

HIRING PRACTICES FOR GRAPHIC DESIGNERS  
IN UTAH COUNTY, UTAH

by

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## ABSTRACT

### HIRING PRACTICES FOR GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

#### IN UTAH COUNTY, UTAH

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The purpose of this study was to show how hiring standards of evidence for graphic designers in Utah County compared with the national standards of evidence. The four major national standards of evidence for hiring graphic designers, identified by American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) and Goldfarb, in order of importance are portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education. The data from this study revealed that Utah County employer's standards of evidence matched up closely to national standards of evidence, but the order of importance was slightly different because personality was ranked ahead of recommendations and education.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The term *design* is broadly used to explain a myriad of concepts. Generally to design is “to create, fashion, execute, or construct according to plan” (Merriam-Webster, 2004). Graphic design is defined as “the process and art of combining text and graphics and communicating an effective message in the design of logos, graphics, brochures, newsletters, posters, signs, and any other type of visual communication” (About, 2003). Coyne (2003, p. 96) notes graphic designers are “responsible for conceptualization and design of graphic applications such as a collateral material, environmental graphics, books and magazines, corporate identity, film titling and multimedia interfaces, from concept to completion.” In addition Heller and Balance (2002, p. 250) have noted, “Designers understand the reason for a particular approach rather than merely engaging in meaningless stylistic mimicry.”

The late 1990s was an exciting time for graphic designers because of the Internet and the demand for well-designed sites. Most companies wanted a dynamic presence on the web and thus needed to employ designers. Hundreds of new companies were established with their only base of operation in the virtual world of the Internet. There was talk of the print world being a thing of the past (Midgley, 2002; Tolme, 1999). However, on March 10, 2000, the Internet bubble burst (Bond, 2004; Leonhardt, 2000) and with it hundreds of design jobs were lost (Richtel, 2000).

In the current job market, it has become particularly challenging to obtain a job in graphic design. As a result of today's tough job market, understanding the needs of employers, what experience and education are needed, and what they want in a portfolio are all issues of concern for designers who are seeking employment. A designer might ask, "How do I best prepare myself to get a job?" Understanding what is required or expected by those hiring is a perfect starting point on the path to employment.

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that industry standards for hiring are established by the employers in a specific occupational area (Crosby, 2003). In the area of graphic design, national standards of evidence for employment have been studied and general lists presented by the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) and by Ros Goldfarb. The purpose for AIGA is to set the national agenda for the role of design in its economic, social, political, and cultural contexts. Goldfarb specializes in the placement of creative, production, marketing, and executive personnel for graphic design nationally and has studied hiring practices for designers nationally. AIGA developed a recommended list of standard evidences for employers to use when hiring designers, listing in order of importance: first, the portfolio; second, recommendations (i.e., experience); third, education; and fourth, personality (i.e., how they fit in the company culture) (AIGA, 2003). Goldfarb's (2001) list is more detailed, but can be summed up in a similar manner in placing first, talent (portfolio); second, personality of the designers; third, academic skills (writing, organization, etc); and fourth, experience (p. 148). Each of these lists describes recommended standards that employers of graphic designers may use. Owing to the fact that each of these organizations gather most of their information from markets on the east coast or California, and neither of these two organizations have

shown data specifically from Utah, the focus for this research was to localize the data specifically to Utah County.

#### Problem of the Study

The problem for this study was that there was not a clear understanding in Utah County, Utah of the hiring practices for graphic designers according to the according to the Utah Department of Workforce Services (D Olstrum, personal interview, August 27, 2003). However, there exists national information gathered showing the national hiring standards of evidence as portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education (AIGA, 2003 and Goldfarb, 2001).

#### Purpose of the Study

This research involved gathering interview data concerning the hiring practices in the graphic design field in Utah County, Utah. The purpose of this study was to understand the current hiring practices of graphic designers in Utah County, Utah. Further, it was to show how hiring practices (standards) in Utah County compared with the national standards. Using the four major standards identified by AIGA and Goldfarb; (i.e. portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education) verifying the validity of the national hiring standards of evidence. This information could be used to help graphic designers understand what is expected of them and how credentials (education) fit into their career path. Understanding the hiring process will also benefit educators of graphic designers and those seeking employment as graphic designers.

### Research Question

Suggested in the statement of the problem are several general research questions for investigation. For the purpose of this study, the general research questions were stated with their supporting sub-questions as follows:

1. To what extent did the hiring of graphic designers in Utah County compare with the four standards of evidence identified by AIGA and Goldfarb: (i.e. portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education)?
2. What are the types of designers that are employed in Utah County?
3. To what extent were portfolios and resumes used in hiring graphic designers in Utah County?
4. To what extent was personality used in hiring graphic designers in Utah County?
5. To what extent was experience (recommendations) used in hiring graphic designers in Utah County?
6. To what extent was education used in hiring graphic designers in Utah County. Is education a factor?
7. How did employers define their needs when hiring?
8. How did employers find designers to hire?
9. Did employers use a written ranking system during the hiring process?
10. How did employers set a base salary?
11. What did employers feel the changes in hiring practices have been over the last five years?
12. What changes did employers feel are to come in the next five years in hiring?

### Assumptions

In the literature, (AIGA, 2003; Poggenpohl, 1993; Reis, 2001; Schwarz, 1998) it was indicated that the number one source of evidence considered on hiring decisions was the applicant's portfolio. Employers look for diversity (wide range of art skills), which is either developed while attending college or on-the-job (Goldfarb, 2001; Hales, 2002).

Even though many employers stated that they do not look for a college graduate, by having college interns, calling college teachers for recommendations, and advertising openings at college placement centers, those same employers implicitly encourage applicants with college degrees.

### Definition of Terms

In order to assist the reader, the following terms are defined in alphabetized categories.

#### *Creative or concept designers*

Designers who develop fresh new artistic ideas for each project.

#### *Production designers*

Purely technical designers who have knowledge of the requirements of printing and output processes, advanced abilities on computer design programs, and excellent problem solving skills are required. These designers are sometimes called pre-press technicians.

#### *Design*

Identifying a problem and the intellectual creative effort of an originator, manifesting itself in drawings or plans, which include schemes and specifications (IIID, 2003).

### *Graphic design*

Graphic design is the profession that plans and executes the design of visual communication according to the needs of audiences and contexts for which communication is intended (NASAD, 2003-04, p. 90). Simply put, it is the art of visualizing ideas (Helfand, 2004). Graphic design is the most ubiquitous of all the arts. It responds to all needs at once: personal and public, embraces concerns both economic and ergonomic, and is informed by many disciplines, including art and architecture, philosophy and ethics, literature and language, science and politics and performance.

### *Designers or graphic artists*

Graphic designers apply what they have learned about physical, cognitive, social, and cultural human factors to communication planning and the creation of appropriate form that interprets, informs, instructs, or persuades. Graphic designers use various technologies as means for creating visual form and as an environment through which communication takes place. (NASAD, 2003-04, p. 90).

Graphic designers plan, analyze, create, and evaluate visual solutions to communication problems. Their work ranges from the development of strategies to solve large-scale communication problems, to the design of effective communication products, such as publications, computer programs, packaging, exhibitions, and signage (NASAD, 2003-04, p. 90). Graphic artists use a variety of print, electronic, and film media to create art that meets a client's needs (Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2002-2003).

### *Firms*

In most cases, the term firm will include design shops, departments, and agencies unless otherwise designated

*Design firms or agencies*

Entities set up to meet needs in the marketing and advertising markets which are usually able to handle large clients and employ both creative and production designers.

*Design department*

In-house design departments that are part of a larger company. They employ both creative and production designers, but mostly creative designers.

*Design shops*

These entities are much like a firm, but most clients are local and smaller.

*Freelance designers*

Individual or independent designers who are often used by firms for single jobs or for a set time length. They do not have a storefront.

*Art, creative, or concept directors*

Constitute the management in the design world, responsible for most of the creative concepts and direction given to other designers.

*Lead or senior designers*

Hold some creative power when it comes to design; they work closely with the directors and are over the junior designers.

*Junior designers*

Usually part production designers; they hold little say in the actual design.

*Entry-level designer*

A person who is one-to-two years out of school and requires mentoring in all aspects of design conception and implementation.

*Presses (large)*

Set up to handle large jobs such as books, magazines, and newspapers. They employ mostly production designers.

*Press shops (medium)*

Set up to handle the output of the print designs given to them by outside firms. They employ production designers who finish the pre-press design work almost exclusively.

*Print shops (small)*

Set up to handle small print jobs, they typically only employ production designers.

*Terms not defined*

This study did not distinguish graphic designers titles anymore defined than production or creative design; however, the fact that there are dozens of terms used in the design field should not go over looked. Terms such as web, game, or animation design are not discussed, and there are many more; they mostly fall into the major categories.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Nationally, the standard of evidence used for hiring graphic designers listed by American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) (2003) and Goldfarb a national expert in the hiring of designers (2001), as noted in Chapter 1, are portfolio, experience, personality, and education. Using the framework of evidence, in the review of literature it is shown how these practices are the standard of evidence for hiring nationwide.

#### Portfolio

In the literature, it was revealed that portfolios in graphic design were a collection of examples of a designer's best work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002-2003). Portfolios were listed as important when hiring a designer in order to get a feel of the designer's design style and talent. AIGA (2003) indicated that the portfolio was the first source of evidence to review when hiring a designer. Goldfarb (2001) added that the designer's talent (portfolio) always ranked first in importance when hiring, but it was never enough by itself (p. 147). Their position is validated and explained by Madsen's (2003) statement, "The importance of the portfolio cannot be overemphasized. At the moment of the interview, the portfolio becomes the student. The successful designer is one who is prepared to communicate with this market." In this case, the market is the employer. There are scores of books and articles that cover every aspect of a portfolio planning and production, written to help designers better understand what defines a good portfolio. How to develop a strong portfolio was not covered in the literature review; however, for

those who are interested in further information on developing a portfolio refer to the books *Portfolio Design*, by Harold Linton or *Designing Creative Portfolios* by Gregg Berryman.

### Experience

In the literature, it was shown that experience gives a designer a greater fluency in the language of design, “proficiency in typography, layout, photography, art direction, and so on, enabling the graphic designer to put original ideas into concrete form so they can be produced and sold in the market” (Heller, 1998). Experience is important when hiring, not only for the greater understanding of the terminology but the understanding of on-the-job issues that cannot be duplicated in a classroom. Exclusive classroom experience will not expose designers to many of the day-to-day problems that designers at firms encounter. Thus, AGIA placed experience as the second factor behind the portfolio in hiring. But the Goldfarb list placed experience fourth. Goldfarb believes that personality and academic skills are factors that would come before experience. In both cases, they believe that experience is important. Utah Job Services stated that there were 113 job orders under the ONET code of "graphic designer" listed from January 1, 2000, to September 4, 2003, in Utah County, every one of the companies listed “experience” as being a priority in their hiring (Utah Department of Job Services, 2003). Having experience gives a designer an edge when looking for a job. Employers know that designers with experience have a better understanding of the expectations that will be placed on them.

How does a designer gain the experience he/she needs to get the job he/she wants? Heller (2002) recommended internships. Specifically, Heller stated that the “first

step to getting started in the design business is to find an internship or staff job in [your area of interests.] Learn as much as possible, do as much hands-on work as you can, and become an experienced practitioner in your chosen field(s)” (p. 233). Heller further promoted the idea of starting in small shops and moving progressively to larger ones.

Another road that designers choose to obtain some, if not all, of their job experience is freelance design. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics three out of ten designers are self-employed—almost five times the proportion for all professional and related occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002-2003). Most designers will at some point work as a freelance designer. As this study is focusing on hiring practices, freelance designers are framed mostly in the stage of getting experience that will lead to a fulltime position with a firm or opening up a fulltime design shop of their own.

### Personality

In the literature, it was revealed that personality, and how a prospective employee will “fit” into the company and work with co-workers is an important factor considered in hiring decisions.

