

The Business Side of Design

► The scoop on freelancing

By Shanti Hadioetomo

Perhaps you've just completed the *Publication Design and Print Production* class (CMNS 473) and you've discovered that you have a talent and passion in graphic design. Perhaps you were also urged to do some freelance work to gain real-world experience. The nagging question at the back of your mind is how to deal with the business side of graphic design.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RUN YOUR OWN GRAPHIC DESIGN BUSINESS?

Drive. I have learned that when you are on your own, you have to turn into a business person. Business of Design Online (BoDo) contributing author Jeff Jeffreys says, "your design talent matters as far as whether you'll do good work." However, at the end of the day, your success will depend on the availability of resources, knowing how to run a business and keeping your clients.

Research and take advice. As with setting up any business, even when you are not considering registering your business, it's wise to draw up your business plan. This will help narrow your focus both in your specialty and in getting your clients. A business plan will encourage you to look for guidance on how other graphic designers have done it themselves.

There are a variety of resources you can use to learn about the business side of graphic design. The Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC) BC chapter discusses issues facing graphic designers today. It is amazing how much you can learn from reading the blogposts that professionals bounce to each other. There is a



The cover of Shanti's design portfolio.

Vancouver Graphic Design Meetup.com group that meets on the second Monday of every month and is free to join.

Personality traits and attitude. These are as important as your business skills and talent in determining your success. Jeffreys says, "if you are organized, responsible, confident, friendly, you might do well running your own business. If you fall short in any of those areas, you're in for some frustration." Be resourceful in developing the skills that you don't have; volunteering and joining professional organizations is an inexpensive way for you to do some personal and professional development. ► *continued on page 3*

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Tips for Government Interviews

► Advice from first-hand experience

By Jennifer Liu

This spring, I was able to get the position I wanted working as a Communications Intern for Service Canada in Victoria. Before landing this position, I had applied for two other government positions, all of which added up to three interviews in the span of one crazy week! After spending hours carefully writing and editing my résumé and cover letters, I thought the most laborious part of preparation was already over. I even remember thinking to myself, “how hard can it be to answer a few questions during an interview?” Little did I know how wrong I was. Luckily I survived all three interviews with my ego and sanity intact.

I want to share some of my experiences and lessons learned along the way, specifically in terms of preparing for structured and formal interviews for government positions. There are three areas that I want to touch on: skills, preparation and phone interviews.

SKILLS

In order to assess the written and verbal communication abilities of candidates, many government interviews are divided into two parts: a timed written exam and a traditional Q&A interview. In addition to communication skills, your ability to think critically under time constraints will also be tested, as many of the questions are situation based and require a quick response. Usually you are told to answer five to six questions or complete one to two written tasks within a half-hour period.

PREPARATION

As with all interviews, it is very important to pay attention to the list of things the interviewer requested you to do. For example, you will be asked to provide a piece of photo identification and proof of education (also your passport/citizenship card if you were born outside of Canada). You also need to complete a security clearance form with information regarding your current and previous place of residence for the

last five years. All this is sometimes done before the beginning of the interview so staff can verify your identity.

You should also pay attention to small hints interviewers may drop about the questions that will be asked. It is a very good idea to do some research and learn as much as you can about the branch’s mandate and the services they offer. In preparation for my own interviews, I spent a few good hours browsing through related governmental department websites to get a better understanding of what the department was about. The media section on the websites is especially helpful in providing information on recent events and changes that might be important to your interview.

PHONE INTERVIEWS

Phone interviews are very common for jobs that are outside of the Lower Mainland, and depending on the arrangement, they can take place either in your home or in the co-op office. From my experience, I found phone interviews to be harder and more stressful because you lack the facial cues and visual feedback normally available at an in-person interview. Here are a few tips to consider:

1. Room set up and secure connection:

It is best to have the interview on a land line in a quiet room free of disturbance.

