10 Pieces of Design Advice from Superfried



We're extremely lucky to have a steady wave of amazing designers through the doors of our campuses for industry talks. Full of inspiration and advice it's a joy for students and staff alike to watch a fellow designer speak.

We recently enjoyed the creative company of Superfried. Known as Mark Richardson on a human level, he's a Manchester based designer who specialises in typography and branding. Mark fitted in amongst our Shillington audience as like many of the students in the class Mark originally came from a very different background of Environmental Chemistry and has taught himself everything he knows.

Read on to hear 10 pieces of advice which cover everything from the importance of personal projects to embracing self promotion.

> *"Get used to being told your work is wrong or a whole lot worse! Do not take it personally"*

1. Absorb

- **Listen to everyone**
  Not just those you consider relevant or respect. Everyone has something useful to say.
- **Every skill learned, no matter how mundane is useful.**
- **Grasp all opportunities.**
- **Never stop learning.**
  As soon as you do that, it's game over and you will simply be left behind

2. Work

- **Talent is not enough.**
  I have worked alongside some of the most talented/ respected in the business –they worked harder than anyone else.
- **Hard work is a given.**
  Don't kid yourself, there is always someone out there working harder than you!

3. Experiment

- **Within your day job and in your own time, experiment.**
- **Don't wait for the 'great project'**
  Make the current project great If it is corporate, even better opportunity to try something bold
- **Don't let good ideas go to waste**
  Use personal projects to; push yourself out of your comfort zone, collaborate for causes you care about, showcase the work you want to do and make use of unused ideas.



4. Focus

- **Don't waste time–it's precious and you can not ask for it back!**
- **Decide what work you like doing most/ best at as soon as possible.**
  Then focus all your e orts in this direction. This will help you to establish a reputation as a go-to person for this discipline. This will not prevent you from o ering other services/skills. Also, establish a USP
- **Sooner you start heading towards your goal, the sooner you will get there.**

5. Confidence

- **Anyone can have a good idea and ideas are king.**
  It is what you do with them that makes the di□erence between you and the next designer. If you do not believe in your work, it will show. And if you do not believe in it why should the client.
- **If you not like it, don't show it.**
  The client will always pick the option you hate.
- **Don't be in awe/ intimidated by established designers.**
  I have met some big names and it's like meeting a celeb. Part of you wants them to be special or super human. When you realise they are just normal like anyone else, at first it's disappointing. But then reassuring as you realise there is nothing to stop you achieving the same goals.

6. Network

- **Talk to everyone, help them whenever you can—without being exploited—and later down the line, those contacts and connections will pay o□.**
  By this I do not mean sell to them. Build as many real relationships and connections as possible. Listen to them and find out what problems they are struggling with as then you can be of value. Even if you can not solve them, you might know someone who can. Later down the line they may then refer you.
- **Volume will help.**
  If you have a thousand connections, at any given time there is a good chance that at least one may require some help. If you have just 100, the chances are now very slim.



7. Promote

- **This is another area that myself and many designers I have spoken to struggle with.**
  Don’t get me wrong, I like it when people say they like my work. However, I really hate having to say ‘look at me’ ‘isn’t my work great’ to get it!
- **Unfortunately promotion is essential**
  You could be the best designer in the world, but if they can not find you, how can they hire you?
- **No excuse not to have your portfolio online**
  Never been easier to get your work out there online via free platforms like Behance
- **However, they are free, so it is hard to stand out**
  Everyone is using them and you are competing with the World

8. Social

- **Use social media. It is free and powerful**
- **It is a leveller.**
  Never before was it possible for those at the bottom to communicate with those at the top. Great for communicating with other designers and potentially obtain work/ jobs
- **However, use with caution.**
  Always think ‘could this be misconstrued/cause o ence’. If in doubt, don’t post. Recently saw a big name Art director make a controversial statement on Twitter – caused a bit of a stir –potentially damaging to the reputation of them and their agency.
- **Don’t lie–you will be found out!**

9. Be Tough

- **You will need to develop a thick skin**

Get used to being told your work is wrong or a whole lot worse! Do not take it personally

- **Pick your battles**
  Fight those that are really integral to the solution
- **Recycle**
  Re-use the unselected ideas for future clients or personal projects That way your time is never wasted

10. Solve

- **Looking good is a given, so the true value is in the solution**
  If it looks great, but does not solve the problem, how much is it really worth?
- **Put yourself in the clients shoes.**
  Ask a lot of questions. What problem are they trying solve and how can you help?
- **Don’t assume the brief is asking the right questions.**
  It is ok to question it if you have an alternative solution. The client may request a new website when really their budget maybe better spent on a re-skin and some targeted advertising.

Huge thanks to Mark for visiting our Manchester Campus and bestowing his invaluable advice. Be sure to head to Mark’s official Superfried website to check out his full design portfolio and follow him on Instagram and Twitter for regular updates.

Curious to hear more about being a designer? Why not come along to one of our Info Sessions to learn about what it’s like to be a graphic designer. If you can’t make a date, get in touch with us directly to arrange a private appointment.

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