Accountemps (2004) noted that:

Every company has a unique corporate culture or way of doing things. For example, some firms emphasize collaboration on projects, while others prefer an individual approach to assignments. Some companies expect their employees to work overtime on a regular basis; others don't focus on the time involved as long as the work is completed. These and other factors are all part of the larger way that organizations conduct their business.

About (2004) noted, “Company culture is the term give to the shared values and practices of the employees.” Fitting into the culture is critical as noted by Reh (2004), “Company culture is important because it can make or break your company. Companies with an adaptive culture that is aligned to their business goals routinely outperform their competitors. Some studies report the difference at 200% or more.”

To explain why Goldfarb listed personality second, the research of Dever & Day stated, "employers said the better the candidate's personal skills and attributes - such as confidence, flexibility, an ability to communicate well and work in a team, creativity and verbal reasoning - the less their particular discipline seemed to matter" (Calder, 2002). The easier a person is to work with, the more forgiving an employer is when looking at other aspects of the hiring process. AGIA placed personality last on their list of things to look at when hiring, yet if the designers personality did not fit into the culture of the company it would not matter how good his portfolio was.

### Education

In the literature, it was observed that, “Employers recognized the value in the various attributes that art graduates could bring to a job. These attributes include well-developed research skills, problem-solving, project management, the discipline to think analytically, enhanced communication skills, the ability to embrace new ideas and theories, and the ability to communicate complex ideas” (Calder, 2002). Further, the U.S. Department of Labor added greater importance to academic skills when they stated, “individuals in the design field must be creative, imaginative, persistent, and able to communicate their ideas in writing, visually, and verbally. Because tastes in style and fashion can change quickly, designers need to be well read, open to new ideas and

influences, and quick to react to changing trends. Problem-solving skills and the ability to work independently and under pressure are important traits” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002-2003). These traits listed could be enhanced in the college atmosphere.

Both the AGIA (2003) and Goldfarb (2001) list ranked education third for hiring a graphic designer. AGIA gives the qualifier, “you may want to look at their educational background,” recognizing that with a good portfolio, work experience and personality the lack of a college degree will not keep a designer from getting a job. However, Heller (2002) believed that few people possess the natural gift of graphic design and usually the untutored designer produces untutored design. He further recognized that “formal education does not make anyone more talented” (p 306) rather, education is like tuning a musical instrument, but just getting the instrument in tune will not change what type of instrument it is. A person who wants to be a designer must start with some talent to be able to be refined.

#### *Emphasis of education in art schools*

“There are an estimated 2300 schools (two and four years) with dedicated and ancillary graphic design programs graduating about 50,000 students each year” (Heller, 2002, p. 306). However, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) presently extends accreditation to 248 institutions (2004). Schools adopt differing concepts of what is most important to teach design students. Many schools focus on production design and the ability to run computer programs like InDesign and Photoshop. Other schools focus more on color theory, typography, and so forth. In an interview with AIGA about what is currently being taught in schools, three colleges were

asked what were the goals for their design students. They came up with what could be called the three 'C's: communication, collaboration, and creativity.

University of Washington, Seattle, Washington: "Our goal is to educate our students as to what they need to know in order to get messages across within particular contexts to particular audiences" (Sandhaus, 1998).

Art Center, Pasadena, California: "Although individual creativity is stressed, more and more of the graduate studios are also engaged in team projects, just as is occurring in the outside world" (Sandhaus, 1998).

New York University, New York City, New York: "The overall goal is to encourage students to "think," "experiment," and "create" something that did not exist before. We encourage risk and failure as one of the means of discovery" (Sandhaus, L. 1998).

In addition, Wolfgang Weingart, a renowned German design teacher, adds the framework of history he was asked in an interview, "What is the most important advice you can offer a student?" He stated, "It is important that students see their work in the context of history. I encourage the students to go to the libraries—to discover what happened over the last 500 years of typography, or to discover the origin of our alphabet over 2000 years ago" (Resnick, 1999). The skills of communication, collaboration, creativity, and the ability to see their work in the context of history are all very important for a designer to be successful.

### *Getting a degree?*

Should a graphic designer seek experience in the job field, go to school or both? The following research is an effort to help a designer look at the cost benefits of getting

an education. As in the world of basketball, where the “one in a million player” like LaBron James can skip college altogether and make it big (Vitale, 2003), there are a few designers with such talent that they will not benefit from college. However, the designers who do not need some post secondary education are, like LaBron James, very rare.

Employers often feel that, compared to non-college-educated workers, college graduates are more motivated, learn tasks more quickly, are better able to meet deadlines, and have better problem solving and communication skills. And because many cost-conscious employers have limited the amount of training they offer, they prefer to hire more-educated workers who can assume greater responsibility sooner. As a result, college graduates are increasingly employers’ first choice (Wyatt, 2002, p. 4).

#### *Associate versus baccalaureate degree*

Norton Grubb performed a major study looking at benefits and drawbacks of getting a two-year (associate) degree and a four-year (baccalaureate) degree. Grubb (1999) stated that:

Several special characteristics of the sub-baccalaureate labor market distinguish it from the market for those with baccalaureate and graduate degrees:

1. The market appears to be quite local. Employers looking to fill occupations requiring less than a baccalaureate degree report that they search locally. Two-year colleges target local employers, and students search for employment almost entirely within the local community.
2. Hiring practices for sub-baccalaureate jobs tend to be informal, with few performance-oriented tests or absolute education requirements. Specific

experience is usually preferred to formal schooling, and preparation in the military, on the job, and through hobbies may be as valuable as formal sub-baccalaureate schooling.

3. Employers are likely to lay off less-educated workers before well-educated employees. Individuals with sub-baccalaureate education are more likely than those with baccalaureate degrees (though less likely than high school graduates) to suffer unemployment over the business cycle (Grubb, 1999).

Finally, the [financial] returns from associate degrees and from baccalaureate degrees overlap. For example, men can earn more by getting an associate degree in engineering, public service, or vocational/technical subjects than they can from a baccalaureate in the humanities or education (Grubb, 1999).

Professional specialty occupations and service occupations that require an associate degree rather than bachelor's degree, however, are targeted as the fastest growing occupations. They were expected to provide nearly half of the total job growth between 1996 and 2006 and typically require training that leads to an associate degree (Silvestri 1997). Although earnings of associate degree holders may be less than that of bachelor's degree holders, the associate degree pays off by affording graduates precise access to jobs in which they can gain experience and on-the-job training (Leigh and Gill 1997).

#### *The cost of obtaining a degree*

Wyatt noted the costs in time and money for getting a degree. He stated: For most people, pursuing a college degree is both time consuming and expensive. However, in the end, college graduates usually see a return on their

investments of time and money. Students working toward a degree are likely to set their sights on the long-term payoffs—which include more career options, better promotion opportunities higher earnings, and lower unemployment—than a college education provides (Wyatt, 2002, p. 1).

In Table 1 the question, “What is the cost of getting a degree in Utah?” was broken down to a two-year program to remain consistent with associate level degrees. The costs reflected tuition cost in the fall of 2003. In most cases, doubling the cost will give you the base cost of tuition for a baccalaureate degree. In the Utah County schools Brigham Young University (BYU), Utah Valley State College (UVSC), and Provo College, tuition costs were compared along with one school outside of Utah County, the University of Utah (U of U). In this study, employers reported that most of the designers they hired that had attended post-secondary institutions attended one of these schools.

Looking at the cost of getting an education was only one aspect; another aspect is where to get your education? Goldfarb (2001) noted, “It is not a question of whether the designer has a degree, but a question of where that degree was obtained” (p 198).

*Table 1 – The cost of getting a degree in Utah*

School	2003 Tuition cost in state (resident)	Tuition out of state (non-resident)
BYU	\$6,120 for two years	\$9,200 for two years
University of Utah	\$5,793 for two years	--
UVSC	\$4,900 for two years	\$15,260 for two years
Provo college	\$24,480 for two years	\$24,480 for two years

Note: This does not include housing, food, books, transportation, or other fees (BYU, 2003; Provo-College, 2003; U of U, 2003; UVSC, 2003)(BYU, 2003; Provo-College, 2003; U of U, 2003; UVSC, 2003).

The most respected design program nationally, of the four universities listed in the table above, was Brigham Young University. It was one of only 14 programs listed on Goldfarb's educational short list (p 198). None of the other colleges from Table 1 were listed.

*The bottom line benefits*

The U.S. Department of Labor has stated for years that more education equals more money earning ability. Their studies show the average of what a graduate with a high school, associate, bachelors, masters, doctorate, and professional degrees earn (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002-2003). However, generally they do not break the information down into occupations. This gives the illusion that having a degree, or higher degree, in any field would somehow automatically give a person a higher paying job. Further, they do not breakdown the earning potential by geographic location. In addition, studies or surveys that list how much designers earn generally do not give an education level attained by designers.

So what is the bottom line for a graphic designer in Utah? What is the average salary for designers? In an AIGA/Aquent Survey of Design Salaries 2003, published in *Communication Arts* May/June 2003, the national average for designers was \$40,000 a year and the intermountain west average was \$35,000 a year. AGIA gives additional information for entry-level designer, stating that the national and intermountain west salaries averages both were at \$30,000 a year. These numbers did not change from 2002 to 2003 (AGIA, 2003). The following comparisons are referred to in order to give the reader some kind of idea how much a designer makes and where someone with a college degree fits in. The national data were not available that broke out graphic designers

specifically with degrees. Comparing an average against a median is not statistically possible, yet the numbers are not available to convert either the above average or the below median. However, the numbers give the reader the general concept.

According to U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics findings in 2002, the median earnings for a person holding an associate degree earned \$35,400 a year. If a person held a bachelors degree, the median earnings were \$46,300 (2002-2003). A report published in 1993 by the Bureau of the Census compared designers holding bachelors degrees to other graduates. Designers (Liberal Arts/Humanities graduates) were second to last in their monthly earnings at \$1,592 (\$19,104 a year) beating out only the Home Economics graduates at \$906. In 2003 terms, that is about a \$1000 more a month at \$2,500 (\$30,000 a year) for designers. However, typically, designers do not design to become wealthy; they design because they love what they do.

Findings in the review of literature support the standards of evidence of portfolio, experience, personality, and education as national practices for hiring graphic designer. The following chapters show what Utah County, Utah hiring practices are and how they match up with these standards of evidence.



## Chapter 3

### METHOD

This research involved gathering interview data concerning the hiring practices in the graphic design field in Utah County. The purpose of this study was to understand the current hiring practices of graphic designers in Utah County, Utah. Further, it was to show how hiring practices (standards) in Utah County compared with the national standards. Using the four major standards identified by AIGA and Goldfarb; (i.e. portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education) this information could be used to help graphic designers understand what is expected of them and how credentials (education) fit into their career path.

### Population

The population identified for this study consisted of all graphic design firms located in Utah County during the calendar year 2003, including, marketing agencies, advertising agencies, and large companies that have an in-house design department (Appendix E). Identifying the population of those who hire graphic designers was determined by reviewing the 2003 yellow pages under the titles of advertising-agencies, marketing, and graphic designers and by doing a web search under similar terms to find as many as were listed in Utah County. The Provo-Orem Chamber of Commerce list of companies identified under similar names was also obtained. Through these efforts, 66 companies (firms) were found. Efforts were made to contact each of these firms and it was found that approximately half of those listed were out of business, bringing the total

number to about 34 firms. Of the 34 companies, 17 companies were selected for an interview.

### Sample

The process used to identify the sample was first listing firms (Appendix E) then stratifying the firms into categories: Corporations, Press Houses, Print Shops, Design, and Marketing Firms. Each of the identified companies within each category were then called and given the opportunity to participate in the study. Companies that had not hired graphic designers in the last few years were not considered for an interview. Companies that could not meet within a month and a half time frame were also not considered. This resulted in a sample of seventeen companies.