2. Dress up and maintain good posture:

The interviewer can hear the professionalism in your voice if you look the part.

3. Pen and paper:

Record short notes; this is especially important for answering long questions or recalling names for a panel interview.

4. Water:

Have a glass of water handy since you do not want to have to run to the kitchen during an interview.

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WHAT ARE THE MYTHS AND REALITIES OF FREELANCING?

Myth: Working alone would be fun

Reality: Freelancing can be lonely and you will likely have less social time given the amount of work you can put in

Myth: I will have more security

Reality: Definitely no financial security – your bills will usually come more regularly than your income

Myth: I will have more free time

Reality: Probably not, but you will have more control about how you spend your time

These are but some of the main factors to consider when you are thinking of working for yourself. It would be wise to get agency experience so you can learn from experienced people. Keep your freelancing to a part-time basis while you are still strengthening your graphic design muscles and building up the capital to be on your own. Good luck!

RESOURCES

Books

- Business Side of Creativity by Cameron Foote
- The Business of Graphic Design: A Professional's Handbook by RGD Ontario

Professional Affiliations

- Society of Graphic Designers of Canada: www.gdc.net
- Vancouver Graphic Design Meetup Group: <http://graphicdesign.meetup.com/73>
- IABC/BC: iabc.bc.ca

Websites

- Business of Design Online (BoDo): businessofdesignonline.com
- Freelance Switch: freelanceswitch.com
- Creative Latitude: creativelatitude.com
- GDC blog: bc.gdc.net/blog

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5. **Smile:** Strangely enough, looking at yourself in a small mirror can help take away some of the nervousness you feel and remind you to smile.

Sometimes it can even be to your advantage to admit to your interviewer about being nervous. In my case, my panel interviewers were all very reassuring and gave me the support I needed to formulate my answers. By being honest, your interviewers may feel more sympathetic towards a less than stellar performance and give greater consideration for other parts of the interview such as the written portion or your references.

FINAL WORDS OF ADVICE

Beware that the formal structure of some government interviews can leave little room for discussions outside of the preset list of questions. Use the period at the end of the interview to highlight some of the things you have done to ensure you demonstrate your unique experiences and qualifications. You can take the initiative by asking permission to show portfolio pieces (if applicable), or asking questions that have been designed to show off your knowledge or interest in a related area.

Besides preparing yourself for the interview, help your references prepare for the questions they may get about you. Let them know what positions you have applied for and give them a brief job description so they are not caught off guard when they get the call. For the position I currently hold, my interviewer phoned up all of my references!

Competition for government positions can be quite intense. In addition to a strong résumé and a well-written cover letter, the possession of good interview skills can prove to be essential in establishing your competitive edge over other candidates. Good luck and happy interviewing! ◀



Jumping Back into Co-op

► Time to build valuable relationships

By Melissa Chungfat

I joined co-op in my second year and I found a position with a company outside the program. At the time, I believed my experience there would be enough to lead me to similar opportunities that co-op offers. So I delayed co-op and worked for a year and a half. I did not realize at the time I made a bad decision.

My previous job working as an administrative assistant for a herbal food company enhanced my organizational and employee communication skills. However, unlike my job, it was through working with and meeting a lot of people as volunteer chair for World University Service of Canada that I challenged myself the most. In 2006, I left work to focus on my studies and looked for other communications-related positions, which was much harder than I had anticipated.

At 110 credits with only a few courses needed to graduate, I asked Sangita, with very high doubts, if there was any way I could return to the co-op program to actively participate. I decided to attach a minor to buy me some time to complete at least three co-op terms. Two interviews later, I happily accepted my position as the Project Assistant for the Faculty of Applied Sciences Co-op program at SFU. This position challenges me within the kind of friendly and supportive environment I was seeking.

The job description and position title does not do justice to the amazing opportunities and people I am able to connect with during my two terms. I help Communication, Kinesiology and Computing Sciences organize events, work with students, edit newsletters, create marketing materials and create projects of my own.

