

Interview with Anthony Wymond, Founder & Creative Director of Ignite Online and AGDA VIC Councillor



Anthony Wymond is a guy you should know if you're in the Melbourne creative scene. Founder and Creative Director of Ignite Online, he's worked with some major brand names (Pepsi,

NRMA, M&Ms) and is a strong supporter of the industry as an AGDA Councillor. Plus, he's an ace guest lecturer and student-advice-giver who's hired not one, but two (!) Shillington graduates—Will Batrouney and Megan Voo.

Read on to hear about Anthony's creative journey, a super convincing pitch for why all designers should become AGDA member, the importance of "investing in yourself", what he looks for when judging design competitions and who's work is inspiring him at the moment. It's a good one!

Tell us a bit about your creative journey. What milestones led you to today?

I was always into art and drawing as a kid growing up. I absolutely treasured my first box of Derwent pencils! That was maybe the first key milestone that set me off down this creative path.

Another one would have to be getting my first computer in the mid 90's, a Pentium 486. What a glorious machine! That really sparked my keen interest in computers, and I got right into gaming. Soon after that I began pulling apart and building my own customised computers.

I remember seeing the internet for the first time using the Netscape Navigator browser and being blown away by what was happening in terms of the technology. I soon after started experimenting with contributing to it, and designed and built my first horribly ugly website in the year 2000.

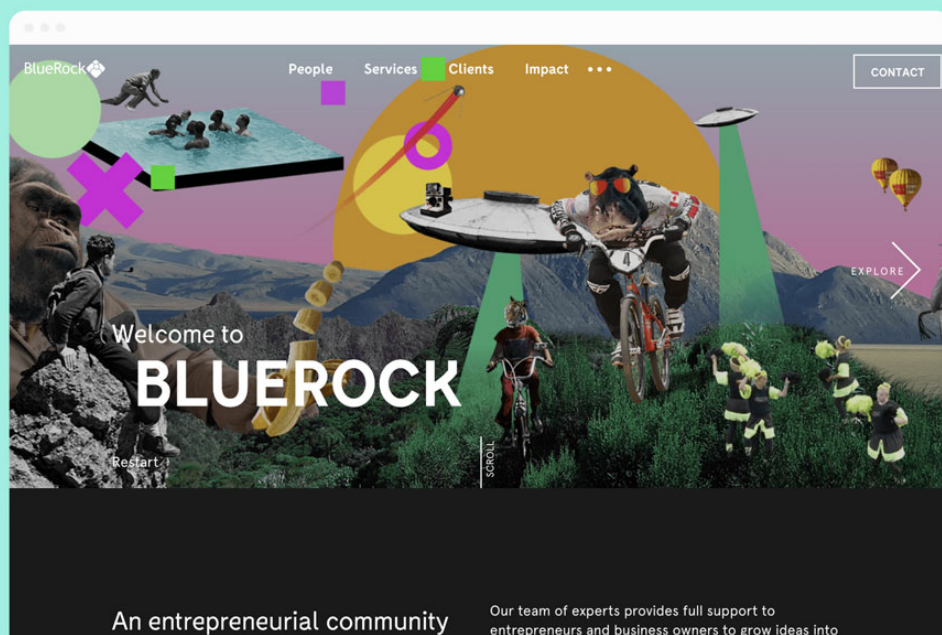
I studied Multimedia Design at Swinburne University, which covered a broad range of digital design skills including website design, animation, 3D, typography and video. During the course, I completed a 6 month industry placement at Clemenger BBDO, which was incredibly helpful in setting me up for freelancing right after graduation.

I see my time at Clemenger as a key milestone for sure,

however, you don't need to go to university to have work experience like this. I'd definitely recommend that Shillington students try anything to get a foot in the door with a design agency, even by taking an unpaid internship. The things you learn and connections you make are invaluable, and can really help you in the long term if you choose to make the most of it.