### Data Collection

Interviews with the person responsible for hiring the graphic designers were scheduled with seventeen firms in Utah County. The expectation was that the interview would be with the person who interviews and hires for the company. In all but one case this was true, and in that case the person who was interviewed was the first contact in the hiring process, but not the final decision maker. Interview times were set up well in advance with each of the employers in order to allow the participant to give full attention and time for the interview.

### *Instrumentation*

During the development of the instrument, several factors were considered: it was determined that the instrument would be an interview guide. This decision was made to insure that in-depth information would be gathered from each participant. With the small population it was highly likely that a mailed survey would not get a high enough response

rate to provide a credible picture. The instrument started as a bank of questions that was intended to determine employers' thought processes when hiring (Appendix A).

The members of the thesis committee reviewed the questions and method. The questions were field tested by interviewing two employers. The interviews were recorded and analyzed with the help of Greg Waddoups, the Associate Director, Instructional Design and Q&A Evaluation in the Center of Instructional Design (CID) at BYU, where a final revision was made placing the interview into a chronological order from start to finish in the process an employer uses in hiring, included the following steps: how the employer defined the need for a new employee; how they went about finding prospective designers; the review process of how they eliminated applicants and what things helped a designer make the cuts; the interviewing process, how the employer documented and scored the interview; when they made the offer, if they had to negotiate; and what things helped designers have a better opportunity with the firm. Questions of how the applicant's education level influenced their decisions were also asked along the way. There was then a time for the employer to give what they believed would be the best and worst case scenarios when hiring. They were also asked to discuss changes in the design hiring practices over the last few years and how they envision it changing over the next few years.

#### *Administration of the instrument*

The following steps were followed in the administration of the instrument.

1. Each appointment was set up with the person hiring. That person was asked to expect at least 30 minutes for the interview and allow up to an hour for the visit.
2. Each person interviewed was asked the same questions in the same order.

3. Each interview was recorded on an individual audio tape and then transcribed shortly after by the interviewer.

#### Analysis of the data

After reviewing the audio tapes and the interview notes the data were divided into sections based on the instrument (Appendix B) and organized into tables (Appendix C). Comparisons of major themes, concepts, and quotes were also analyzed and then the data were summarized according to the four major standard evidences of portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education. The findings are reported in Chapter 4 and a discussion of the conclusions, recommendations and implications of the findings is presented in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

To determine what extent hiring practices in Utah County compare with national standard of evidences from AIGA (2003) and Goldfarb (2001) (i.e. portfolio, experience, personality (fitting into the company culture), and education). In the interview process, the interviewer started with an explanation of the study. The instrument (Appendix B) was used in an open conversation beginning with the question “When you need to hire a graphic designer how do you define your need?” One limitation of this study was that not every employer in Utah County was interviewed; however, the data revealed that Utah County employer’s standards of evidence matched closely to national standards of evidence as will be shown in the following sections.

One employer likened the hiring process to a beauty pageant, explaining that it is hard to say why one designer would get the job over another; one designer might have won the swimsuit contest, (a.k.a. the interview), but lost the talent contest, (a.k.a. the portfolio). Explaining that it was how all the candidates placed in the total contest that would determine if they were offered the job. These “contest categories” for hiring graphic designers are the national standards of portfolio, personality, experience, and education. These categories are listed in order of importance to Utah County employers. An additional category of general standards has been added, giving other points that Utah

employers look at when hiring. The interviews averaged about one hour. The following sections describe the findings for each of the research questions identified in Chapter 1.

In research question 1 it was asked, “To what extent did the hiring of graphic designers in Utah County compare with the four standards of evidence identified by AIGA and Goldfarb; (i.e. portfolio, recommendations, personality, and education)?” Since this was an over arching question of the entire thesis, findings from questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 (related to each of the standards of evidence) were used to substantiate research question 1. The data revealed that Utah County employer’s standards of evidence matched up closely to national standards of evidence but the order of importance was slightly different placing personality ahead of recommendations and education.

#### Types of designers

In research question 2 it was asked, “What are the types of designers that are employed in Utah County?” In Utah Valley, all graphic designers carry one of two titles: production designer or creative designer. This is also true when speaking nationally (Heller, 2003). Sometimes there will be lead designers or art directors who supervise these designers, but for this study, the focus was on production and creative designers. It was found that there are very different expectations when it comes to designers who will work in a production area—meaning finalizing the layout or setting up for the press--and those who are doing creative design—meaning creating logos or designs. When looking for production designers, employers reported that a production designer deals with a lot of repetition and for that reason every employer interviewed stated that computer skills and their ability to work quickly and efficiently were the most important things to them (appendix C). Employers stated that the education level of a production designer favored

at most a two-year degree. Employers reported 46% of the production designers had degrees, 53% did not (appendix C). They found that designers who had a four-year education wanted more money than they could pay and would not likely be satisfied in the production job position.

When hiring a concept (creative) designer, employers stated that the creativity of the designer outweighed his/her speed or computer skill ability. They also liked designers who searched for understanding on what was wanted and needed by the client, before spending time in developing a concept. Employers stated that the education level of creative designers favored having a four-year degree. Employers reported 62% of the creative designers had degrees 38% did not.

### Portfolio

In research question 3 it was asked, “To what extent were portfolios and resumes used in the hiring graphic designers in Utah County?” In the findings of Utah County, it was revealed that portfolios are the most important part in the hiring process for graphic designers, which coincided with the literature. Employers stated, “Their portfolio really is the number one thing – it has to be a sample of their work and ability. How creative are they? What kinds of ideas can they come up with?” (Employer E, personal interview; April 2, 2003, Employer F, personal interview, April 3, 2003). This sentiment was prevalent in all the interviews (Appendix C).

When employers look through portfolios they want to see the specific type of design work that they are doing at their firm. In most cases, firms want someone whose work would fit into their firm standard (style) and not stand out. When asked, “What most often keeps a prospective design employee from being hired?” Firms repeatedly

said, “Their designs are not consistent with the designs that we do.” It was reported that most designers had no idea what type of design that the firm they were interviewing with did. Of the hundreds of portfolios that these firms had reviewed, they reported that only four times they could ever remember having had designers take time to make some effort to tailor their portfolio for that firm. All four designers were offered jobs. This could have something to do with the personality or arrogance of some designers and will be discussed in the next section.

Eight of seventeen employers stated that having a strong portfolio was the first thing that they felt gives designers the edge, but having experience was not far behind with seven employers. Naturally, the portfolio is the collection of the designers best work experience that would account for why experience came in second. Nine of the seventeen employers stated that the portfolio is the single greatest asset when it comes to negotiating, while only six felt that experience was a greater asset. However, when discussing the topic of negotiating pay, employers stated that in the current economy they rarely negotiated with designers. Employers would usually offer designers what they could afford.

Employers reported similar thoughts when asked what would be the best-case scenario concerning the portfolio:

It is really nice if the portfolio has the same look and feel as the resume. The fonts, weights, colors etc., this is a campaign, you are selling yourself. I want to see that you are branding yourself, because that is what we do with our clients. I want to see a portfolio that has great detail. It’s precise in that the board’s sizes and their cuts, that it is easy to flow through. I want to get a breadth of the style

that the artist works in meaning, some very aggressive, some conservative, maybe soft and fluffy etc., a consistency in quality of design that every piece is solid and looks great. I can feel confident that I could turn this person loose. When I go through a portfolio, I always ask myself, "Can I trust this person to a job, or am I going to have to baby-sit them." I do not mind checking in with them, but I do not want to have to baby-sit them (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

Additionally, employers were asked what they would like to see in a portfolio, specifically what type of span of work they have seen and would like to see. One employer stated:

I have had people bring in glasswork, oils, watercolors and even cakes they have decorated, but that's not the kind of work we do here. If they believe that will compliment their work, great, one or two pieces. To have a lot of work that we do not do here does not help them. I am not looking for a wide range of artistic skills, I want to know they will do well in the kind of work we are doing or have at least have done work that's applicable to what we do. For example, for ads that they have ads with long copy, most of the time in school they do not have a lot of copy. Remember most of the ads in the works, cannot be solved with a single photo and a headline, they need copy. Having work that looks like it could be done for one of our clients impresses me (Employer M, personal interview, October 7, 2003).

*Resumes*

Resumes have been included in the portfolio section because employers include the resume as a design piece. However, designers often place little thought on the design of the resume. Employers observed, “It often looks like the designers all had the same resume class from the business department. They are cold and boring” (Employer M, personal interview, October 16, 2003; Employer M, personal interview, October 7, 2003).

When employers were asked to name one thing that caught their eye when looking at a resume, six of seventeen cited technical skill, five cited typography, and five cited style. Employers commented that they loved to find “land mines” in the resume: typos, poorly worded thoughts, etc. This saved firms time and money because they knew right away that they did not have to look any further at that designer. Many firms reported a need for more thought to be put into the design of the resume. They wanted to see more creative thought in the layout of the resume as noted by one employer: “For goodness sakes, they profess to be designers” (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

Employers reported similar thoughts when asked what would be the best-case scenario when looking at the resume:

The resume is elegant but not over the top, it’s crisp and sharp, a great choice of paper, paid attention to detail in their resume, it’s worded well (which is odd, but we often have to fix clients’ work) and it needs to be brief, to the point, and get my attention. (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003). Remember, employers are looking for reasons to discard resumes and portfolios; it is easier to

get rid of an applicant than keep one, use proof readers (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003).

### Personality

In research question 4 it was asked, “To what extent was personality used in hiring graphic designers in Utah County?” Findings from the interviews coincide with the literature showing that personality is very important to employers. Over all it ranked second in importance in Utah County behind portfolios. Employer Q stated, 80% is the portfolio the rest is personality.” When employers were asked what they looked for in the interview stage of the hiring process they all stated that the personality of the designer was the number one thing they considered. Fitting into the company culture consistently was a point of discussed in the process on hiring, because most firms have close working relationship. What firms are looking for in an interview comes down to the company culture. The interviewer(s) are looking for two things: the way a person is dressed, and the personality of the person. That is how well the interviewer feels that the person will fit into the company culture. Employers have learned over the years that a person who does not fit in, is not happy, and in turn is less productive. It is somewhat difficult to know completely what an employer really wants. It is kind of like dating, there is a look and a feel that they want. Some of the employers made statements like, “I want a designer that I can laugh with” or “I want a designer who I can disagree with and is able to discuss their point of view without getting offended.” At times in the interviews, I found myself wondering if they were looking for a person to date, live with, or an employee. It may be true that many people spend more time at work than at home, so they are looking, in a sense, for a person they can, if not live with, spend a lot of time with. Comments like

“They have to be neat and organized” and “They have to have a style similar to ours” take on greater understanding. The importance of fitting into the company culture was expressed well in the following comments:

The way they present themselves, how they are dressed, if they dress very nice then I can tell that they are concerned about outward appearance and detail in their own lives and that shows in their design work. Their personality is key, they need to bring it into the environment here. They could be a great designer but are very arrogant “I am the greatest designer,” then we don’t want them. Surprisingly this happens a lot and it’s amazing how often they have poor work (Employer I, personal interview, October 16, 2003).

Almost every employer made comments about the arrogance of the designers that they interviewed. As stated in the Portfolio section, a discussion of how arrogance shows through to employers needs to be mentioned here. One of the ways that arrogance is shown consistently by designers is that they take no thought regarding the specific firm that has called them in for an interview. When designers show up with their portfolios they somehow believe that one version of their portfolio fits all firms. It might be said that “design is design” but employers do not believe that to be true. Employers want to see evidence that designers have some understanding of the type of design work they do in their firm. One firm, an ad agency, expressed his frustration saying, “Most designers that come in seeking employment have portfolios of magazine covers, and CD design, which is nice but we do not do that type of work here, show me ads.” Whether most designers are really as arrogant as they come across was not a topic of this paper, but it is

clear that employers are frustrated at that lack of investigation performed by designers on what the firms that they are interviewing with are doing.

