

Rethinking

The Partnership
of Design & Business

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*A research study exploring the relationship
of design and business philosophies, strategies,
and education toward the advancement
of creative leadership.*

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Introduction

Throughout this spring I have written and edited the following essays to better examine and understand the interaction and integration of design practice and business. Throughout this study I have come to realize a great deal about the nature of this cooperation and have formulated a proposal to break down the current compartmentalization of these two industries. The following essays are an evolution of a philosophy based on research, personal experience, and conversations with professionals and educators. There is still much work to be done before we realize the full potential of a perfect partnership and mutual understanding between design and business.



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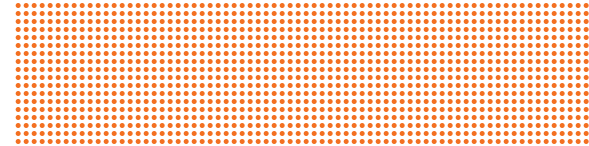
The need to differentiate and stand out in a saturated marketplace of products and services has led to the introduction of design as a strategic catalyst positioned to revive faltering business models and rethink old industry practices. The excitement and momentum behind this movement began in the early 2000s with periodicals such as BusinessWeek and Fast Company devoting more and more attention to design and innovation. Around the same time, IDEO's David Kelley, and others, began to advance the methodology of design thinking, a more holistic approach to business problem solving using the processes and principles of creativity to direct business decisions. Understandably, businesses have been hungry to discover solutions to their problems through creativity and innovation.

However, as this new methodology of business practice holds design to a higher societal standard than ever before, there have been some questions surrounding its implementation and widespread effectiveness. Business periodicals have been the most sunny when reporting the progress of true partnerships and integration of "design thinking" but lately there has been some vacillation. Even one of the movement's biggest allies, BusinessWeek's Bruce Nussbaum, had to announce the death of his favorite catch-all word, the very notably hot: innovation. It is this very word that leads to a reflection upon the design community's overall reaction and this call to arms. For the most part, very little of business practice has been affected by design. Though firms like IDEO have been given the opportunity to affect the business model of a client, the more typical relationship is still a somewhat adversarial role between designer and client. Many professionals have often expressed in their personal monographs that business and design simply do not exist in the same universe. This really could not be further from the truth.

The problem between design and business does not arise from a reciprocal need or from the lack of a common mission, but instead, it stems from lack of communication and mutual understanding. The reason many designers are not buying into this new excitement is not because they are uninterested in affecting their client's strategy through creative means but rather, because they have not been given the tools or the opportunity to do this. The current commentary on the subject is causing excitement in the business audience but not in the design community. Graphic designer and vocal design-business writer, Michael Bierut, summed up the opinions shared by so many fellow designers- writing that businesses are excited about "innovation" because they see innovators as "forthright fellows with their shirtsleeves rolled up, covering whiteboards with vigorous magic-markered diagrams, arrows pointing to words like "Results!" Design, on the other hand, is seen as an aesthetic pursuit that is sometimes good and sometimes bad, while, "it's taken for granted that innovation, however, is always good."

Extending beyond the trivial issues that designers have with the use of denigrating language (that's a completely different matter), lies a much more deeply rooted obstacle preventing a better synthesis and understanding between design and business - that is the lack of context, organizational understanding, and leadership education promoted in modern design education.

The more motivated of the two parties involved in this interaction, business, has already made monumental shifts in graduate business education toward a more complete awareness of design's essential role in new business thinking. These new programs have been instrumental in the evolution today's MBA but ultimately do little to promote an equal, paradigm-shifting interaction between design and business. If business leaders have the tools to understand "design thinking," this nevertheless does not promote design or designers to a true leadership position within organizations.



Remedying this dilemma requires a reassessment of how business is to be integrated into new design school curricula. Design education already finds itself in a state of flux. Aside from the rapid evolution of the tools and media that students work with, even the most well-respected programs have been attempting to make their voices heard and add professional credibility to the field before a public that cannot differentiate these specialized attributes from an exclusively fine arts education.

There have been two main approaches to business studies in design education (both discussed at length later in this document), one focusing on a complete integration of "design management" and the other, more common, an introduction of cursory seminars on business practice and technical skills. On a broader level, neither of these approaches is truly hitting the right mark - to educate designers that are excited and equipped not only to practice a high standard of design but also to manage and understand business situations and be respected as partners in the business community.

Both design and business are still compartmentalizing each other within their respective institutions and will continue to attempt to package their essence into an easily understood and quantitative view of each field. Given the overlapping nature of these two disciplines, with the lines between design and business blurring constantly, the true cooperation that professionals are so excited to see will only become a reality when designers are trained to be leaders and equals in business and not just well-versed students in a narrowly defined "business" education. This is much more than another passing trend: design can be great business.

Michael Bierut, partner designer at Pentagram, once wrote, “Not everything is design, but design is about everything. So do yourself a favor: be ready for anything.” Today more than ever this statement rings true. As design evolved throughout the twentieth century there have been many iterations of its practice and theory. Connections with science, fine arts, engineering, the humanities, and sociology have led to a discipline that is so intertwined with everything in our world that it escapes definition. It is the broad classification of design, as the edification and thoughtful architecture of all human creation that epitomizes how integral design unquestionably is to the success of our society.

Since the debate outlined in the summary above is not to be about the significance of design to the human race but rather, how design, as a method of problem solving, can be integrated into practices other than design-related areas to achieve an elevated level of success. The question stands, how can this be done?

Like never before in modern history, design is being called upon to step into a leadership position, asked to address a myriad of dilemmas, both social and environmental, that challenge not only the way that we interact but also our very existence. Tough times have always called for creative problem solving and individual innovative genius to change seemingly futile situations, but what our present situation requires is not the work of a few brilliant men behind closed doors but instead, the movement of our entire culture toward an incorporation and an understanding of the importance of a more holistic and creative approach.