Straight after university, I started Ignite Online, but was a sole-trader for many years. I was designing and developing websites myself, and sub-contracting overflow work to freelance designers and developers as necessary to help me complete larger design projects.

Eventually, I realised that in order to create the best work, attract bigger clients, deliver better projects and to grow both personally and professionally, I needed to build a 'real' agency. So in 2015 I hired my first employee, and Ignite Online (2.0) was born!



You have worked on some impressive projects at Ignite Online—Pepsi, NRMA, M&Ms, Formula1, Covergirl and more! Could you tell us about one or two projects you've worked on with these big names?

We've had the privilege to work on some really exciting projects over all these years. A few of those brands you mentioned were for projects that we worked on through being engaged by large advertising agencies. I'd recommend any freelancers out there try to establish a relationship as a contractor or supplier to larger organisations, as it can be really beneficial as an avenue for new business.

The job for Pepsi was to design the Liveries (Vinyl wrap graphics) for the Pepsi-Max V8 Supercars. That was a really fun project, in that it was something different for us, to see our work in a high profile event like that in the real world, and not online.

At the moment we are specialising in digital work for the education sector. We work closely with several schools around Australia including Melbourne Girls Grammar, International Grammar School in Sydney and Salesian College, and we have a few more projects in the pipeline too. We have found that specialising in a niche means that we can offer an even higher level of expertise and knowledge in our field, which leads to the best possible results. It's scary to do, and feels counter-intuitive, but 'riches are in the niches'!

You've hired two Shillington graduates at Ignite in Melbourne. Tell us about that hiring process, and what they're like to work with!

Both of our Shillington recruits Will Batrouney and Megan Voo have been amazing!

The hiring process with Will was a bit of an interesting one. Good friends of mine that operated their branding agency from within the same studio space as us, decided to end their

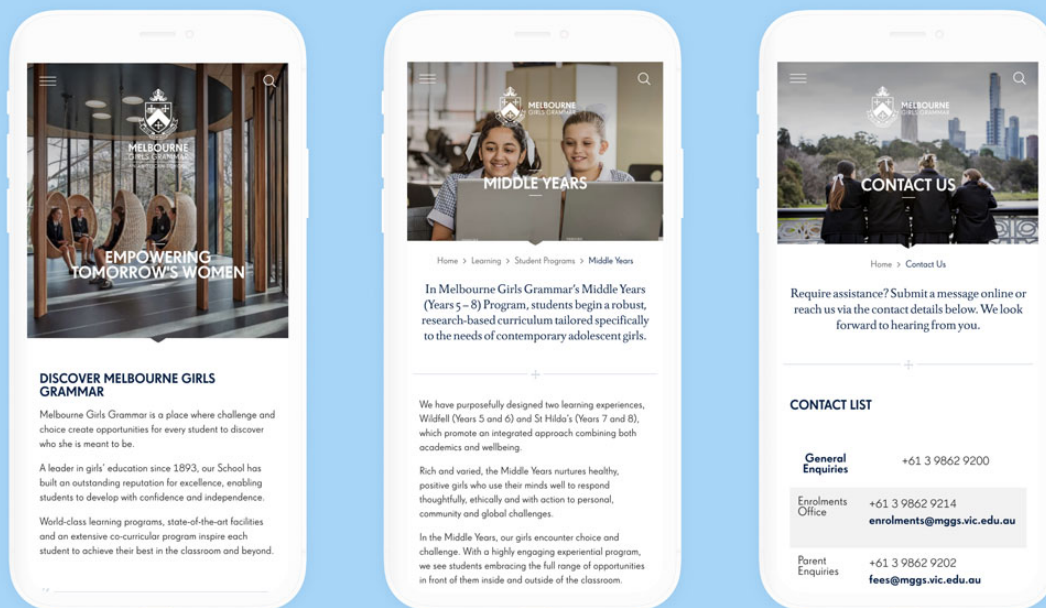
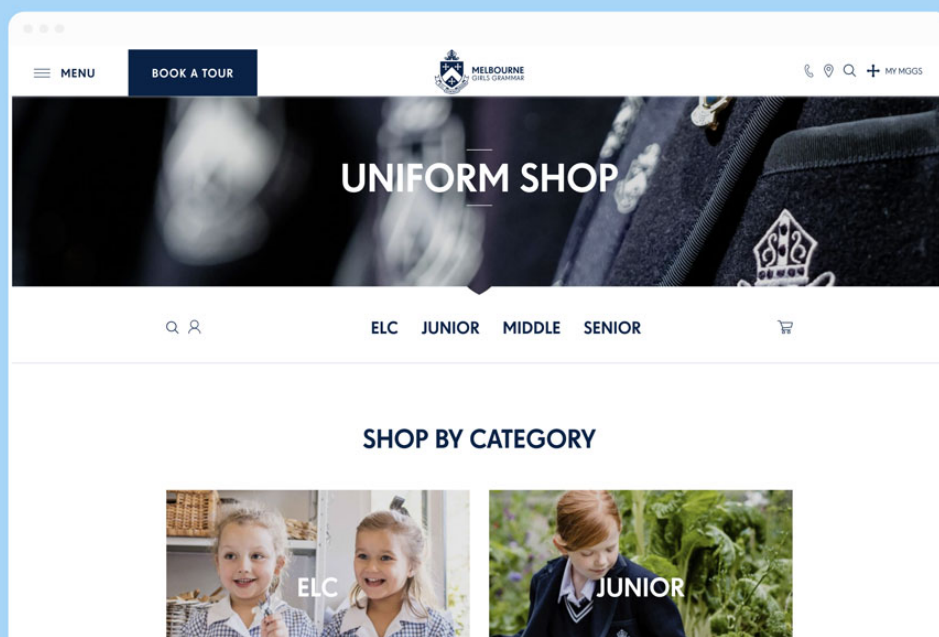
business partnership to pursue other ventures.

