a framework for managing these important considerations.

THE NEED TO INNOVATE

New ideas drive business. The Council of Competitiveness, a group of CEOs, university presidents, and labor leaders, sees innovation as the basis of America's economic success. As companies compete to find the next great thing, they look for ways to move from concept to market as quickly as possible. To do this, they use structured ways of developing, testing, and moving ideas towards production.

Businesses, like designers, need to be in a constant state of ideation. Design gives firms a competitive advantage in overcrowded markets by identifying

unique value and connecting audiences, as well as reacting quickly to social trends. By using a defined process that accommodates the development of new ideas, designers give themselves the tools to innovate and ensure that ideas get implemented within the organization. These processes are applicable to product design, communication design, and service design.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

From e-mail, instant messaging, Twitter, and Skype, the ability to quickly connect person-to-person is now commonplace. This speed is expected in business as well. The first to establish an offering usually dominates the market, making speed to market an important factor in competitive strategy. Design process offers designers and clients a framework for moving forward on projects quickly. Process cuts down on development time by offering a structure for coming up with meaningful concepts that are tied to business objectives. Process also keeps the project team aligned so that downtime is minimized and up time is used more efficiently.

THE NEED TO MANAGE RISK

By its very nature, design projects are ripe for risk. The content arrives late or is incomplete, or worse, incorrect. Schedules are jeopardized by late agreement on direction or sudden changes in content. Budgets are blown. Clients are unhappy. The final piece is ineffective. In short, design is a risky endeavor often centered around an uncertain outcome. Design process integrates controls like design briefs, change orders and sign-offs at critical phases to help manage the uncertainties.

THE NEED TO MANAGE PROJECTS EFFICIENTLY

Design projects often entail aligning people, building consensus, gathering information, and thinking creatively to produce an artifact or service that motivates the audience to act or think in a certain way. Project management skills are applicable in a variety of design-related disciplines, including architecture, new product development, and communications. Almost all of these disciplines impose some structure on the development of their product, whether it is a new building, a coffeepot, a brochure, a retail space, or a website.

THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION AND CO-CREATION

Consider how LEGO harnesses the power of consumers to help develop new products. In 2003, LEGO began gathering data from consumers over the Internet via online dialogs. Through these conversations, LEGO began to realize that their customers don't only want to be consumers; they want to be influencers of the brand. In similar fashion, Converse engaged its users to make ads for its 2005 campaign. As a result, web traffic increased a whopping 40 percent and sales went up 12 percent that quarter. Today, people who have passion and knowledge about music, art, design and video are now doing many of the things that used to be the sole property of design and marketing professionals. This is a result of the public being exposed to a broader range of educational experiences, as well as the accessibility of the tools needed to create new works. For designers, this means clients and audiences are savvy about communication and can offer intelligent opinions on how it's done. Additionally, there is an expectation from clients and audiences that they will be active members of the design process. Therefore, the design process should be transparent so that these creative minds can be active participants in solving their own design problems.

Today, co-creation and participatory design are fueling several successful business models. Companies are benefiting from the creativity that a willing public provides. Co-creation brings companies and audiences together, allowing audiences an opportunity to create ideas and designs while companies provide the manufacturing and distribution. The T-shirt design company Threadless typifies this idea. The company had its humble beginnings in Chicago when Jake Nickell and Jacob DeHart started the online company on a shoestring budget. Fans of the site contribute designs, and the company allows customers to vote on the T-shirts they like best. The winning designs are put into production and offered online. Eight years after its start, Threadless has revenues of $30 million.

As companies strive to connect to audiences, they find that engaging them in the front end of design decisions has many advantages. Audiences have typically had difficulty expressing their needs. This would explain the incredibly high rate of failure for new products. The traditional marketing methods of surveys, focus groups, and interviews are not always enough to

truly understand what customers want. Only when audiences become active participants in the design process do companies gain true insight.

The designer's process has been until recently a closed door. Protective of their processes, afraid of exposing how the "magic" of design is done, designers have tightly guarded their methods. However, these attitudes are changing. In the new collaborative environment design is becoming open source, available to team members, clients, and audiences. Designers are now asked to co-create with people from other disciplines. Clients, once thought of as the spoilers of great design, are now seen as the source of creative ideas and an integral part of developing meaningful design concepts. Audiences are mixing into the equation as well, often providing the most influential insights toward solving design problems. By having a framework for working together, designers can harness the knowledge and insight of these groups, elevate themselves in the hierarchy of teams and organizations, and become valued strategic partners.