There is no better place to begin this than with the designers themselves. Much has been written on the need to integrate creative “design thinking” within the business community but, apart from a great deal of conversation and good thinking on the topic, no action has been realized. Business leaders, no matter how excited they are to approach strategic problems from a “design” perspective, are not going to be effective in implementing any change in their business model unless they inspire a level of curiosity, excitement and potency amongst the design community themselves to achieve more and be equally involved. To designers today, the concept of becoming an integral partner in the business world is just another problem that the community must face. Sustainability, integrating deeper scientific approaches, gaining respect in the broader community, or integrating business thinking into their process – all of these issues are seen as equal. Designers somehow have to choose if they want to be form makers, focus on aesthetics, be dilettantes to the corporate world, or be designing systems and ideas and generating real impact. However, this should not be the case. Designers need to understand that in order to move forward in any of these directions they need to be equipped and educated to collaborate beyond interactions among designers. This can only be achieved with a basic understanding of leadership, business practice, and organizations.

The business, scientific, and general communities have made it abundantly clear that they are collectively eager to integrate “design thinking” more widely into their practice. The next step in this process is to affect a systemic shift in the way business thinking is approached by designers. Many designers and artists are often alienated by the concept of business thinking or integration. This conjures up notions of corporate boardrooms and more recently the perils and pitfalls of the financial crisis. In reality, this is not how business will affect design’s potential. In the higher education of designers today, a greater weight is now being placed on the conception of professional

preparation – auxiliary courses geared to introduce students to pragmatic models of finance, accounting, intellectual property law, and basic start-up strategies. Though beneficial, these practices are certainly not going to advance the role of designers in any field – and this is not the assumption. There may however, be a way to spark a higher level of involvement on the topic of business, organically, within the design community, with the root of the solution fixed in education.

Design education on its own is a contentious topic and integrating so-called “professional” studies is a topic few designers will approach willingly. Since there are many methods presented to educate young designers in the three short years that the most intensive design programs prescribe, seeing eye-to-eye on a topic as broad as business education will not be achieved easily. However, when we examine the lack of integration more closely, if design schools were to adopt a more intrinsic approach to business education, designers would have the opportunity to be exposed to the inner workings of business and would learn how business can actually positively affect the execution of design and lead to a more practical, worldly and ultimately more effective design process. The notion that business education is more of a skill set for designers to learn instead of viewing design education as a concept for business people to embrace has a long, very resistant foundation. Regardless of how interested an individual designer may be to work in the corporate or business world beyond the design community, the very act of designing for the public and designing as a profession requires a solid understanding of client interactions, business goals, and pragmatic design solutions that must take business practices into account. It may be beneficial to understand design as a business leader but it is not necessary in order to succeed. A designer, on the other hand, that cannot relate or communicate the significance of his product or service to a business and execute design processes with strategy in mind can no longer compete in today’s society. Furthermore, given design’s present nature as an educational discipline, where designers benefit from a knowledge of everything from science to theology, having a comprehensive notion of business will only further build upon the necessary skills through a deeper understanding of a client’s goals.

This discussion of business and design education harkens back to Michael Bierut’s quote that design is about everything. Business studies and the promotion of tomorrow’s designers as leaders and engineers of strategic business practice can offer design so much more than a greater realization of design’s potential in the corporate world. If design students can be actively and openly engaged to rethink the scope of their education, we are giving them the opportunity to explore the depth of what design is capable of helping them achieve. They will be empowered to understand early in their careers that the skills and problem-solving approach developed in school can be implemented in countless applications, which have the potential to affect the world positively and creatively. The solution begins when we step beyond our limited views of what “design” and “business” are and begin to understand that we no longer live in a world that can afford to compartmentalize solutions by such anachronistic standards.

“Design Thinking” Anyone working in business today has heard this phrase tossed around meetings and offices often in reference to a new product offering, corporate direction, or some other form of innovation. Lately, along with innovation, design thinking has taken hold in the business community as one of the key strategies for success. Companies are hungry to thrive, especially in today’s dire economic conditions, and they see design thinking as a tangible way toward achieving this goal.

Though the integration of strategic design in business and the promotion of creative leadership is critical in helping companies get ahead in the industry today, “design thinking” comes off as a complete misnomer for an approach that is actually nothing new at all to the business world. Looking at what is today regarded as “design thinking” leads us to the conclusion, when boiled down to its essence, that it is simply a more complete, holistic approach to the business philosophy. More abstractly, it can be described as a vehicle created to drive ideas through contextual observation, planning, and ultimately effective implementation.

Frankly, successful companies have been executing this integrative strategy for years without the word design ever coming out of their mouths. Figures like Peter Drucker introduced concepts that parallel these “new” tenets startlingly closely as he and other business leaders championed a broader notion of business and implemented truly innovative ventures. Companies like IBM, under the leadership of Thomas Watson, put design at the forefront of their strategy, cementing IBM as one of the most important and respected corporations of the 20th century.

Ultimately, the term “design thinking” pigeonholes design and detracts from the fundamental idea that good business is really just good design. Businesses would greatly benefit from implementing a more holistic, pragmatic approach, which design is well known for, in all of their affairs in order to truly adopt “design thinking.”

Regardless of buzzwords and inaccurate language swirling around conversations within the business community, it is abundantly clear that businesses are craving designers to do more than add aesthetic brilliance to their companies these days. They are in need of fundamental tactics and approaches to stay competitive and efficient in an increasingly dynamic and competitive world where the consumer is gaining more command every day.

To begin to break down this nascent and energetic blending of educational approaches it is best to first examine the institutions and organizations contributing to the conversation. Recently, these topics have become the mainstay of events like the Davos World Economic Forum, which brings together many leaders of business, politics, and now design as well as the intellectual community to try to better understand the most pressing issues facing the world. These forums have spawned many collaborative organizations in the past twenty years, formed to help better address the needs of the business world. Organizations, such as the Corporate Design Foundation, The Design Council (UK), DMI, C&binet (UK), the Business Innovation Factory, and the Center for Design and Business, vary in their specific mission, scale, and purpose (some more profit-based than others) but are all committed to promote interaction and cooperation between design and business in order to demonstrate and implement design’s value in terms that businesses can understand. These organizations have been successful in spreading the themes of design integration, innovation and more recently business transformation throughout their communities but have struggled to “sell” the more comprehensive understanding of design to business, leaving their impact on the larger system of business practice relatively minor.