It was somewhat surprising to observe that employers placed so much value on the prospective employee's dress. Every employer interviewed made comments on the dress of those they interviewed; and many went further, adding comments on the hairstyles and even how clean they kept their cars. Another employer said:

We want to see the professional look, that they have the design capability, and their attitudes about their work. Sometimes we will test them a bit by asking why they did "xyz" and when they answer then we say we don't think you meant it, to see how they will respond. We want to we know whether they can stand up for their ideas and back up why they did it. When you present your work, you are not always going to be right and in a production roll, it is a lot more about taking direction. We need to know how they react when told this or that. We don't try to tick the designers off by doing this, but if it happens we want to know how they deal with it (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003).

When expressing what would be the worst-case scenario when hiring, one employer said:

Having a great interview with the designer and then the designer is nothing like they were in the interview. They are slow, they are demanding, they miss deadlines, they over promise and under deliver. They may try to pass off someone else's work; they may not really know how to use the software they said they could (Employer G, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

Other employers stated that dishonesty was a major concern making statements like "one designer undercut my customers taking jobs home," "one designer tried to pass

off other peoples' work for his/her own." When calling references the personality traits that employers want to know revolve around honesty. Specifically they want to know if designers have "poor work ethic," are "under qualified," or "not flexible." However, it is difficult for employers to find out this information, because of concerns for potential liability by former employers. Even rumors of awards to former employees for negative references are enough to chill employer's willingness to openly criticize a person who worked for them. Consequently, many employers tend to simply answer yes or no when asked questions, without elaborating.

Finally, personality or personal character will affect not only getting a job but keeping one. Employers commented that when they needed to downsize, or "fire" someone, it came down to lack of productivity, but most of the time people work themselves out of a position. They will say, "I don't want to do this or that," or "I am not really very good at that." They just will not take on certain jobs (Employer H, personal interview, October 27, 2003). Their unwillingness to meet the needs of their employer, whether do to arrogance or lack of skills, leads to their downfall.

### Experience

In research question 5 it was asked, "To what extent were experiences (recommendations) used in hiring graphic designers in Utah County?" Experience ranked third in importance when hiring graphic designers in Utah County. Again, it should be noted how experience enhances a designers portfolio and that even though it came in third it was very important to employers. In the interview, the employers were asked, "Assuming that two applicants' portfolios and personalities were equal, whom would you hire first, the person with a four year degree, or the person with four years of experience,

but no degree?” Twelve of seventeen employers stated that they would hire the person with the experience, only two stated that they would hire the person with the degree. Three were undecided on what they would do, in that it hinged on their need: if it was immediate versus if they had some time to let this person grow. If the need was immediate, the designer with experience was unanimously chosen, but if they had time to work with the person a bit some would choose the person with the degree.

Experience can be shown through so many ways, as the literature showed that experience gives a designer a greater fluency in the language of design, proficiency in typography, layout, and so on. Having design experience helps designers build better portfolios. Furthermore, experience in design can be a place where employers learn more about the designer through references where they also gain a better understanding of work ethic, and personality. However, firms avoided those who seemed to “job hop,” moving from one job to another too often.

Employers had a tough time in the first stages of sifting applicants, deciding what was more important they were asked, “in the first stages of reviewing the applicants, what do you look for: education, resume, job experiences, or portfolio?” Half said that experience was the first thing they looked for and half said the portfolio. The reason for this could be broken into two reasons. First, money, designers with experience produce quickly with less hand holding than designers without experience. Second, the employer’s ability to evaluate the employee, the risk factor. The more you know about a designer, the less risk you have in making a poor investment when hiring, noting that this is the first stage of the sifting process when hiring. However, it was clear that experience was important in all stages of the interview process when employers were asked what the

strongest point for designers when negotiating for the job, experience was a close second behind portfolios.

### Education

In research question 6 it was asked, “To what extent was education used in the hiring graphic designers in Utah County? Is education a factor?” The findings in the literature showed that nationally education is something that employers saw value in, yet still ranked third in importance. The findings in Utah County indicate that the graphic design industry does not demand a college diploma. Not only did employers place education last, if you thought that you could use a degree as a bargaining chip for higher pay you would be wrong. Employer E and F both stated that degrees have no effect when offering higher pay. They felt that the portfolio is the single greatest asset when it comes to negotiating pay (Employer E, personal interview, April 2, 2003; Employer F, personal interview, April 3, 2003). Additionally, Turner stated that, “The degree is never asked about, I never bring it up.”

All employers but one believe education to be the least important item when hiring, citing such factors as graduates do not understand color, fonts, postscript, or any of the production side of design. One owner stated, “I never look at education. It’s not a factor in my hiring. Maybe that is because I never graduated.” In most cases, even when the firms thought education was important, it was not a matter of if they had graduated or not, just that they had some schooling in the field of design. Only two firms felt that education was highly important. Of those, one stated that it shows that the designer was a finisher. The other stated that if they did not have a BFA, they did not even look at the applicant. In the past, the ones who are best qualified, have the best range of work, and

are the best thinkers, end up having a degree. This employer bucked current standards in Utah County. With further investigation, the fact that this firm had only been open for just over a year makes a major difference in how they responded. Firms that are even six years old, those who have gone through the boom and bust of the Internet, think differently than those that have opened in the current market. In the past, there was a time that firms would take anyone who could design. The employers that hired during that time found many designers with degrees were under qualified or just did not meet their needs. Today the market for designers has slowed, making it easier for employers to find a designer who meets their specific need. Not having gone through this strain in hiring, it is believed that this firm set standards around education in order to cut down on applicants more quickly. In addition, referring back to the section on personality, 'fitting into the company,' the firm owners had post-graduate degrees, and they felt that employees that also had post-graduate degrees somehow would communicate better with them. This may or may not be true and again it was not the norm.

Employers were asked if it made a difference if the applicant that attended college had graduated or not? Responses varied from not at all to:

Well yes, it would make a difference to see that they have been through the classes and had a little more experiences dealing with the teachers, the classes, and the school. But, if I have a college grad and a designer who had only been through a year, and the designer who had only been in a year came across better [personality] and had a good portfolio, then I would hire him over the person with a degree (Employer E, personal interview, October 17, 2003).

Another employer commented on the character of a person who graduated but made it a point to show it matters where you go to school not just that you went:

It shows some dedication on their part; it is fairly important. It shows that they have had at least some basic or core classes. But the problem with Provo College and UVSC is that they teach the programs, but they do not give the student the depth of the theory of design, and these students seem to lack in artistic skill.

They lack the attention to detail that I have spoken about (Employer I, personal interview, October 16, 2003).

Nationally there was no data that could be found showing employed designers' education level. This data is the most telling because it shows what has happened, not just what employers would like to happen. There were 87 designers in the firms interviewed:

63% of all designers had degrees and 36% did not

62% of the creative designers had degrees 38% did not

46% of the production designers had degrees 53% did not

Where did the designers with degrees in Utah Valley attend school? It was no surprise that 62% of the designers attended Brigham Young University. There were 13% from Utah Valley State College (UVSC), 11% from Provo College (PC), 4% from the University of Utah, and finally the Art Center in California. Employers did not believe that UVSC or PC graduates had a real understanding of the principles of design, but they did have computer skills that were helpful on the production side of design.

In conclusion, even though education is last on the list of importance for employers in Utah County, education benefits most designers. Designers with degrees

have a better understanding of how to build portfolios, they usually have a better grasp of history, and usually have better problem solving skills (Employer I, personal interview, October 16, 2003). The problem that designers who have a degree need to be careful to avoid is expecting unrealistic pay right out of college (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003). This only adds to the arrogances factor. Designers who prove themselves on the job will make what they are worth. They will move up the pay scale as soon as they show they are worth it. In the words of one employer:

Someone who comes in who is a quick learner, dedicated, and will stay long hours if needed. A team player. ... If the person is putting in the time and increasing their skill levels, then they might get a raise every few months, but we have a few designers who have not had raises in two years. Raises have to be deserved (Employer H, personal interview, October 27, 2003).

### General Standards

In the hiring process there are a number of steps that don't fall into one of the four main standards. The following is general information gathered in the interview process that falls out of the main standards.

#### *Defining the need*

In research question 7 it was asked, "How did employers define their needs when hiring?" The first stage of the hiring process for employers comes far before looking at the portfolio, resumes, or interviewing. The first stage of the hiring process is when the employer has a need for a new employee. In this stage, employers must define their need. The need for a graphic designer that a company has at one moment in time can vary. Generally, firms are looking for a person who can fill a very specific need at that

moment. It could be a designer who will be able to design packaging or maybe one who understands the way the press setups will print the jobs that are currently being designed and so on. One firm stated:

When we hire, we hire for a very specific position. We determine where we are hurting and what our needs are, then create a list of our needs. We also have a list of things we would like, but we want to hit our direct needs with this hire. We then post listings stating that we need someone with very specific skills. We like people with other skills but they need to meet our needs. Our needs are basically the type of design that we do here at BMG. We do not do a lot of multi-media. If that's your thing, you probably would not be a good fit (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

### *Finding applicants*

In research question 8 it was asked, "How did employers find designers to hire?" Once the employer has defined its need, the next stage is finding applicants to choose. Employers were asked, "How do you search for a graphic designer when you have an open position? Where do you advertise for applicants?" Employers usually found applicants in more than one way. Nine of seventeen found applicants by word of mouth, eight from walk-ins, six from schools, three on the web, and three from the newspaper ads. These numbers must be broken down to understand them better. The design shops, marketing, and ad agencies favored word of mouth and schools. One firm said, "Word of mouth is how I have found my last three designers; I have liked having someone I know referring me to a designer" (Employer B, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

Another firm stated that they find applicants by:

Getting a reference from a trusted source we know... we will then ask around to people we know in the industry, or call up to BYU. That's how we really want to find someone, because the personality mix is one of the hardest parts. When we get a referral then usually the skill is there and personality good (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003).

However, large companies and presses favored walk-ins and newspaper ads for their large numbers of applicants. For these very same reasons, not one design firm would ever use newspaper ads, they stated that they would just get too many under-qualified applicants.

Finally, employers reported that over the last few year they had hired interns and freelance workers. Half of the firms studied reported using interns and four firms hired from their intern staff. Seven of the firms used freelancers and four had hired from their freelance pool of designers. This supports the findings in the literature. Specifically, Heller (2002) stated that the "first step to getting started in the design business is to find an internship or staff job" (p. 233), showing that getting your foot in the door is a great way to gain experience and work your way up in a the design field.

The stages of reviewing the applicants though the portfolios, resumes, and interviews are in the above sections.

#### *Written ranking*

In research question 9 it was asked, "Did employers use a written ranking system during the hiring process?" It was hard to get employers to commit to their practices in this area, because of the legal ramifications that surround this area. However, even

though the employers were very cautious about how they phrased their words, they all admitted they had some type of ranking system set up in their minds, if not written, through each of the steps of the hiring process. Looking at resumes, employers ranking would range from their work experience to if there was a misspelled word. When calling references, employers would rank such questions as, “Do they meet deadlines?” “How’s their work ethic,” their honesty, character, attitudes, and creativity (Employer C, personal interview, October 9, 2003, Employer G, personal interview, October 10, 2003, Employer K, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

#### *Set base salary*

In research question 10 it was asked, “How did employers set a base salary?” The issue on what employees were willing to pay designers related more to the current state of the economy than anything else. The range that they were willing to extend within the current economy to the design employee was based on the amount of experience the designer had, and higher ability to be productive quickly.