I also never fully appreciated or knew how to “network,” though I prefer to use the term I heard from another staff member, “relationship-building,” until I began this position. For the “Careers in Communication” event, for example, I collaborated with my friend Shanti Hadioetomo, who created a professionally-designed event program. Also, my friend Kei Baritugo works for Shannon Daub, the Communication Director



Co-op student Melissa Chungfat (second left) with co-op coordinators at the Communication Co-op Alumni Event at the Diamond Alumni Centre.

for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). Ms. Daub spoke at our event and I was able to make a connection with her to help with the CCPA’s future projects.

I would never have had the opportunity and time to get involved in these projects if I still had my head in the books as in previous academic semesters. Outside work, I have the time to attend events and to belong to professional associations such as the International Association of Business Communicators.

I have not regretted my decision to go back into co-op. I used to be one of those people who wanted to graduate in four years or less. But I am enjoying the wonderful staff, my very supportive supervisors and the students I encounter.

I encourage everyone to participate in the co-op program to get relevant work experience and make invaluable connections with people that, sometimes, you will not even expect. Speaker and Director of Resort to Resort Dean Kneider said, “you can have good luck, but you will have better luck when you take advantage of your opportunities.” Co-op is one of those opportunities. ◀

The Style of Substance

► What to wear for interviews

By Megan Lau

So you polished the perfect resume and cover letter for your dream position and the work pays off – you get an interview with the employer. The face-to-face interview is often the only chance you’ll be able to make an impression in-person before the interviewer(s) make a decision. It is also an important networking opportunity, so what you say and do in the interview are crucial. But studies have shown that the first 30 seconds that you meet could be the real deciding factor.

That first impression can make all the difference; looking professional, polished, and even stylish, can give you the leading edge over other applicants. It sends the message that you are already prepared to jump into the workplace without the employer needing to ‘groom’ you before seeing great results.

To make that impact, there are a few guidelines to follow that will truly wow your interviewer.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

It is always a difficult decision when deciding whether to wear something more formal or to opt for more casual outfits. Make an educated guess considering the culture of the organization and make choices accordingly.

Interview attire for men and women differ only slightly. In general, it is so very important that everything fits properly, is pressed and looks like it is well taken care of in order to appear professional and presentable; so faded blacks, wrinkled pants or jackets that look well-used never send the right message.

Instead, invest in well-fitting pieces like a suit and long sleeve shirt, or a tailored dress or skirt that is not too short. These can be pricey items but they’re well worth the investment when you get the job! Also, coordinated pieces can be mix-and-matched with the jeans and t-shirts you wear to school every day.

For the interview, add belts, wear dark socks (with pants) or neutral hosiery, bring a briefcase or handbag, and for the final touch put on shoes that stay on the conservative side in terms of colour and styles.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

The smallest things can make a huge difference. For example, one thing that really turns employers off are things that you can’t even see: cologne, aftershave, or perfume. The day of an interview, avoid splashing on a fragrance out of courtesy to the interviewer; they might have allergies and scents can be quite distracting.

While piercings and tattoos are legitimate expressions of art and body politics, it’s often best to leave them out of the professional arena. Keep piercings to a minimum and cover up tattoos as much as possible. Employers generally associate body art with unreliability and sloppiness rather than professionalism. In other words, you could appear to be a risk, instead of an advantage, to the employer.

Another little detail to pay attention to is your fingernails! Make sure they are clean and trimmed. For women, long or brightly coloured nails can be stylish but not always professional. As a general rule, tone down trendy styles for interviews unless you are interviewing for a fashion-oriented position.

That being said, style is all about your personality: small touches like stylish cufflinks, a great tie, or an understated, but colourful piece of jewellery are great options to add to your interview outfit. You want to be comfortable in what you are wearing so you can focus on wowing the interviews with your answers and personality.