In the educational circuit many business schools have felt the need to integrate “design thinking” into their curricula in order to stay relevant and successful in a world that now, given the recent events of the financial crisis, is not enamored with the attitude many schools have taken in the past. Business schools also are seeing the advantages of widening their scope of prospective students in the belief that there can be several paths to an MBA and that the successful business leaders of tomorrow are going to be a much more diverse and varied group than the leaders of the 20th century.

No school has embraced this idea more than the Rotman School of Management in Canada and its Dean, Roger Martin. Martin has embraced the philosophy of creative leadership within organizations and has worked within his school to introduce integrative thinking more fully into the core curriculum. He has gained international acclaim for his work and writing, and has become an international leader introducing this new discipline into the educational world. Rotman is not alone in these trends. Other business schools have begun to open their doors to a wider base of students, in the hope that a more well-rounded student body will lead to more innovation and diversity within both the curriculum and the student body. In terms of specific business schools, not surprisingly, Stanford has become another leader in embracing design and integrating engineers and designers into its MBA program within its Institute of Design. Other programs have continued to form throughout the U.S. and the world as this concept of integrative discipline continues to evolve organically.

Though the institutions and universities have moved forward by introducing this more integrative approach to business thinking, the most publicized and widely circulated “buzz” on the subject has been at BusinessWeek magazine. For the past few years BusinessWeek, along with a few other periodicals, not to the same extent, has advanced and fostered a discussion of innovation and design to the business community. In line with many of the recent trends in the magazine industry, much of this discussion has been on their active online portal, allowing for a wide reach and two-way discussions between the reader and the journalist. BusinessWeek has been extremely successful in terms of disseminating information, strategy, and provoking conversation around innovation to business people, but its biggest asset by far has been journalist, Bruce Nussbaum. If there were ever another cheerleader for a movement of this nature, Nussbaum would outshine, out network, and out-speak them. His chief duty at Business week is curating an eponymous blog, “Nussbaum on Design,” that covers everything design and business from Obama’s stimulus bill and its lack of innovative thinking, to open discussions on specific companies and their strategies for integrating design. In addition to the blog, Nussbaum religiously attends both design and business conferences, teaches a course at Parsons with several other high profile speakers on the topic, and makes connections within both fields to promote interconnectivity. Though his impact is more apparent to the business audience, who are more receptive to his writing style and background, Nussbaum does an impressive job promoting this budding discipline to everyone, easily relating his ideas to business minds, packaging up the whole chatter into a more linear system than has ever been articulated before.

While his efforts are truly commendable and he is clearly a great promoter of both designers and their possible impact on the business world on a macro level, just like the institutions and universities he, along with BusinessWeek, has failed to affect any real change greater than a ripple throughout the industry. One could easily say that all of the literature on the subject is too focused on trends and buzz words, with the most recent swirl around the idea of “transformation”. Ultimately, these buzzwords offer only a superficial solution to what is a complex issue that demands the equal interaction and partnership of design. Too often these mantras have been reiterated in a form that forces the real solutions and dialogue into a format that is too easily quantitative and formulaic.

BusinessWeek, Nussbaum, the Rotman School of Management, and other involved institutions and organizations have created an amazing resource for businesses to better understand and define what is necessary for a successful interaction of design and business. However, returning back to the definition of “design thinking” there has still been little progress or success in the culminating parts of the process, namely the execution and implementation of the strategies everyone seems to be so interested in. It appears, at least for now, that the current approach of hitting executives over the head with essays and conferences about the impact of design on business simply does not work. We will see what will eventually become of this interaction, whether the business world will commit to foster this interaction on a larger, systemic level. It stands to reason that if we can break from the habit of compartmentalizing ideas like “design thinking” and see the two as complements to one another there is clearly much success to be had.

Design has always had to walk the fine line between art and business. Since the rise of commercial design and mass-production in advertising and design in the post World War II era, designers have been attempting to practice both good design and good business simultaneously. It has been anything but a smooth ride.

The design practices of the 1960s, 70s, and even 80s, were largely craft based; designers spent much of their time as a fine artist might, pouring over drafting tables and creating sample concept layouts and mock-ups by hand. They had a relationship with their clients for sure, but it often only involved a few meetings, often not even attended by the designers themselves. In larger firms, like advertising agencies, the designers never actually met the client; all messages were relayed through account executives and managers, the salespeople. This system led to a slow but certain rift between the design and business communities. The two could not see eye to eye because they rarely had the opportunity. Everything was conveniently compartmentalized to keep business and design in their own respective arenas.

Though this was the norm, there were, however, some exceptions to this rule. Many smaller, designer-led, agencies offered direct interaction between designer and client. Designers like Paul Rand, Massimo Vignelli, Ivan Chermayeff, Tom Geismar, and Milton Glaser (among others), employed their work to transform the strategy of their clients through the sheer power of their work, and perhaps most surprisingly, the integration of business thinking into their agencies. This approach, contrary to the wildfire fervor around “design thinking” today, introduced the designer into a business atmosphere. Often introduced as vice presidents of design at larger organizations, designers were able to manage and coordinate all design-related functions within the business. Names like Lou Dorfsman at CBS and WGBH’s Chris Pullman are still icons today for the sensible design practices that elevated their companies to sublime levels of design consciousness and overall consistency. These strategies were often born out of a lack of specialization in the field, which forced designers into leadership roles, taking on the responsibility of a job that today would be filled by many different individuals.