Often the employers would make the designers give them an idea about a dollar amount that they were willing to work for; it seems like a cat and mouse game, if you stated a number too high, you would most likely not be called back. If you stated a number too low, then you could end up not getting what you are worth or they would think that you do not understand the market. So what is the answer? The employers were looking for someone who understood the market value of their work. All employers interviewed expressed their desire to pay fair pay for the work produced. If the designer came in and was able to get more work done than other designers were, then that designer

would get a raise more quickly. One employer said the following regarding the short-term vision of designers when they are getting their first job:

Designers sometimes don't see past the first year. They see their friends making \$50,000 right out of school and they want the same. They won't get it. They need to realize that in five years they could be making \$75,000 whereas their friends will still be making \$50,000. Their potential is much greater as a designer than they think in this field (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

#### *Changes in hiring practices*

In research question 11 it was asked, "What did employers feel the changes in hiring practices have been over the last five years?" Comments varied from looking at things in a positive light "There are many more schools training designers and that has given me a larger group of designers to choose from" to a negative light "There are a lot of under qualified designers out there." In this line of thought, a firm said:

We were much more selective back a few years ago. I hope we can get a qualified designer that meets the aspects that we are looking for. Now it's: I hope I don't get a hundred resumes for this position. I just want to deal with the qualified designers (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003).

Other concerns were raised, like "There are a lot of designers who have gone strictly into web design and have not developed the skills needed in print, schools are not teaching them it either." Similar statements were made by every press interviewed. This concern becomes even more difficult to address for schools when you see how stretched designers are asked to be.

Five years ago, people were more specialized on what type of design they were doing, just web designers, print design, or GUI design. Now I have found that designers have to wear more hats (Employer K, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

These hats are in part due to the advancements in the world of technology, with computer programs integrating major divisions of design, as in layout programs. Adobe, InDesign, converting designs directly to press, skipping the many steps of pre-press, negatives, plates, and so on.

*Change over the next five years*

In research question 12 it was asked, “What changes did employers feel are to come in the next five years in hiring?” During the interview employers were asked how they think hiring practices will change over next few years. Their comments supported the trends from the past to current in both advancing technology, and the need for designers to know more.

More integration of programs (ex: Adobe CS) that will help designers learn the programs more quickly, faster computers. Maybe there will be more specialization, with the web and the network of people that can be connected. It seems that freelancers could hook-up with each other and create a broader client base (Employer K, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

Another firm adds:

The software gives us the ability to work faster, more intelligently, publish quickly to web, and other apps. There is an understanding that designers need to have in what you are trying to accomplish, something different when going to the

web than when you go to print. You have different abilities and focus. You have to understand the nuances of the niche you are working in (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

Another aspect that became apparent is the idea of collaborating. As mentioned in the above quote and the following:

We would like to do a lot more partnering. I hope firms specialize and become really good at what they do. I feel that you will have to understand more, but I hope that you will not have to provide more or to say something that you are not good at, like TV or Radio and so on (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

It is clear that the industry is changing quickly. It was only a few years ago that you had to have a Zip disc and drive to get your designs from one place to another. Today Iomega is gone and stick memory had taken its place. There is no more need for bulky drives and expensive discs. Designers in today's world not only have to understand the principles of design, they have to understand the many more mediums to solve clients' needs.

#### *Employers' words of wisdom*

In the final question to employers, they were asked if they had any other comments or thoughts that they would like to express. Regarding what makes a good designer, Employer M remarked:

I believe that graphic designers look at solving problems regardless of the medium. They look at the problem and look at what mediums will work best to solve the problem and the principles of type, design, and communication will

remain the same. There are a lot of issues when it comes down to production, I believe that most web designers are not conceptual designers. They don't think through a marketing problem the same way that maybe another designer would be thinking through it. They are designing a page so that people can access it quickly and effectively, but there is more to it than that when you are coming up with a strategy.

Employer G gave these words of wisdom in evaluating the need of the customer:

Clients want three different things: first, speed (time) – deadlines are everything, second, cost (price) and third, quality. “Usually you can only get two out of three – speed, quality, or price. You do not really tell the customer that, but that is the reality of it.

In translating this when he hires, he said:

Speed is something that is hard to tell from a portfolio, interview, or a resume.

Often in an interview I will ask how long a piece had taken to design. If they have had a semester to do one piece, that is just too slow for what we do here. We are here to provide solutions for clients and often their largest problem is that they need something done now, today (Employer G, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

Finally when making cuts in his hiring this employer stated:

It really comes down to whatever is weak in their first contact with us: it could be a portfolio, a resume, it could be a leave behind, but whatever the case, it's the first creative expression we see (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003)

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found the national standards for hiring graphic designers, taking into consideration portfolio, experience, education, and personality, were mostly congruent with the practices in Utah County. However, it was found that the order of importance was slightly different for Utah County, listing in order first portfolio, then personality, experience, and finally education.

An illustration of why personality was ranked higher in Utah County was shown when employers were asked, “What would be an ideal way to find a new designer?” one employer stated, “A reference from a trusted source we know. That’s how we really want to find someone, because the personality mix is one of the hardest parts. When we get a referral, then usually the skill is there and personality good” (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003). In the current market, there are many experienced designers who are without work, making it easier for an employer to find a qualified designer. In this job market, employers are able to be more demanding about finding personalities that fit into their corporate culture.

#### Limitations

The 17 companies interviewed in this study constitute a nonprobability sample of the population of 34 design firms operating in Utah County during October 2003. In addition, the officials in some very small and relatively unknown companies declined to participate in the study. Hence, the findings may not be representative of all design firms

in the county. Because of these limitations, readers should be cautious in making generalizations about the whole population. Readers should also remember that the nature and membership of this population continually changes from time to time as new companies start up and others stop operating.

The areas of portfolio, personality, experience, and education are discussed in the following sections. In addition, supplementary information is given that did not fall into the other four areas.

### Portfolio

Since resumes and portfolios need to be tailored to the firm that a designer is interviewing with, designers will need to do some research. In order to find out what tailoring is needed to meet the needs of the firm. Several things can be done, call and ask, get on the Internet and look at their website, or walk by their office and look at what they have on display. This will also come in handy should the designer be invited for an interview. Based on the research, designers will have a clearer picture of how to tailor their resumes, portfolios, and even how they should dress for the interview.

### *Resume styles*

The complaint most often given by employers about resumes was that they were under-designed. “Over the top” resumes were never a problem, it was the under-designed straight business style, right out of Microsoft Word<sup>®</sup>, that employers most often complained about. Employers loved to see spelling errors or design errors because it made it so easy to eliminate that person from the pool. Too often they found errors that could have been resolved by good proofreading. Interviewers believed that a designer

who did not pay attention to detail in his/her resume, would not pay attention to detail on company projects.

### *Portfolio styles*

Having a strong relevant portfolio is the first key to getting in the door, but must be followed by strength in each of the other categories. Employers complained that designers often waste their time in that they present portfolios that have nothing to do with the type of work that is done at that given firm. They all stated that they had seen CD designs and magazine covers, which are not often designed in Utah County. It was found that designers take no consideration regarding the type of design needed by the employers with whom they are interviewing. A designer may have great CD designs, or great magazine layouts, but if the interviewing company is not looking for that skill set they have little use for those designs, and it will ultimately hurt the designers chances in getting the job.

Employers had the following to say on the topics of format, typography, presentation, how your presentation is packaged, specifically what are you looking at in typesetting, specifically what are you looking in the span of the work, and skills.

### *Format*

I want to see the uniformity of the same mat-boards. It just feels more professional. It is also how we present to our clients, so I can see how they might make a presentation to a client. Looking for how the pieces flow, the rhythm, and the pace. Are the pieces that are related by each other; do they start off with a bang, then having like pieces, and then ending with a peak (Employer A, personal interview, October 14, 2003).

### *Typography*

“We want to see the type of things we do here” (Employer C, personal interview, October 9, 2003).

Now in their portfolio I look at the typography, their choices of imagery, the quality of their work, and their attention to detail. I like to look through the piece, open it, to feel it, see what paper they choose, etc. This is how we present our work to clients. I like a portfolio that is short and to the point. I like to see the work mounted on boards, as long as they are a manageable size, and can be looked at quickly. If they have had work printed, I would like to see the actual piece rather than a picture of the piece that is just printed out (Employer D, personal interview, October 17, 2003).

There are so many issues, color choices, and font choices, spacing issues that I look for, so the easiest way to see this is to see if the design is consistent with the design we do here. We are not looking for the Michael Jordan, the all star that will change our life. We are looking for the designer that will fit in seamlessly to what we do. You cannot tell what inks, paper (thickness, color, texture), how it was cut or what size it is on a screen (Employer G, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

### *Presentation*

I like to see both print and digital pieces, but print goes much further in my eyes. We just do more with print. But now, design has to be repurposed; you will design for print and it will end up on the web, or in a presentation, maybe on a video.

I like to see something that is very organized and that they have spent a lot of time creating. For example, we recently had a designer come in that had a box that had individual spots hand cut for every piece and everything had its place. It was one simple package. When he showed it, he pulled each piece out one at a time, explained it, put it back, and then got the next one. I was very impressed with his presentation. It showed that he paid attention to detail, that he was task orientated. That you are a dedicated hard worker often comes across in the presentation. That will sell me every time (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003).

I want the designer to go through it with me, I want to know why they designed it the way they did and what things they took into consideration. What portion of the project did they really work on. It could have photographs in it, did they take them, etc. Did they come up with the concept, did they do the production, or did they do both (Employer I, personal interview, October 16, 2003).

*How your presentation is packaged*

If they used mat-board, are all the corners clean or all dented. Are there fingerprints all over the place, is it poorly mounted. Do they pay attention to detail? The actual piece could be great and then when they went to the presentation they got lost somehow (Employer K, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

For me it seems to be the imagery in it, I look for things that catch my eyes; something that pops. Put in things that show what your strengths are. If you are good at layout, choose things that really pop, (standout). More than what media

you have it on, it is the ability to talk about what you did as if we were your client (Employer O, personal interview, October 23, 2003).

When I look at the concepts and say, “That is great,” I look for the way the work impacts me. I want it to affect me. If a piece of work had a great headline, a great visual, well laid out, that just pulls you into it and makes you want to spend time and read it, that is what I am looking for. When I find myself just flipping through a portfolio and not spending any time with it, then I know it is not what I want.

They may have all these neat tidy layouts, but if it is not giving me any buzz, then it is no good [a visual kick] (Employer L, personal interview, October 16, 2003).

Remember you only have one opportunity to make a first impression. Therefore, details are important, but I do not expect the boards to be brand new. Remember you cannot set yourself up to have to explain away this or that about your work. It is what it is and my first impression will stick. However, am I going to not give a job to a designer who has killer work, but sloppy presentation of it? Of course not, I am not that dumb. They would get a job (Employer L, personal interview, October 16, 2003).

There is a place for every designer (Employer M, personal interview, October 7, 2003).

*Specifically what are you looking at in typesetting?*

On type, I look to see if they have a technical understanding of typography - kerning, leading (spacing) if there is a page of text it does not have rivers of white flowing through it. An appropriate choice of typeface, if they understand how to make true atrophies and not just the inch marks. See how they justify things if

they have widows or orphans. If they are using appropriate typefaces, then the aesthetics—does the type seem to be the right size, does it communicate well, and is it well suited for the problem. Does it have the right feeling or flavor or are they just trying to be decorative [over designed] rather than just communicating a message (Employer M, personal interview, October 7, 2003).

*Specifically what are you looking in the span of the work?*

Designers need to understand that they are only as strong as the weakest pieces in their portfolio. We look to see if designers understand that, or if they just have gone with the idea that they can just put in everything they have ever done. [I am looking for consistency] if they have some good work and then one or two bad ones, I know that the consistency is not there. If they think that a bad piece is worth showing to someone that worries me little bit. There is a trade off, if the work is very strong, you have one of two things: they may just be that good, or they are not showing us enough of their work. So, it calls for more investigation (Employer M, personal interview, October 7, 2003).

When I am dealing with students, they put together work that they think is really cool or is cool to them; but what they don't consider is that if I see one piece that I can disregard, then it makes my job easy. I then have an excuse to toss that one. What makes it hard is if I do not see anything wrong, then it requires more investigation. When I go through resumes, it is a relief to be able to reject one. To find something wrong with it, then there is no need to investigate further (Employer M, personal interview, October 7, 2003).