Before you step into the interview, have one last look in the mirror. Do you look ready for a day at work at your dream placement? If so, great! Before you even say a word, your attire is going to do a lot of the talking and it will say all the right things. ◀

Meet the Faculty: Janet Kennedy

► **Communication students learn hands-on design skills**

By Laurie Jung

Have you ever tried registering for CMNS 473, but could never get in? *Publication Design and Print Production* is one of Communication's most popular courses that fills up within a week and requires department consent. One of the reasons why students are racing to sign up for this class is because of Janet Kennedy. She is an instructor who motivates her students and equips them with survival tools for the world of communications design after graduation.

Janet has been teaching in the School of Communication for over 11 years. Other courses she taught were CMNS 478: *Publishing Project Group* as well as a special self-promotion class that helped students prepare for the workplace. Janet has many years of teaching experience in communication from graphic design to journalism and more. She has taught at Douglas College, Kwantlen University College and helped develop the Design and Publishing program at Langara College.

Before beginning her journey in the field of communications, Janet studied Art History at UBC for a couple of years and then left to travel the world. Between traveling and work, Janet completed a degree at UVic in Fine Arts. After graduation, she decided that she did not want to be a starving artist and applied for a position at Indian and Northern Affairs as a graphic designer. Janet acquired her graphic design skills from a mentor in addition to teaching herself.

Many students have come to her for suggestions in improving their résumés. So in some of Janet's classes, she emphasizes the dos and don'ts of writing a résumé. Janet has seen many students' résumés throughout her teaching career and has noticed that SFU students have excellent content in theirs. She thinks co-op is one reason why these students have accumulated so much work experience and that co-op is a great way for students to experience the world of communication.

What advice does Janet have for co-op students? Get in tune with your experience quotient (E.Q), which is similar to intelligence quotient (I.Q.), but is solely based on experience. By raising your E.Q., one can obtain ideas and inspirations for their work. Janet referred me to an essay by Peter Glen, which states that there are two ways to enhance one's E.Q: experience the world and experience yourself. A creative individual is the sum of his or her ideas. This requires us to taste, try, investigate, read, explore, and experience everything. Students can certainly raise their E.Q. through co-op!

It is through an artist's experiences by which they draw upon their ideas and ultimately deliver projects that impress their clients. As Janet says, "get out there and experience the world!" ◀

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An ad assignment Shanti Hadioetomo made for Janet's *Publication Design and Print Production* class.

Working in Non-Profit: Rich in Experience

► The benefits of working in non-profit

By Sukhy Sidhu

I spent the summer of 2006 working at the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), the largest non-governmental, non-profit funder of diabetes research in the world. Their mandate is to find a cure for Type 1 diabetes and its complications. The BC Regional Head Office, where I worked, focuses on raising funds by hosting several annual events, such as walks and galas, throughout the province.

Since it was my first co-op placement, my expectations were high, but they were greatly surpassed. I gained an incredible amount of valuable experience in such a short period of time. My wide-ranging duties and assignments include: helping set up auctions, helping at two golf tournaments, writing a press release and public service announcement and designing sponsorship packages with full creative liberty.

WHY WORK FOR NON-PROFIT?

If helping others doesn't warm your heart, there is a lot to be gained from the experience itself. While non-profit organizations often lack in pay (unfortunately on the lower end of the salary scale) you will greatly make up for it in the valuable experiences gained. I started with just one item in my portfolio, then at the end of ten weeks, I had nearly two full portfolios of publishing and editing samples. The experience I gained is a stepping stone for a career in graphic design, journalism, event planning, fundraising, editing, writing and countless other jobs related to communication.