However, the success of this thinking and practice actually hurt the designer’s role as a leader in the business community. As the popularity of branding and consumerism in general exploded in the 1980s and 90s there was a rampant consolidation of these smaller creative design agencies as well as advertising agencies into larger communications holding companies with offices and employees worldwide. This movement led to a bureaucratization of the industry and a further compartmentalization of design, placing it into a separate and inequitable box from its business counterpart. The new directors of these organizations, who were not designers, created a hierarchy similar to that of an advertising agency where art direction fell clearly below the guise of account management, and rarely dealt directly with the client. Furthermore, with the rise of computer-aided design, we have seen the world form an even more ambiguous view of the discipline and what it is exactly that designers can offer. The fast paced rise of Do-It-Yourself design, in combination with a reluctance of many designers to embrace the new shift in the profession’s tools helped to create an animosity between the design and business worlds. This resentment was largely because businesses could not rationalize paying an expensive design consultancy for work the designers could not justify as being more valuable than what a ‘Photoshop jockey’ could create. Herein lies the root of design’s problems: communication of value and a mutual understanding between the client and the designer.

The compartmentalization of design has emerged as the model for large design agencies, which are now more commonly referred to as branding or product innovation consultancies. Some of the smaller, privately-held firms still approach design with a clear understanding of the important integration of business into their practice. IDEO, the internationally acclaimed product design firm, has truly established itself as the leader of this class. Under the leadership of Tim Brown, who has worked actively with figureheads of the business world to promote 'design thinking' and innovative strategy, IDEO has carved out a niche as a respected and accomplished firm in even the eyes of the most conservative businesses. In addition to a unique but now widely emulated process of product development, IDEO has begun to work with its clients to implement new strategic direction and design to bolster a company's performance. Though these pioneering efforts have garnered great attention for IDEO, their success has been rather limited. It seems that as a firm they have been able to successfully create a curiosity within the business community but have not yet truly implemented the ideas they support so passionately.

In another approach to addressing these issues of compartmentalization, graphic designer, Michael Bierut has written a great deal on his personal view of design's integration with business. A partner at the international design firm, Pentagram, Bierut basically fulfills the role of CEO, CMO, COO, and CFO in addition to designer for his group. Though they operate in a relatively niche market, with a smaller number of high-end clients, Pentagram's strategy for collaboration between designer and client is unparalleled. The organization stresses the importance of designing as a partnership and deeply involves their client into the process to better address their needs. Though Bierut and Pentagram offer some unique and refreshing perspectives on the conversation, their impact, too, has been no more than a blip on the radar screen of the current business practices and strategies.

These two examples, in addition to the work of the large corporate firms and the small three to five person firms, provide a fairly complete depiction of the design industry as it stands today in relation to the world of business. There are certainly moments of brilliance and success in seeking a more comprehensive approach to design and a more meaningful relationship with the client, but on the whole, it remains an extremely fragmented and specific industry that the business community does not communicate with very well. The only way that this lack of shared vision or understanding is going to change is to broaden the education of tomorrow's design and business professionals.

Examining the range of design schools from portfolio schools like the Art Institute network which focus on technical skills, to the process-based schools like Rhode Island School of Design which push students to think in terms of design on an integrated level, it is clear that the incorporation of "business thinking" is still a relatively novel concept and not fully incorporated into most curricula. The most developed integration of a business curriculum into a design school appears to be Parsons School of Design in New York City. Parsons has hired journalist Bruce Nussbaum to teach in its design department, offering a survey of topics such as innovation and design thinking. Nussbaum has invited many big names from both the design and business worlds to speak at Parsons. After reviewing the course outline posted online, the approach still seems overly broad and vague. Beyond Parsons, the current landscape of business education in design schools is even bleaker. Many schools offer introductory courses in business skills such as financial accounting, organizations, and basic economics but merely teaching these skills will not change the paradigm in the professional community.

The best design schools have a reputation for largely ignoring serious career planning, preparation, and business education, believing that those skills will be learned within the first few years in the professional world; the problem is, they are not. Designers graduate school and gain some exposure to these experiences but are still primarily designing while their higher-ups deal personally with clients, make strategy decisions and are basically taking general leadership control. This is a serious problem for design. If the discipline hopes to transcend its stigma as an aesthetic veneer to the business community, the change needs to start with a proper integration and preparation of students.

The more educated and open-minded designers are to 'business thinking' the more they will be able to lead in the business world and change the corporate culture that developed throughout the 80's and 90's, redefining the business landscape and design's involvement in it. Business education needs to not only be approached as a skill set that will allow designers to operate their own firms and understand the financial decisions of their clients. Business education should be viewed as an important aspect of a complete design education, informing design as a broader model of what business and essential design really does, that is, to provide goods or services to satisfy a customer need. Fundamentally, an education with a sound basis in these principles would provide a design student with a better understanding of their projects, allowing them to quantify a more customer centric approach, eventually leading to better design. The emphasis on the human factor and the market association would help designers understand their clients better and put future professionals in a more viable position to lead in the organizations they end up working within.

Today, a formal design education trains the best designers; there is no question surrounding this fact. However, the more pertinent question is whether or not design students are trained to be the best professional designers. The designers of the 1950s and 60s were from a generation that was the first to formally receive a higher education in design. Their experiences in school were those of constant collaboration across disciplines and much of the practice of design was often with areas of study that would today be completely foreign to contemporary designers. It is actually quite interesting that what designers should be striving for in their practice is an emulation of their predecessors who had so much less access to the resources at our disposal today.

There is a general interest in integrating more fully with clients and businesses in the hope that it will lead to a more rewarding and freer design process, but not much has been put into actual practice. The current climate is more concerned with simply "dealing" with business rather than becoming a more important and vocal member of the leadership and decision-making process. Until this changes within the educational culture of the preeminent design institutions, we will continue to see a struggle for design and business to be able to communicate on equal terms and with equal consideration. The eventual result of this really lies in the hands of design engaging business and empowering themselves to collaborate equally on interactions larger than a specific skill set can address alone.

Since the 1950s, following a mass exodus of European designers to the United States and a growing rise in the need for mass communication and production, the U.S. has been the worldwide leader in the higher education of designers. However, the approach to design education is far from the organized and structured approach as would be expected in a modern liberal arts college.

The early luminaries of design history were nearly all self-taught masters who relied on their own inventiveness, creativity, and contextual observation to derive their success. Today, this still remains a heavily valued skill for designers, but the current educational model has been slow to shake the notion that design is simply a commercial application of fine arts and it was treated largely this way throughout the twentieth century. Design has often been seen by the professional world as an adjunct component along with advertising and production – a gloss to make the true, underlying mechanism look better. However shallow this may seem to today's intellectual and intelligent design audience, the education system at this time was focused on preparing students for the professional working world.