### *Skills*

Other things that are given in the graphic design field are the computer skills and an ability to freehand sketch. Firms stated that they expect designers to know the programs and be ready to work with Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, and Quark. Though the computer is not limiting, it is just not as fast as a person who can freehand sketch some rough designs for clients on the spot. Clients are very impressed when they can see their basic ideas quickly after they explained them. Do your research. Find out what the current needs are in the firm where you are applying, target your portfolio and resume at those needs. Show the employer that you can create something that is usable by his firm. In a small market like Utah County, it is all the more critical that you narrow your search and view your job search as a presentation more than an application. Each firm will need a unique presentation focused on that firm's needs and your ability to meet those needs. Three to five carefully tailored applications will likely meet with much greater success than 35 generic applications.

As designers look for jobs, they need to be armed with the best bargaining chips to be able to get the job and get the pay that they are seeking. This has been very difficult in the market of 2003 and in the current market of 2004. When asked about what is the best bargaining chip, firms agreed that in this market they would rarely negotiate pay. They would just move to their next choice. Then when pressed with what would make them want one designer more than another, eleven firms would choose portfolio and six stated that it was experience. Not one stated that it was because they had an education. That is not to say that education was worthless. Often the work of a designer who had a

formal education was better; this only shows that having a degree meant little in the hiring process. It is more about the education of the designer, what has he/she learned in the classes he/she had.

### Personality

The reason that personality came in second in Utah County is that employers have a large pool of designers to choose from and that the portfolio displays evidence of the experience and education of the designer. Therefore, a designer with a strong relevant portfolio and personality that shows confidence (without arrogance), flexibility, and an ability to communicate well will get the job offers.

Additional personality traits that are important to employers are detailed oriented, creative, a team player who is highly collaborative. Employers want designers who will meet deadlines. Design jobs often are not bound by a nine to five workday, staying late sometimes all night to meet a deadline is what is needed. Designers need to be able to deal with this challenging job requirement.

### Experience

So why did experience come in third? One reason could be that a person could have all the experience in the world and still be a poor designer, which is evaluated in the portfolio. Experience also did not mean that a designer was collegial in the work place. However, it could mean all of these things and more. Experience is important because it shows employers that a designer has the understanding of on-the-job problem solving, dealing print issues, clients, and deadlines. Another reason that experience is important is that it allows you to have references from firms that you have worked for and can vouch

for your understanding of the work environment. Through your experience, you will gain a network of friends. Having a network of friends who are designers provides avenues for recommendations. The closer your skills meet the current needs of the employer, whether it is met in experience or education is of little difference; the key is that you bring the abilities they seek.

### Education

A degree is not something that gives a designer the ability to make demands or negotiate. It is what they have learned and how much better their work is from having the education that gives them this ability. Designers with degrees have a better understanding of how to build portfolios, they usually have a better grasp of history, and usually have better problem solving skills. The problem that designers who have a degree need to be careful to avoid is expecting unrealistic pay right out of college. This only adds to the arrogances factor. Designers who prove themselves on the job will make what they are worth. It is shown in their portfolio (Employer G, personal interview, October 10, 2003).

#### *Education for the types of designers*

Production designer – preferred not to have a four-year degree, reasoning:

First – most companies have found that designers who have graduated with a four year degree are not satisfied doing the work of a production designer and therefore will not remain in that position.

Second – designers who have graduated tend not to apply for jobs that only pay what production designers get.

Third – companies can pay non-graduates less money.

Schooling – most production designers come out of UVSC, there are a few who have come out of Provo College, and none came from BYU.

The type of companies that hire production designers: prepress shops, print shops, presses, and marketing firms typically have larger staffs.

Creative designers – preferred to have four-year degree, reasoning:

First – companies believe that they are more respected when they have staffs who have respected degrees.

Second – given the current market, companies can demand more from a designer and tend not to settle on designers without degrees.

Schooling – most creative designers came out of BYU, a few came out of Art Center, two came from UVSC, and none from Provo College. The types of companies who hire creative designers include: advertising firms, marketing firms, design firms, and the corporate world.

### Supplementary information

The following information for the designer and for the employer gives supplementary information that did not fit into one of the four previous categories.

#### *For the designer*

Setting forth your best work, your best face, your best attitude in every point of contact with a prospective employer is often misunderstood. Designers must take more thought when they are applying for a job. They need to do more research on the firms specialization and then tailor their portfolios to that firm. Find out what the every day dress standard is at that firm, and dress one-step above that for the interview. Be more confident, but less arrogant, how this is done is sometimes hard but it must be done.

The better question is whom do you want to work for? Or, what type of design do you enjoy? After you have thought through these questions, look for the firms that do this type of design. If you are having a hard time thinking of the possibilities, here are some aides:

Major positions: production design and creative design

Jobs in production design with design education: marketing and advertising firms, design shops, and corporations.

Jobs in production design without an education: prepress shops, press shops, and large design shops.

*Possibly move to a junior, creative designer or even a production director*

Jobs in junior design: In this position, most of the time you would take designs that have been previously developed and make them press or web ready. You work a lot with typography, layout, setting up colors, trapping, gutters, bleeds and resolutions. Many times you follow a standard format given by the customer. You might layout a magazine, a brochure, or any number of standard needs. You might get to layout ads or update a web page.

Jobs in creative design: Education or experiences is almost required for this position. Starting out as a junior designer, you move up to a senior designer, then an art or production director. This job involves working on creating marketing packages, brand packages, ad concepts, logo design, and packaging to name a few.

*For the employer*

Finding the right designer has changed over the last five years. Five years ago, companies would have to have aggressive tactics when trying to find creative designers.

The designers were in a demanding role and could negotiate terms. Companies would post jobs on the Internet, at schools, and with other agencies to get a few applicants. They would settle for designers who did not meet all the needs they were hoping for. Education was not a factor for most firms, they had resigned themselves to the understanding that they would have some on the job training or have to pay higher amounts to find fully qualified designers.

Today none of this holds true. For every job that is available, there are 15 to 30 qualified designers. Some of the designers are so desperate that they would almost work for free for a short time just to get a shot at a fulltime job. Designers have little if any negotiating ability. Companies will not post jobs very often because of the large number of applicants they get, which requires extensive time to review. They now rely more on word of mouth, referrals from people who they know and trust, and walk-ins. Education moved up in its value to employers in that they look for it as one of the ways to eliminate applicants. One employer stated, "When I see a great designer who doesn't have a degree, I know that if I just look a little longer, I can find an equally great designer with a degree." School value comes into play mostly when it comes to networking within Utah County. Employers will often call the BYU design department to ask for and about students.

Only one company, a press, stated that they would use the newspaper when looking for applicants; this was because they liked to have a large number of applicants (75 or more) to choose from each time they hired.

### Recommendations for further research

Seek information from designers to learn how much education they have had in their years in school, what degrees they have and what schools they graduated from, or attended.

If specific areas of expertise will improve likelihood of employment (InDesign, Flash, and so forth)

What are the best ways to learn technology applications?

How do you measure the communications abilities of designers?

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APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A

## Question Bank

This question bank was used to develop the final instrument. It was determined to ask questions in sequence of the hiring process for example when it is realized that a company needs to hire a new employee they first define there needs, and then look for ways to find those who would fit there need.

## Interview questions:

What graphic design positions do you have in your company?

- Production designer
- Creative designer
- Senior designer
- Jack-Of-All-Trades

How do you hire lead designer or director? Does education or experience play a larger roll?

In production design what is most important to you when hiring?

- Speed
- Hard working
- Creativity
- Specific skills

In Concept design what is most important to you when hiring?

- Speed
- Hard working
- Creativity
- Specific skills

When a design job position is needed in your company, where do you advertise for applicants?

(Does that change depending on type of position?)

job services | local colleges | News paper | look at our interns | Internet | from freelancers

What makes a good portfolio?

- Typesetting skills
- Diversity
- Organization
- Sketching ability
- Uniqueness
- Writing skills

Do you prefer a certain type of portfolio?

- Book style
- Easel
- Folder
- Transparency
- Electronic
- Box/case

When looking at references, what is more important?

- Size of company
- Type on company (corporate, firm)
- Diversity of the company
- Clients worked with at the company

When calling references, what points are your main focus?

- Well liked
- Hard worker
- Creative
- Problem solver

What do you look at when hiring?

Rank order from the following. (#1 being the most important)

- Resume
- Portfolio
- References
- Degree/ credentials
- Other

Name one thing that caught your eye when looking at each:

Resume \_\_\_\_\_

Portfolio \_\_\_\_\_

References \_\_\_\_\_

Is it important that the applicant attended college? yes / no

If yes, does it matter if they graduated? yes / no

How many employees do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Of these employees how many do you know did not graduate from college? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the best negotiating tool when looking for more pay in your company?

- College graduate
- Graduate degree
- Portfolio
- Resume
- References

Do you look at resumes? yes / no

If yes, rank the following in order of importance. (#1 being the most important)

- Having an objective
- Typesetting style (form)
- Education
- Experiences
- Internships
- Awards
- Publications
- Honors
- Computer
- Memberships
- Languages
- Travel
- References
- Length of previous employment

When interviewing an applicant, rank the five most important aspects. (#1 being the most important)

- Personality
- Ability to talk the talk
- Confidence level
- Talent
- Business savvy
- Intelligent
- Motivation
- Verbal skills
- Appearance
- Technology
- Flexibility
- Attitude

Do you have a set base salary?

If so, is it different based on education/portfolio/experience?

Do you expect counteroffers when hiring?

When promoting a designer, what qualifies the person for (advancement) a higher position?

- \_\_\_ Management
- \_\_\_ Lead designer
- \_\_\_ Education
- \_\_\_ Experience
- \_\_\_ Time with the company
- \_\_\_ Design skill
- \_\_\_ Problem solving ability
- \_\_\_ People skills

What holds an employee back most often?

- \_\_\_ Education
- \_\_\_ Experience
- \_\_\_ Time with the company
- \_\_\_ Design skill
- \_\_\_ Problem solving
- \_\_\_ People skills

Interns – freelancers – part time employees

When downsizing, rank order the following (#1 being the most important):

- \_\_\_ Education level
- \_\_\_ Long term goals
- \_\_\_ Productivity
- \_\_\_ Personality

How many designers have you hired that do not hold a four year education?

Have you hired designers who have first done freelance work for you?

How many designers on your current staff do not have a four-year degree?

How often do you use freelancers?

How do you find freelancers?

What do you look for in a designer?

Questions from pre-study interviews

Lance turner

What is value of education in your mind for those who have average talent in graphic design?

Do you look for degrees when you hire out?

Why would you look for a degree?

What is it you look for when hiring? – Portfolio, references, resume

So what you look for is personality what next? – how do you boil it down

When does the portfolio or degree come into play?

With a graphic designer you don't care so much about his personality?

Does someone with a degree demand more money?

Do you make a judgment with someone with or without a degree about how much to pay them?

How do you catch the vision of judging a person competent?

RRO

What is the value of a college education for a graphic designer?

What is the number one thing that you look at?

How does the resume play in to your hiring?

Hiring – what do you look for

Paying – does education effect base pay

Do college graduates expect more money?

What is the breadth and depth of the portfolio you look for?

Productivity – is there a difference

What are your clients like –

Reliability –

How does personality play a roll?

Problem solving abilities –

Creativity –

Firing/letting a person go is education a factor

What determine taking a part time person to full time?

What kind of training if any do you give new employees?

We hire for positions – creative – technical / production etc.



## APPENDIX B

## Interview Form

Actual interview form used by the interviewer along with an audio tape

***Background on company: pre-interview from phone call or Internet etc.***

Name of person & company

Type of company

Interviewers note: corporation | design firm | advertising firm  
| marketing | basic design co. | other

Job title

Size of company –

Number of employees –

Date /Time

Typical client base –

Interviewers note: local, state wide, national, international

**Interview Chronology**

The set up - I am looking at the hiring practices of graphic designers in Utah County

Explain the process that occurs when you are hiring. (How you find, review, interview, etc)

**Defining the need**

***Need-*** positions

What graphic design positions do you have in your company?