Join a non-profit organization through Co-op or volunteer to help yourself secure a job and enhance a variety of skills. Many non-profit organizations hold large fundraising events ranging from golf tournaments to black-tie galas. Event organization is an important skill as it requires the ability to multi-task, communicate with a wide range of personnel from CEOs to high schools volunteers, to deal with last minute disasters, and to have the crucial ability to prioritize tasks to ensure that everything is



A beautiful work of art at a Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation event.

completed within a reasonable timeline. Also, the events themselves are quite fun.

THE BEST DAY EVER...

I had the opportunity to work at two charity golf tournaments benefiting JDRF. One of them was organized by Boston Pizza International and was held over two days at Quilchena Golf and Country Club.

After all of the hard work preparing for the event, the fun started on an early morning that included a complimentary continental breakfast while signing in guests, followed by a paid four-hour break.

Returning to a catered lunch, I was sent to the golf course to verify hole-in-ones that were designated with large cash prizes. Then came gift certificates, huge, fragrant flowers along

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Happy kids at a JDRF event.

► **Working in Non-Profit** ...Continued from Page 7

Editors:

Erika Wah
Marcia Shimizu
Melissa Chungfat

Design & Layout:

Melissa Chungfat
Jane Nunnikhoven
Special thanks to
Amara Der

Contacts:

Melissa Chungfat
Project Assistant
MBC 1325
604-291-3505
mjchungf@sfu.ca

Sangita Mudaliar
Program Assistant
K 9665
604-291-5367
sangitam@sfu.ca

Marcia Shimizu
Co-op Coordinator
K 9669
604-291-3862
mshimizu@sfu.ca

Erika Wah
Co-op Coordinator
K 9661
604-291-5542
ewah@sfu.ca

with thank-you cards for doing our part. Being appreciated seemed unnecessary – the event itself was like a vacation.

A few days following a second golf tournament, I was working on a graphic design project when a manager put a card on my desk. It was signed by a child with juvenile diabetes and expressed his appreciation for what others were doing to help him. That small gesture made my day.

I am incredibly lucky to have had such an amazing time working for a research foundation. This is where I will look for a future career. ◀

Super-size my Résumé

► **Co-op helps make the résumé fatter**

By: Amara Der

I knew, my parents knew, everyone knew that my high school résumé wasn't going to cut it for the career world. So what did I do? Nothing, until I heard about co-op from a friendly SFU student brave enough to stand in front of an extremely large lecture hall. I have to give a lot of thanks to that courageous girl for leading me to become the person I am now: a co-op student with an awesome résumé.

Not only did the introductory co-op tutorial, Bridging Online, assist my initial understanding of why I use certain terms in my résumé, but it also became the backbone of my résumé and co-op experience. Let's just say that "near and far transfer" are practically my favourite words in the English language.

Some improvements on my high school résumé include upgrading from Microsoft Word to InDesign, expanding gibberish to significant phrases and changing boring subtitles to fun categories. Who knew that résumés can be much more flexible than what CAPP teachers told us in high school? I can play with the layout, add colour and maybe add some shapes or small pictures/icons.

Statistics Corner

Who we are: Spring 07 Spring 06

New admits	37	28
Total Participating	115	101
Total placements	92	74

Who's doing what

Eight-month term	32	18
First co-op	26	28
Second co-op	30	19
Third co-op	22	13
Fourth co-op	10	12
Fifth co-op	4	2
Self-directed co-op	20	8

Where we're working

Greater Vancouver	79	67
Out-of-town	3	4
Overseas	10	2

Who we're working for

Federal government	17	15
Provincial government	4	6
Municipal government	1	0
Government agencies	22	12
Not-for-profit	13	14
Private	35	27

Where else we're placed

Arts	11	5
Business	13	1
Computing Science	3	0
Science	0	1
Kinesiology	0	1

On top of that, I don't have to keep those dull titles like "work and volunteer experience" or "skills and interest"; throw those away and make up new ones! Right now, my "references" section says "friends, but not really" and these clever titles have gotten me a few more interviews than I expected.

So what's the point of my story? Have fun, be creative, be you and super-size your résumé! ◀