This vocational, technique-driven standard in the world of American design education shifted toward a more abstract view following World War II. The first U.S. design schools were modeled on the revolutionary practices of schools like the Bauhaus, Basel, and Ulm, which established the existence of basic design principles which underlie all design disciplines, emphasizing the importance of a design education beginning with abstract problem solving and introducing students to these universal principles before broaching any pragmatic topics. The designers that put forward this standard began design programs at institutions that graphic designer and author Michael Bierut calls “process schools,” places such as Yale (Josef Albers), Harvard (Walter Gropius), and Illinois Institute of Technology (van der Rohe) that emphasized process-driven problem solving.

In the same essay, entitled, *Why Graphic Designers Can't Think*, Bierut goes on to say that there are two types of design schools in the United States today: the previously mentioned “process schools” and the form-driven “slick schools.” While process schools are direct descendants of the theoretically centered European design meccas, the “slick schools” are more closely attributed to the technical institutions that approached design in a pragmatic manner, valuing the training of students, skills and presentation over sophisticated problem solving and “thinking” like a designer.

For roughly the last thirty years of the twentieth century, these two types of schools coexisted somewhat harmoniously, each pursuing the discipline of design as their respective philosophies dictated. Then came the introduction of the personal computer and a great shift in the paradigm and accessibility of “design”. It was at this point that things became more nebulous within the design world. Technology has always triggered massive changes in the way design is executed, from the advent of set type to the introduction of the Xerox machine, but the personal computer introduced an era that ignited a major change for design – the exponential growth of two-year associate programs focused on technique-based design education.

The most interesting observation that Bierut makes about these two directions in U.S. design education is not how different these approaches are (as it seems both are equally sought by professional corporations) but rather how they are similar. Both, in effect, fail to create designers that are able to “think.” He goes on to elaborate that in most programs “it's possible to study (graphic) design for four years without any meaningful exposure to the fine arts, literature, science, history, politics, or any of other disciplines that unite us in a common culture.” Bierut's over arching argu-

ment is that designers need to be educated beyond simply understanding design principles. By its very nature, design is a practice that encompasses all aspects of humanity, a fact that could possibly be missed entirely with the recent flush of “designers” educated in online and vocational programs.

Steven Heller, one of the most prolific contemporary design writers, further echoes Bierut's sentiment. “What is the greatest problem facing (graphic) design education today? Not enough quality time.” Heller, who edited a collection of essays entitled *The Education of a Graphic Designer*, believes that the current model of design education is “insufficient to cover everything today's well-rounded graphic designer should know.” This “crisis in education” is creating a generation of designers that lack a deep enough fluency in design languages, and a profound lack of “basic business acumen.” Heller's views are commonplace among professional designers – basically, that design education (the Swiss method, presumably) isn't broken; students simply are not presented with a broad enough education encompassing not only design but the humanities, business, and even sciences by the conclusion of their time in school. Though he laments a common problem, the only solution Heller can seem to suggest is the addition of an extra year to all American design programs.

This hardly seems like a pragmatic solution and does not address the schism that lies at the heart of how to approach teaching design as a discipline. While Bierut and Heller argue that U.S. design education lacks the opportunities and time for students to gain a more complete education, author and designer Ralph Caplan, offers a different hypothesis in his essay, *Why Designers Can Think*. Here, he advocates for the “uncommon intelligence and curiosity” of designers and attempts to clarify the “seeming incongruity between the intellectual prowess of designers and the limited educational requirements of the trade they follow.” He goes on to discuss that as technology has progressed, designing has become more about the mind than the hand. This theory leads to his final conclusion that it is not that design schools do not offer any “meaningful exposure” to the world beyond design, but rather, just like nearly any university today, students can easily avoid any meaningful exposure to a complete education no matter what their major of study. He believes that responsibility does not lie so much in the way that design schools teach but instead, how they present the education available to their students– the argument is of form versus content.

While these perspectives attempt to depict the general attitude of current design professionals toward design education, none truly touch upon the real definition of what is the goal of all of this education. The goal is to create designers better prepared to affect the world with what they create and how they solve problems. This brings us back to a major issue facing nearly all design schools, that design graduates are not prepared by the institution for the challenges and interactions they are going to face in the professional world. It is argued that too much of the “professional” part of the education is left for the students to take on themselves and learn firsthand once in the workplace.

The answer should be quite simple: offer students “professional preparation” courses to fill the holes in their education. The hopeful and ultimately more exciting aspect of the integration of design and business, when compared to the entirety of design education, is its relative nascence and capacity for continued redirection, refocus and finesse toward a more successful and rewarding end. Business and leadership education has only really been formally approached in design schools in the past ten years, unlike design education, which has evolved over the past seventy years. It is possible that an integrative approach to business thinking by designers may be just what design

education needs to fully enable designers to finally assume professional positions befitting their full abilities. When examining the need for a business/professional education in American design schools, there is a clear trend that is in line with the much larger philosophies that Bierut outlined in his writing.

After a cross-sectional analysis of businesses integration in design schools throughout the United States, two clear courses of action strategy emerged: the implementation of cursory adjunct programs, and design management full-time major integrations. The first course of action, far more widespread due to the extra-curricular nature of its approach, are exemplified in the cursory programs introduced in the past ten years by many design schools. Though the correlation is not exact, many of the schools on this list (which are examined more specifically in the addendum) also would fall into Bierut's category of "process" schools. These long-established institutions have well-fixed curricula and have appeared to, in many cases, introduce business education into their schools as a defensive move to add credibility to their program's quantitative and professional merit, going along with the flow of current trend thinking. These perfunctory programs are typically operated through the college's career planning office in the form of adding visiting lecturers, presentations on "business basics" such as balance sheets, intellectual property, interviews and coversheets, and short workshops on economics and finances. In addition, some of these schools have begun to offer elective courses on "business" that give students a survey of case studies, business plans, and business writing. These courses invite guest lecturers and alumni to talk with students about their experiences in the professional, "real" world, but on the whole offer little opportunity for personal experience, exploration or real leadership opportunities.