Interviewers note: - Production designer | Creative designer | senior designer | Jack Trades

**Find**

*Advertise*

*Interns*

*Freelances*

*Current design staff*

***Find - Advertise***

When you have a position for a new designer in your company, where do you advertise for applicants?

Interviewers note: job services | local colleges | Newspaper | look at our interns | Internet | from freelancers

(Does that change depending on type of position?)

***Find – Interns***

How often do you hire your interns?

***Find – Freelancers***

Have you hired any designers on fulltime who have done freelance work for you?

**Review**

*Applicants*

*Education*

*Résumé*

*Job experiences*

*Portfolio*

***Reviewing - Applicants***

When reviewing applicants what do you look for?

Interviewers note: education | portfolio | experiences | internships

***Reviewing - Education***

Is education a factor? In what way?

***Reviewing - Résumé***

What do you do with Résumés?

Name one thing that has caught your eye when looking at a resume

**Reviewing – Job experiences**

What do you look for when looking at job experiences?

Interviewers note: Size of company | Type on company (corporate, firm) | Diversity of the company | Clients worked with at the company

**Reviewing - Portfolio**

Which type of portfolio do you prefer?

Interviewers note: Book style | Easel | Folder | Transparency | Electronic | Box/case

**Reviewing - Portfolio**

What do you do with the portfolio when you have finished reviewing them?

Interviewers note: keep | return | trash |

**Interview - Education**

How important is it for an applicant to have attended college?

**Interview – Graduated**

What differences does it make in your mind whether an applicant has graduated from college?

**Interview - Drive/passion/love**

When interviewing an applicant what are the important aspects you consider?

Interviewers note:

- \_\_\_ Personality
- \_\_\_ Ability to talk the talk
- \_\_\_ Confidence level
- \_\_\_ Talent
- \_\_\_ Appearance
- \_\_\_ Technology

- \_\_\_ Business savvy
- \_\_\_ Intelligent
- \_\_\_ Motivation
- \_\_\_ Verbal skills
- \_\_\_ Flexibility
- \_\_\_ Attitude

**Interview**

*Education*

*Graduated*

*Drive/passion/love*

**Documenting**

How do you documenting interviews?

(Taking notes, grading, rating, etc)

**Documenting – References – recommendations**

How often do you call references?

When calling references, what do you focus on? (look for)

Interviewers note: Well liked | Hard worker | Creative | Problem solver

**Rubric (set standard for hiring)**

*Experience*

*production / concept*

**Rubric – Experience**

Assuming that two applicants' portfolios and personalities were equal, whom would you hire first, the person with a four year degree, or the person with four of years

*money*  
*negotiating*  
*demands*

Do you have a set way of eliminating applicants?

## Decision

*Education*  
*Portfolio*  
*GPA*

experience but no degree? (remember portfolios are about equal)

### **Rubric – Production / concept**

In production design what is most important to you when hiring?

Interviewers note: Speed | Hard working | Creativity | Specific skills

In concept design what is most important to you when hiring?

Interviewers note: Speed | Hard working | Creativity | Specific skills

### **Rubric – Money**

Do you have a set base salary?

If so, is it different based on education / portfolio / experience?

### **Rubric – Negotiating**

What is the best negotiating tool for an applicant to use when looking for more pay in your company?

Interviewers note: College graduate | Graduate degree | Portfolio | Resume | References | experience

### **Rubric – Demands**

Do new hires with a degree demand more money?

Do they get more?

### **Decision - Education**

How many designers on your current staff do not have at least a four-year degree?

### **Decision - Education**

What degrees do the designers that are working for you have?

Interviewers note: BA | AA | BS | AS | MFA | BFA | -- then design, English, teaching, history, business etc.

### **Decision - Education**

Where are the degrees from?

Interviewers note: BYU | UVSC | UTAH | ART CENTER | OTHER\_\_\_

### **Decision – Not being hired**

What most often keeps a prospective design employee from being hired?

Interviewers note:

- \_\_\_ Education
- \_\_\_ Experience
- \_\_\_ Design skill
- \_\_\_ Personality
- \_\_\_ Drive
- \_\_\_ Problem solving
- \_\_\_ People skills

## Two scenarios (story time)

*Best & Worst*

Take me through a best case scenario when hiring

Take me through a worst case scenario when hiring

### Changes:

How have hiring practices changed over the last 5 years? (Then ten years)

How do you feel they will change in the next five years? (Then ten years)

### Promoting

*Best qualifies*

### *Promoting*

When promoting a designer, what best qualifies the person for (advancement) to a higher position in your company?

Interviewers note:

- Management
- Lead designer
- Education
- Experience
  
- Time with the company
- Design skill
- Problem solving ability
- People skills

### Downsizing

*Attribute*

When downsizing, what attribute most influence you:

Interviewers note: Education level | Long-term goals | Productivity | Personality | reliability | current salary

## APPENDIX C

## Research Data Table

	Employer A	Employer B	Employer P	Employer C	Employer Q	Employer D	Employer G	Employer H
<b>Find</b>	we call schools both local and national; Walk -ins, freelancers	word of mouth, walk-ins, people who fit our style	Production designer-employment agencies, and the newspaper, word of mouth	walk-ins, word of mouth	word of mouth, schools	word of mouth, walk-ins, BYU	walk-ins	Newspaper
<b>Review</b>	portfolio	loves what they do	technical knowledge	design skill, proficiency in the programs, work habits	80% is the portfolio the rest is on personality	I don't really care about education it really comes down to the portfolio	looking for our needs, styles match our designs	<i>is self motivate, have finished something, loyalties, other hobbies</i>
<i>Education</i>	School does matter is just does	Yes but not the key factor, I do not care if they have graduated	understanding and experience	we don't often hire someone who has a degree	graduated from a reputable school I will take a little more time looking at there stuff		it is not a factor for us	Graduates don't understand color, fonts, postscript, any of the production side.
<i>Résumé</i>	work experience, technical experience	consistent look and feel	understanding and experience	technical side	if they are at all interesting, things that are more my style.	proficiency in the programs	type of projects they have worked on the size of clients	Creativity
<i>Job experiences</i>	worked as a designer	type of work they have done	changed jobs a lot progressing towards some sort of goal	ability to work with people	worked for good studios, years of experience	freelance work they have done	Size and type of clients	worked in the printing industry, maybe UNIX skills
<i>Portfolio</i>	quality consistency, you can tell from the portfolio where they came from most of the time	<i>array of work</i>	type of press work they have done	the type of things we do	creative self-promo	typography, and their quality of their work, attention to detail	<i>consistent with the design we do</i>	versatility, understanding on colors
<b>Interview</b>	<i>personable, dress</i>	Professionalism, how they dress	Appearance good commutation skills	graduates ask for too much money	easy to work with	<i>personality</i>	<i>appearance, ability on Mac's Personality, attitude</i>	first impression, their personality
<b>4years school / experiences</b>	four years of experience	four year degree		four years of experience	four year degree	four years of experience	lean towards the person with out the degree	experience

<i>References</i>	do they meet deadlines, how they work in creative environment		work ethic, and there personal attitudes		work ethic, then where they creative and inventive			
<i>Experience</i>								all depends on how much experience
<i>Production</i>	a hint of computer nard	Speed and quality, Creativity	a bit of creative skills	Speed & attention to detail	attention to detail, the typography, easy to get along with	Speed, someone who will be happy in doing this work	Speed	Knowledge, very organized, their own managers, knowledge of output process.
<i>concept</i>	asks a lot of questions before development	Creativity		Speed & Quality of work		Uniqueness – a fresh look	Attention to detail	Someone who is more creative and has a verity of ides.
<i>Money</i>	set ball park	certain amount to work with in	better understanding will = better pay			entry level range		
<i>Negotiating</i>	not in this market		Portfolio	experience	experience	Experience for one, two portfolio, and then education third.	Portfolio	experience
<b>Decision</b>	Typography					quality of work and attention to detail. Then their experience on the field, and then education	I use a lot of freelancers	
<b>education</b>	4/6 have 4 yr degrees – 2 from art center 1 from BYU	2/4 @BYU	2/4 – one in design BA from the U and BYU	2/4 byu & UMA	5 designers who have graduated with a 4 year degree and about 6 who have not	3/6 - BYU and UVSC	2/3 - BYU, Provo coll	5/7 - UVSC, P-College
<b>scenarios</b>		Someone who loves what we do			been referred	have talent and don't demand to much money	1. 1. speed (time) – deadlines are everything 2. cost (price) 3. quality	people stand out in a good way

**Changes  
Promoting  
Downsizing**

Usually people with degrees do not want to work in production design. And its true that many companies wont hire someone with a degree to do production design because they don't want to pay more.

*Usually you can only  
get two out of three*

	Employer R	Employer I	Employer K	Employer L	Employer M	Employer N	Employer O
<b>Find</b>	walk-ins	word of mouth 1st, web site 2nd, local collages 3rd	walk-ins	word of mouth	local collages, walk-ins and emails	Newspaper, other companies other designers	freelancers, referrals from people we know, then BYU
<b>Review</b>	<i>experiences then schooling, then I look at the samples, and then knowledge of design programs</i>	<b>First</b> thing I look for is have they had any schooling, and it does not matter how many years. They need to have been working for a goal, <b>Second</b> thing who have they worked for	portfolio first   experiences second	Good strong talent is hard to find	<i>portfolio 1st   experiences 2nd - good representation of concept, that they understand how to do conceptual work that they have good technical skills, in addition to computers they know how to do typography, basics of layout, and that they are good to get along with</i>	experiences 1 <sup>st</sup> portfolio 2nd	<i>Where is our point of pain, and how can you solve that point?"</i>
<b>Education</b>	<i>if someone who has graduated would almost never apply here they</i>	don't care about their education I only care about their talent.	not an issue but I feel that I understand what a designer who went to byu knows better because I went there	Yes and no - Fundamentally, it tells you that they are a finisher, its not the degree but the education	the ones who are best qualified the best range of work and the best thinkers in the past end up having a degree	I never look at education its not a factor in my hiring maybe that's because I never graduate	Yes, for us you need a BFA
<b>Résumé</b>	<i>type of experiences</i>	typography is first then if its organized	typography, then attention to detail, what typefaces they have chosen, how did they present it.	– the fact that its different, business of getting mind shire	back ground, weather the resume is designed well its self whether it came from a designer. If it had typos in it is a major issue for me, understanding of typography	call past employers, I mainly look for job experiences	look a little sloppy. The type is amateurish, the style is off
<b>Job experiences</b>	number of jobs, how long they have stayed there.	job hoppers, companies have they worked	It really depends on our needs	things that add to what we do	Type on company (corporate, firm	If they have done the type of work that, we do here.	some kind of projects, internships, proficient at the production work
<b>Portfolio</b>	<i>creativity</i>	very organized, why they designed it they way they did	how its packaged	that they have done the type of work we do here, I look for concepts that stand out, that has great visuals, that pulls you in	consistency, only as strong as the weakest pieces in there portfolio	rk that has been printed the flow of the design and that they have some understanding of design	Sitting down and analyzing – what dose the portfolio look like, what's the story behind it, what was the goal here, and where the results met, the imagery in it, things that catch my eyes something that pops