For many creatives, collaboration can be uncomfortable—multiple voices competing for dominance, toes being stepped on, and egos bruised come to mind. But consider the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Orpheus was founded by New York City cellist Julian Fifer, who started the Grammy Award–winning chamber music orchestra almost thirty years ago. Traditional orchestras are made up of multidisciplined musicians who must be sensitive to each other in order to produce complicated works. In most orchestras, conductors are the norm, acting as a stabilizing force, directing the musicians toward their own interpretation of the music. Orpheus, however, is unique among orchestras in that it has no conductor. In fact, the role of conductor is shared among its members. The group works on a collaborative democratic principle, with shared responsibilities and rotating participants. This collaborative spirit has won them several Grammy Awards and international collaboration from the likes of Yo-Yo Ma, Isaac Stern and Dawn Upshaw. The group has been so successful with their collaborative approach that businesses like Kraft Foods and Novartis have invited them to speak about their collaborative work process.

Designer-centric design has been a staple in the design industry for years. Often the designer's individual style is what brought him recognition and fame.

The industry, and the education programs that feed it, are now going through a sea change. The idea of authorship is eroding in the face of an increased need to reflect the audience's needs as opposed to an individual designer's style. Todd Wilkens of Adaptive Path refers to designer-centric design as "genius design," where the designer comes in with the perspective of "I am a genius. Give me the problem. I will sit in a room and solve your problem." Whereas there are some situations where this type of approach makes sense, for the most part, a more collaborative, socially constructive type of design, in which the designer is the facilitator, yields better results.

In the design program at the Ohio State University, professor Paul Nini acknowledges this evolution. "That is the key for students—creating something meaningful," he says. "I think that's the thing that students need to figure out, that they can create things for themselves, or they can create them for the people that will actually experience and use them in some way. They can actually do both, where the designer can achieve some satisfaction, and the user and audience can get something meaningful as well."

The goal of graphic design is to communicate messages by attracting and retaining viewers, with the intent of influencing their thinking and behavior. Design must consider numerous factors like perceptions, beliefs, visual language, trends, business, and culture. By including specific stages in the design process to address these factors, designers can make their work more meaningful to both clients and audiences.

THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY

Over the last two decades, process management has played an increasingly important role in business. From W. Edwards Deming and Total Quality Management in the 1980s to Six Sigma and Lean in the 2000s, businesses have looked to process as a way to improve quality and efficiency in their organizations. By understanding workflow, information, communication and controls, firms are able to address problems quicker, increase quality, and ultimately create value for the customer.

Design is an iterative process, requiring a series of explorations, a layering of ideas and constant refinement. Unlike the factory, which requires systematic processes to develop consistent products, design process is about going into the

unknown and having the flexibility to react to any number of organizational or audience considerations.

Design processes are often tacit, and designers tend to work internally, developing concepts and ideas through idiosyncratic methods. These methods, though at times successful, frequently are difficult to share with others. As designers are asked to work in more collaborative environments, they must be able to communicate process clearly to co-workers and clients.

"Process is more important than outcome," says designer Bruce Mau. "When the outcome drives the process, we will only go to where we've already been. If process drives outcome, we may not know where we're going, but we will know we want to be there." By defining the process and going through all of the stages, the designer is able to reach his design solution via a structured thought process, arriving at an idea that meets the need of the client and addresses a specific goal. This process helps avoid the common design problem of sameness. In other words, much of design feels derivative as designers look to others' work for inspiration. Design process offers a clean approach, without assumptions or indulgences.

The process outlined in this book includes the phases of design research, concept development, design development, and measurement. These phases are common to most design projects and are used, whether consciously or not, by most designers. Granted, there are as many design processes as there are designers, each having their own approach and tools to achieve their ends. But with few exceptions design projects go through each of these phases.

IN CONCLUSION

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the field of graphic design is expected to grow 13 percent through 2018. Demand for design professionals will increase, and competition for design positions will become tighter. As businesses look to hire design professionals, those who have the ability to collaborate and to manage the increasing complexity of design

problems and to design "in context" to their target audiences, and to be accountable through measurement, will have greater opportunities in the marketplace. Design process provides a framework for integrating these activities, offering unique client value and differentiating their offerings in a crowded market.