The second and immensely more integrative approach to business education is the new and emerging discipline of "Design Management." Schools offer a design management program attempting to educate students through a hybrid curriculum combining both design skills and business education. This educational structure is aimed at creating a student that is well prepared for working in a business-like, creative environment and also has the tools to understand both management and design. Naturally, the schools that have been quick to embrace and welcome this integrative discipline as a complete major into their institutions have been the "slick" portfolio schools. The most unique in this group has been the California College of Arts, which has introduced the first MBA program housed in a traditional design school. Many professionals in design and business have questioned the probability of success for this program and similar programs, existing in a school that has no prior business education track record and it remains to be seen if graduates of programs such as this will be more successful in the professional world than their more traditional design educated counterparts.

There continue to be questions surrounding the basic philosophy behind a complete design education in the United States and these two directions still do not offer a truly symbiotic relationship that a cross-disciplinary and contextually rich educational environment could offer. Both of these approaches fall short in their philosophies because neither is focused on elevating students to be more effective members of society after graduation. While the process schools focus their education on problem solving through theoretical puzzles and exercises and the slick schools appear concerned with creating brilliant aesthetics, neither understands that the transcendence of design education in a completely synergized setting. The success lies in offering students an experience that is more akin to the early design luminaries who learned through contextual observation and real-life challenges beyond image and form making. Once U.S. design schools adopt a more holistic

approach and incorporate a fundamental understanding of business thinking into the heart of their curricula, they will realize that it will improve the work of their students on many levels and will lead to better design.

The goal of design education for the twentieth century needs to be to address the role of a designer in society. Our culture is full of challenges and all types of problems and these educational institutions are in the position to provide the world with the creative thinkers to solve them. Students simply need to be given the structure and the opportunity to advance themselves into positions of authority and leadership in the professional world.

In conclusion, this study was conducted in the hope that its contents and insights will lead to action within the academic community on the issues of business leadership, partnership and integration in the studio environment. The following is an action plan to realistically bring about these systemic changes in design at the college level.

This proposal is meant as a general guide for art and design colleges in the United States. Obviously there are certain aspects that are more relevant to some institutions than others based on student body size, breadth of major offerings, and relationships/cross-enrollment with other colleges.

There are five key components to this recommendation creating a comprehensive plan for any art and design college:

1. The recognition, advancement, and communication of current curricular offerings that promote the study of business practice, leadership, and integrative experiences.
2. The designation of a faculty or administrative member of the college to fulfill a role as business advisor
3. The creation of a national and collegiate online community and organization for business education and events.
4. The promotion and support of extracurricular activities that cultivate entrepreneurial/ leadership based endeavors.
5. The commitment to long term planning for continued investment in this emerging field as a key component to the education of artists and designers.

1. Current Curricular Offerings

Many art and design colleges currently offer courses on business practice and entrepreneurial thinking already (see Design College Index) that offer invaluable resources to students and introduce them to relationships that they are not exposed to in their other liberal arts or studio courses.

The goal of these courses should be to expose a wide number of students to the concept of business studies and provide a foundation for higher level learning to be fostered at the college. Many of these courses are offered outside of the realm of both liberal arts and departmental courses - this has become a problem when courses are cut or students are seeking credits for graduation. The movement of these courses to become more integral aspects within the curriculum will ensure their long-term survival and provide the institution with the opportunity to introduce interested students to these opportunities in their first year studies.

There is a great potential opportunity to supplement the courses that many colleges have already begun to offer by expanding themes of business and integrative thinking into the studio curriculum. By working with specific departments to initiate/integrate program-specific courses that infuse business thinking with design, students would begin to understand the environment where their work will exist and begin to design in context relating to issues beyond the design process.

Also to expand the breadth of opportunity at smaller institutions, independent studies specifically designated for business related topics may be introduced.

2. Business Advisor

Most design schools lack the resources for students to discuss business ideas and career opportunities beyond the Career Services Office. Colleges should introduce a part-time faculty member to hold office hours a few days a week for advising and counseling on business related issues. Whether the student is curious about course offerings or is interested in learning more about how to get involved with the local (or alumni) professional community, this advisor will have the time and resources.

The introduction of this advisor will also give students another perspective and resource to turn to for career advice, business plan writing, and connections with lawyers and intellectual property law. Furthermore, the operation of all professional practice seminars that the college currently offers could be absorbed by the office, creating a central node for all business and leadership education on campus.

Finally, this individual would also work interdepartmentally to integrate business strategy into applicable courses and further develop the awareness of business education through all departments.

3. Online Community

In an effort to create consistent and collective resources, colleges should introduce an online center for all business education related events and conversations on campus. The college-run website would become the face of business and leadership studies at the institution and provide students with a network of resources and organizations beyond campus.

In addition to an on-campus web portal, accredited colleges and universities should work together to generate a nationwide community, much like the UK's Design Council, to promote business integration with a sense of broader strategy.

4. Extracurricular

With the introduction of more structure within the institution, the new office of business advising should sponsor events that introduce students to the professional community and foster a closer relationship between the academic and professional world. The office could also be the official center on campuses for groups like IDSA and AIGA to connect with the institution - something that currently relies on student enthusiasm and independent faculty support.

Cooperation with student organizations will allow for these groups to access guidance and advice on fundraising, finance, and management issues. Instilling these pragmatic business principles into organizations with student leaders will stress their importance early on in their careers.

5. Long Term Viability

We are at a point where art and design schools are being forced to make a systemic decision about their role in higher education. If they are to heed the call of business, science and culture in general, then the decision is clear: design schools must understand their contextual viability to educate tomorrow's creative leaders. Without proper focus and long term planning, colleges will continue to address the business, leadership and professional needs of its students in an ad hoc, opportunistic manner. The nature of design's role in the world is changing rapidly and art and design colleges have a critical role to play design's mandate to make positive change in the world and to make this happen, they must provide their students with the necessary tools.