<b>Interview</b>	How they carry themselves	Outward appearance and detail in their own lives and that shows in their design work. Their personality	articulate are they clean, do they care about their appearance, are they neat Do they listen	<i>be able of speak intelligently, Attitude is also important, personality that is pleasant</i>	<i>someone who loves design, who is really satisfied with it, Appearance, Personality</i>	Do they understand how to deal with placing registration marks, bleeds, and other press issues in their design. And understanding of programs	<i>find a match with us, personality, design style, standing for your design choices (able to explain your choices and if you can adjust)</i>
<b>4years school / experiences</b>	experience	experience but no degree	Most likely experience	not sure	four years of experience	Experience is always better	It depends on the projects
<i>References</i>		Charter, work ethic	work ethic, constantly asking for raises		Are they honest, easy to get along with, are they hard working, where their any problems, I am basically looking for issues,	attitudes, their personality was like, their specifically they types of jobs design	How are they to work with, their work ethic – do they leave early come late
<i>Production</i>	Speed, Specific skills	Specific skills	Hardworking do they need their hand held	designer that would add value to each design	happy with production and not trying to be the designers also	Speed 1 <sup>st</sup>   Creativity 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Having that well rounded basics skill set. And to be happy doing their work
<i>concept</i>	understand the print process	Creativity	Creativity - sense of humor	Creativity	appropriate concepts	Creativity 1 <sup>nd</sup>   Speed 2 <sup>nd</sup>	creativity speed the ability to come up with a lot of once
<i>Money</i>	experience		not graduate yet when we offer less money	its set to this market but if they bring in more work then they would get more pay	I usually ask them to give me a range that they are looking for and I will tell them if its within what we can afford.	experience	base it on what projects the agency had coming in
<i>Negotiating</i>	We do not negotiate	grade level based on education / portfolio / experience - In a corporate environment education is problem the best tool	experience then portfolio are almost hand in hand	Portfolio	not really flexible	experience	experience
<b>Decision</b>							
<b>education</b>	0/2 - have degrees	12/17 - most BYU, 3 uvsc, 1 from U, 1 PC	1/3 - masters from england, past designers have been in school	3/3 Advertising, MBA in advertising and audio engineering at BYU	4/4 byu, 1 PC	0/2 designers	2 BFA's and 2 MBA's, BYU and my MBA from Syracuse
<b>scenarios</b>			someone that is hungry				<b>First look at resumes</b> cutting to about 20 <b>Second portfolios</b> – cutting to about 8 <b>Third interviews</b> –

**Changes  
Promoting  
Downsizing**

Printers vs. Web – the  
gap widens – fewer  
designers understand  
how to work up for the  
press.

Much more selective, back a few  
years ago

First - experience  
Second - résumé Third -  
portfolio Fourth -  
education

## APPENDIX D

### Consent to be a Research Subject

#### **Introduction**

This research study is being conducted by Landon Densley a graduate student at Brigham Young University. This research will explore the factors employers in Utah County consider when hiring graphic designers.

#### **Procedures**

An Interview will take place where talk about the process that occurs when you are hiring. (How you find, review, interview, etc) it will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be tape-recorded and then transcribed.

#### **Risks/Discomforts**

There are no risks for participation in this study. But if you feel any discomfort in the conversation at any time feel free to say so and the moderator will be sensitive to this and move on to another question.

#### **Benefits**

The benefits to you are simply to get a better understanding of hiring practices here in Utah County.

#### **Confidentiality**

All information provided will remain confidential and will only be reported as group data with no identifying information. All data, including tapes/transcriptions will be kept until the thesis is finished only those directly involved with the research will have access to them. After the research is completed, the tapes will be destroyed.

#### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate.

#### **Questions about the Research**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Landon Densley at 372-1533, ltd@byu.edu or Dr. Thomas Erikson at 422 – 6300

#### **Questions about your Rights as Research Participants**

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Shane Schulthies, IRB Chair, 422-5490, 120B RB, shane\_schulthies@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This request was made and accepted by the IRB October 2003

Due to this type of research being conversational informal interviews, I am requesting that the consent form signature be waived, because having subjects sign a form might overly formalize the interview. There is no sensitive information disclosed within the interview and no harm could come if names were somehow exposed. However, the consent form will be shown to and read by subjects. Their willingness to continue with the interview will there by show consent to the information on the form.

Thank you for your consideration  
Landon Densley



## APPENDIX E

## Employers List of Designers

List of companies that were called in attempted to participate in this study. In finding the sample group an attempt to talk to employers that had different types of design work was made. Looking at press shops, design firms, advertising agencies, marketing firms, graphic design shops and corporations with in-house designers. Of the original list of 34 all of which were called and the following was found: 10 had moved, changed their name or gone out business or did not meet the criteria of hiring graphic designers, 7 that were willing to talk but too busy at the time of the sampling, 1 that flat out said no, 10 of the business had multiple names there by cutting down the original list to 9. I then went out and searched out others under publishing and design and came up with a list of 20 others half of which did not meet the criteria of hiring graphic designers bringing the total available population to 20.

Advertising-Agencies & Counselors

Braineac

Provo, UT 84601

Phone: (801) 221-1624

Cougar Sports Magazine

684 E 2320 N

Provo, UT 84604-1749

Phone: (801) 224-6255

Categories: Advertising-Agencies &amp; Counselors

Hales Stephen Creative

2230 N University Pkwy

Provo, UT 84604-1509

Phone: (801) 373-8888

OREM

Digital Video Etc

170 Mountain Way Dr

Orem, UT 84058-5103

Phone: (801) 225-3825

Categories: Advertising-Agencies

Element

81 N Center St.

Provo, Utah 84606

Phone: (801) 373-4808

Online Graphics

170 Mountain Way Dr

Orem, UT 84058-5103

Phone: (801) 225-3825

Imc Inc  
 3651 N 100 E  
 Provo, UT 84604-4597  
 Phone: (801) 224-2582  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors

Ishii Design  
 32 W Center St  
 Provo, UT 84601-4462  
 Phone: (801) 374-5449  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors,

James Bastian Creative  
 450 N University Ave  
 Provo, UT 84601-2860  
 Phone: (801) 373-1271  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors

Kendell Communications  
 1727 Teton Dr  
 Provo, UT 84604-2915  
 Phone: (801) 377-3456  
 Services: Advertising Design, Media Buys  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors

Pacific Media  
 3521 N University Ave  
 Provo, UT 84604-4418  
 Phone: (801) 374-0096  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors

Soter Associates  
 209 N 400 W  
 Provo, UT 84601-2746  
 Phone: (801) 375-6200  
 Services: Brochures, Direct Mail, Graphic Design, more...  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors,

Storey & Assoc  
 50 E 500 N  
 Provo, UT 84606-7146  
 Phone: (801) 373-7498  
 General Info: American Assoc Of Advertising

Glyphx  
 1435 N 1200 W  
 Orem, UT 84057-2449  
 Phone: (801) 225-9777  
 Categories: Commercial Art & Graphic Design

Quantum Advertising  
 170 Mountain Way Dr  
 Orem, UT Zip Code  
 Phone: (801) 225-3825  
 Services: Broadcast, Brochures, Corporate Marketing, Logos

Scarpino Keck Design House  
 206 E 860 S  
 Orem, UT Zip Code  
 Phone: (801) 224-6255  
 Categories: Advertising-Agencies & Counselors

#### Graphic Designers

Barney 3 McKay Design Group  
 491 W 1400 N  
 Orem, UT 84057-7000  
 Phone: (801) 225-9949  
<http://www.barneymckay.com/flashPage.html>  
 Categories: Graphic Designers, Commercial Art & Graphic Design

Design & Publishing Group the  
 165 N 1330 W  
 Orem, UT 84057-5111  
 Phone: (801) 221-2737  
 Categories: Graphic Designers, Commercial Art

Image Kitchen the  
 122 Mountain Way Dr  
 Orem, UT 84058-5118  
 Phone: (801) 434-8867  
 Categories: Graphic Designers, Commercial Art & Graphic Design

Knight Jim Design Inc  
 Orem, UT 84057  
 Phone: (801) 224-3072  
 Categories: Graphic Designers, Commercial Art & Graphic

## Agencies (AAAA)

Utah Business Club  
684 E 2320 N  
Provo, UT Zip Code  
Phone: (801) 224-2223  
Categories: Advertising-Agencies &  
Counselors

Walton Group Inc  
8 W Center St  
Provo, UT Zip Code  
Phone: (801) 812-0125  
Services: Full Service Advertising, Graphic  
Design  
Categories: Advertising-Agencies &  
Counselors

Graphic Designers

Alphagraphics  
2001 N State St  
Provo, UT 84604-1047  
Phone: (801) 818-9060

Focus Design  
510 S University Ave  
Provo, UT 84601-4500  
Phone: (801) 379-0380

Hawkins Vance Design  
18 N University Ave  
Provo, UT 84601-8406  
Phone: (801) 374-2440

Ishii Design  
32 W Center St  
Provo, UT 84601-4462  
Phone: (801) 374-5449

Magellan Publications  
4778 N 300 W  
Provo, UT 84604-7704  
Phone: (801) 426-8751

Rushford & Ross Marketing Communications  
108 W Center St  
Provo, UT 84601-4418  
Phone: (801) 377-3954

You Inc  
81 Mountain Way Dr  
Orem, UT 84058-5117  
Phone: (801) 224-5007  
Categories: Graphic Designers, Commercial  
Art & Graphic Design

LEHI

Arius 3 D  
551 E State Rd  
American Fork, UT 84003-2191  
Phone: (801) 756-2929  
Categories: Graphics Services, Commercial Art  
& Graphic Design

Mountain Graphics  
485 N 1200 W  
Lindon, UT 84042-1126  
Phone: (801) 785-6419

Inspire Graphics  
PO Box 935  
Pleasant Grove, UT 84062-0935  
Phone: (801) 235-9393

Jolley Graphic Productions  
375 E 790 S  
Pleasant Grove, UT 84062-3608  
Phone: (801) 796-1221

Viewpoint  
11778 Election Rd  
Draper, UT Zip Code  
Phone: (801) 619-4600

Zero Gravity  
50 W 3900 S  
Salt Lake City, UT Zip Code  
Phone: (801) 269-1066

Extended list:  
Novell 861-7000 / 359-3079

Liberty press 853-5353

Rocky Mountain press 222-9300

Storey & Assoc  
50 E 500 N  
Provo, UT 84606-7146  
Phone: (801) 373-7498

Thayne Rick Design  
350 E Center St  
Provo, UT 84606-3262  
Phone: (801) 375-0086

Extended list:  
Posom Design Website design services  
1250 East 520 South  
Provo, UT 84606  
801-356-8441

KDM Sales & Design  
801-371-0300

Downtown Design Company  
177 West Center Street  
Provo, UT 84601  
801-812-3125

Minuteman Press  
563 North 1200 West  
Orem, UT 84057  
801-431-0991

Alan Press  
269 Mountain Way Drive  
Orem, UT 84058  
801-221-1191

Dean Art & Design  
1106 South 1680 West  
Orem, UT 84058  
801-224-9845

Summit Graphic & Design  
1135 North State Street  
Orem, UT 84057  
801-426-6533  
801-426-6532

Sundog Design Inc  
237 West 520 North  
Orem, UT 84057  
801-225-8869

Press Publishing Inc 801-373-6996  
1601 West 820 North  
Provo, UT 84601

ARO Publishing CO  
398 South 1100 West  
Provo, UT 84601  
801-377-8218

DMT Publishing  
Provo, UT 84601  
dmt@dmtpublishing.com  
801-373-4450

Henry Dean Publishing  
1254 North 1220 West  
Provo, UT 84604  
801-377-0374

Legacy Publishing  
808 East 1910 South  
Provo, UT 84606  
801-356-7700

Cicero Web Publishing  
1800 N State St  
Provo, UT 84604  
801-319-4214

Front Line Design Services  
486 West 1720 North  
Provo, UT 84604  
801-374-9223

Killian H Val Design Group  
15 North 100 East  
Provo, UT 84606  
801-377-5577

Kiora Web APPS & Design  
32 West Center Street  
Provo, UT 84601  
801-356-1900

Unlimited Design  
514 South 500 West  
Provo, UT 84601  
801-374-5229

Swivelhead Design Works

305 West 800 North  
Orem, UT 84057  
801-225-3225

Cp Jolley Graphics Productions

801-376-0376

Graphicsone Llc

8 W Center St  
Provo, UT 84601  
801-375-0317

Limelight

290 N University Ave  
Provo, UT 84601  
801-344-5300

World Design

37 East Center Street  
Provo, UT 84606  
801-375-7762

Smack Dab Creative

560 S 100 W  
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