Final Note

What is most exciting about this initiative is not that students need to be inundated with technical business education, but rather that we need to infuse art and design education with the pragmatic discipline of business thinking to promote students to be leaders in all fields.

Business and leadership education does not need to only interest students pursuing careers in management but rather be a tool for all students to become better designers and artists once they leave college. Being educated in business and human interaction is invaluable in fostering the skills needed to create truly world-changing results.

Resources

The collected resources are a work in progress but offer a sampling of professional and academic resources on the topic of design and business.

Blogs

@Issue Journal <http://www.atissuejournal.com/>
 Adaptive Parth <http://www.adaptivepath.com/blog>
 BIF Speak <http://www.businessinnovationfactory.com/weblog>
 Nussbaum on Design <http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/NussbaumonDesign>
 C&binet Blog <http://www.cabinetforum.org/index.php/blog>
 Design Thinking: Tim Brown <http://www.designthinking.ideo.com/>
 Logic + Emotion <http://www.darmano.typepad.com>

Organizations/Institutions

AIGA: Gain
 C&binet: Creativity & Business International Network
 Corporate Design Foundation
 Davos World Economic Forum
 DMI: Design Management Institute
 IDSA
 UK Design Council

People

Bierut, Michael
 Brown, Tim
 Caplan, Ralph
 Dorfsman, Lou
 Drucker, Peter
 Eames, Charles
 Eames, Ray
 Farson, Richard
 Foulkes, Bill
 Heller, Steven
 Kelley, David
 Lawrence, Peter
 Maeda, John
 Martin, Roger
 Millman, Debbie
 McCracken, Grant
 Nussbaum, Bruce
 Pullman, Chris
 Rand, Paul
 Watson, Thomas
 Whitney, Patrick

Periodicals

@Issue
BusinessWeek
Design Business Review
Fast Company
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Business Case Studies

Design College Index

In order to better understand the direction of business education and leadership preparation in design schools I have compiled summaries of the business/management course and program offerings at the nation's leading art and design schools. This review includes both undergraduate and graduate programs.

Art Center College of Design

1700 Lida Street, Pasadena, CA 91103
<http://www.artcenter.edu/>
1,400 undergraduates, 100 graduates

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Advertising, Broadcast Cinema, Entertainment Design, Environmental Design, Film, Fine Art, Graphic Design, Illustration, Photography, Product Design.

RELEVANT COURSES:

Business 101: A collaboration of several instructors. Addresses business basics to students. 2nd part of course divides students into their disciplines for more nuanced training. This course is offered during a limited January term.

Entrepreneur's Spirit: Follow-up course to Business 101, introduces students to more specific ways a creative education can solve problems in business. This course is offered over a few days in during a limited January term.

Presentation and Career Preparation: Courses embedded into studio courses. Also offer sponsored courses by corporations.

OTHER OFFERINGS AND RESOURCES:

The Dot Exchange: A mentor program that bring students and alumni together to share experiences, exchange ideas, and build relationships.

Alumni Mentorship: students have the opportunity to be teamed with alumni mentors giving students direct exposure to the "real world" while allowing alumni to an opportunity to scout new talent. Participation in the program is by application and sponsored by the Office of Career Development.

California College of the Arts

San Francisco, CA
<http://www.cca.edu>
1,600 students

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Animation, Architecture, Ceramics, Community Arts, Fashion, Furniture, Glass, Graphic Design, Illustration, Industrial Design, Jewelry, Media Arts, Painting, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture, Textiles.

RELEVANT COURSES:

The MBA in Design Strategy: A new MBA program that equips students to lead organizations

California College of Arts, continued

from the unique perspective of design thinking. By uniting the studies of design, finance, strategy, and sustainability, it offers the tools to manage in today's interconnected markets with a vision of business as sustainable, meaningful, ethical, profitable, and truly innovative. The program features a flexible structure (five once-a-month, four-day weekends of instruction and interaction each semester) that allows students to commute from outside the Bay Area, combining 12 full-time, in-person instruction with 3 credits of online and other telecommunication tools to facilitate the educational experience.

California Institute of the Arts

23700 McBean Parkway, Valencia, CA 91355
<http://www.calarts.edu/>
863 undergraduates, 511 graduates

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Fine Art, Graphic Design, Photography, Critical Writing (MFA), Dance, Film, Animation, Music, Acting, Directing, Theatre.

RELEVANT COURSES:

All courses at CalArts are specific to their given 'school'. Cross-enrollment between 'schools' is not common and most students complete their study within their 'school.'

Business of Film (School of Film/Video)
Entrepreneurial Studies (School of Film/Video)
Career Design for Musicians (School of Music)
Entrepreneurship (School of Theatre)
The Law of Producing Theatre (School of Theatre)
Arts Marketing and Grant Writing (School of Theatre)

OTHER OFFERINGS AND RESOURCES:

January Interim Courses: Auxiliary courses that provide students from most schools with an array of compressed learning opportunities, including career-oriented workshops, practicums, and international experiences.

The Kauffman Foundation: The foundations sponsored the Entrepreneurship in the Arts conferences in 2007.

The Office of Student Affairs: The Office invites companies for on-campus presentations and recruiting. The office also hosts workshops throughout the year that focus on resume and cover letter writings, legal issues in art, teaching, grant writing, budgeting, and time management.

The Alumni Association: The Association offers casual lunchtime discussions with alumni and workshops focused on developing business skills applicable to the arts.

Parsons, The New School for Design

66 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10010
<http://www.parsons.edu/>
3,800 undergraduates, 400 graduates

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Fine Arts, Graphic Design (AAS only), Illustration, Photography, Architecture, Interior Design, Lighting Design, Product Design, Design & Management, Environmental Studies, Fashion Design, Fashion Marketing (AAS), Fashion Studies (AAS).

RELEVANT COURSES:

Design & Management (BBA) degree (518 students): The Design and Management concentration explores design fields and industries while completing a business program. Students learn the principles of business to giving them a secure footing to succeed the business world. Unlike other BBA programs however, Parsons offers training and internships to manage business problems that are unique to design industries. Students learn the design lifecycle, how to manage creative projects and teams, and the analytical skills necessary to identify opportunities for innovation. Thesis topics relate to the management of design, examining a design artifact, environment, interaction, organization or industry case study.

Entrepreneur's Spirit: Follow-up course to Business 101, introduces students to more specific ways a creative education can solve problems in business. This course is offered over a few days in during a limited January term.

OTHER OFFERINGS AND RESOURCES:

Design at the Edge: Journalist Bruce Nussbaum's lecture series on design and business. Offers students a unique perspective of the business world through visiting lectures by several creative professionals.

Pratt Institute

200 Willoughby Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11205
<http://www.pratt.edu>
3,106 undergraduates, 1,654 graduates

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Advertising, Animation, Architecture, Art Education, Critical Studies, Digital Arts, Graphic Design, Fashion Design, Film/Video, Fine Arts, History of Art, Illustration, Industrial Design, Interior Design, Photography

RELEVANT COURSES:

Freelance and Business: This course is essential for students planning to establish a freelance business or land a first job in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and advertising art direction. The lecture/workshop sessions cover: 1. The portfolio - how to construct it, protect it and plan a search strategy. 2. Getting a job - pricing freelance jobs, writing purchase orders and contracts, dealing with collection and legal actions and designing a self-promotion piece. 3. Taxes/Accounting/Business Structure - the business world (sales tax, sole proprietorship, copyright, work for hire, markups, contracts).

Pratt Institute, continued

OTHER OFFERINGS AND RESOURCES:

Online Databases: Business: Familiarizes students with specific databases, the techniques used to search them and their application in a business library. Focus is on bibliographic, full-text, statistical and directory databases (both domestic and international in scope) which are common to all business libraries. The ultimate goal of the course is to foster the ability to search efficiently and accurately with an awareness of the special needs of the business environment.

Design Management Program (graduate): The DMP is a two-year program created to bridge the disciplines of design and business management. It is tailored to provide an executive education more focused than an MBA on the special needs of design leaders managing design firms or managing design teams in creative industries. Participants come from a variety of disciplines, including industrial design, interior design, graphic design, fashion design, communication and information design, interactive media design, and architecture. The curriculum is designed to develop strategic management skills in six study areas related to design management: operations management; financial management; marketing management; organization and human resource management; management of innovation and change; and management of local, regional, and global suppliers, distributors, and markets. The courses provide participants with an integrated focus on the role of design in the creation and management of strategic and sustainable advantage. The program leads to an accredited academic degree, the Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Design Management. Courses are held in Manhattan. The DMP's academic calendar is modeled after successful executive MBA programs. Its schedule of alternating weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) allows participants to carry their full job responsibilities while they study. Two seven-day weeks—at the beginning and middle of the program—and an intensive integration experience at the end of the program provide the opportunity for several brief, intensive courses, including behavioral simulation and negotiating modules. These weeks establish and maintain relationships among students in each class, which many participants in executive programs consider especially valuable.

School of Visual Arts

203 E. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010

<http://www.schoolofvisualarts.edu/>

3,402 undergraduates (705 graphic design students)

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

BFA: Advertising, Animation, Cartooning, Computer Art, Film/Video, Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Illustration, Interior Design, Photography, Visual & Critical Studies.

MFA: Art Education, Art Criticism, Computer Art, Design, Design Criticism, Fine Arts, Illustration, Interaction Design, Photography, Social Documentary Film.

RELEVANT COURSES:

Designing a Business (GD Senior Project Course): A comprehensive experience for anyone who wants to learn the skills it takes to make a business idea become a business reality. The course covers the steps to bring an idea to the marketplace: defining the

School of Visual Arts, continued

concept for a business or product of your choice, designing the prototype and corporate identity for your company, writing a business plan and the basic legal requirements to

OTHER OFFERINGS AND RESOURCES:

MPS in Branding: Started in 2009 the MPS in Branding concentration will be directed by Debbie Millman and Steven Heller.

Rhode Island School of Design

2 College Street, Providence, RI 02903

<http://www.risd.edu/>

1,827 undergraduates, 410 graduates

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Apparel, Architecture, Ceramics, Digital Media (MFA), Film/Animation/Video, Furniture Design, Glass, Graphic Design, Illustration, Industrial Design, Interior Architecture, Jewelry/Metalsmithing, Landscape Architecture (MFA), Painting, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture, Textiles.

RELEVANT COURSES:

Design and Entrepreneurial Thinking: Introductory course in entrepreneurship for students to understand a basic vocabulary of business and explore how design vocabulary and design processes overlap, complement and enhance business practice. The course covers HBS case notes, case studies, and recent business books to highlight this thinking.

Joint Studio Classes with Brown University, MIT, and Babson College: RISD offers several opportunities for students to collaborate with students in a wide range of disciplines on creative team projects including engineering, business, and the sciences. These courses establish relationships between the institutions that form bonds to build integrative ventures beyond the classroom.

Cross-Enrollment at Brown University: All RISD students are allowed to cross enroll into any course at Brown. This experience introduces students to a wide range of courses in entrepreneurship, economics, and business at a renowned university.

OTHER OFFERINGS AND RESOURCES:

Career Services: RISD's CSO offers workshops on business basics such as resume and cover letter writing, copyrights, interviews preparation, and other technical business skills.

Ringling College of Art & Design

2700 North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34234

<http://www.risd.edu/>

1,200 undergraduates

DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Advertising, Business of Art & Design, Computer Animation, Digital Film, Fine Arts, Game Art & Design, Graphic Communication, Illustration, Interior Designer, Motion Design, Painting, Photography & Digital Imaging, Printmaking, Sculpture

Ringling College of Art & Design, continued

RELEVANT COURSES:

Business of Art and Design Major: The major offers a solid grounding of business skills, an understanding of the creative process, and the ability to work with other creative individuals. In business courses, the focus is on case studies in industries such as arts management, advertising, video production, and art-and-design entrepreneurship. Studio experiences teach students to think creatively, understand how artists work and comprehend the role of art and design in the contemporary marketplace.