Will was working for them at the time, so he ended up without a job almost overnight due to no fault of his own. I knew Will's work was top-notch, so after a brief chat, he conveniently moved from my friend's side of the office to ours, and started working for us!

Megan reached out to us by sending through her folio, and I really liked her work, which led to an interview and a job the week after. We hadn't actually advertised for that specific role at the time, but created a role for her, which in hindsight ended up helping fill a need at Ignite at just the right time.

I guess the lesson from all of this is to not be afraid to respond to job positions advertised online. Don't automatically assume that the company wouldn't want to hire you for whatever reason you've made up. Give it a crack and send your folio. I can't guarantee you'll get the interview, but I can guarantee you won't if you don't send it.

Even if your targeted company is not advertising for any current roles, don't take that as a reason not to send your folio through. You never know, they may just be able to create a spot for you.



You're an AGDA Councillor. Why did you get involved? Why is AGDA important?

I got involved with AGDA as a part of a conscious push to be more involved in the design community. It's easy to get caught

up in your own world running a business and lose sight of what's coming next, so it's critical that you remove yourself from that bubble often, and open yourself up to external ideas, people and conversations.

AGDA is important because it gives the design industry a unified voice and a strength in numbers to make things happen.

There are many other practical benefits for members including discounted products and event tickets amongst many things, which are best explained on the AGDA Benefits page on the website.

My involvement has lead to helping run some amazing design events like the AGDA Awards, having the chance to meet some well known designers from around the world, connecting with the local leaders in the Australian design industry, mentoring other designers looking for a helping hand and even hiring some amazing talent.

For Shillington students, the real benefit I would see would be the networking and professional development opportunities. Go to the events and speak to people, go to the folio review nights, go to the monthly drinks which lots of local agency owners and designers attend. Ask lots of questions and listen! If you do all of that you will fast track your career in the industry without a doubt.

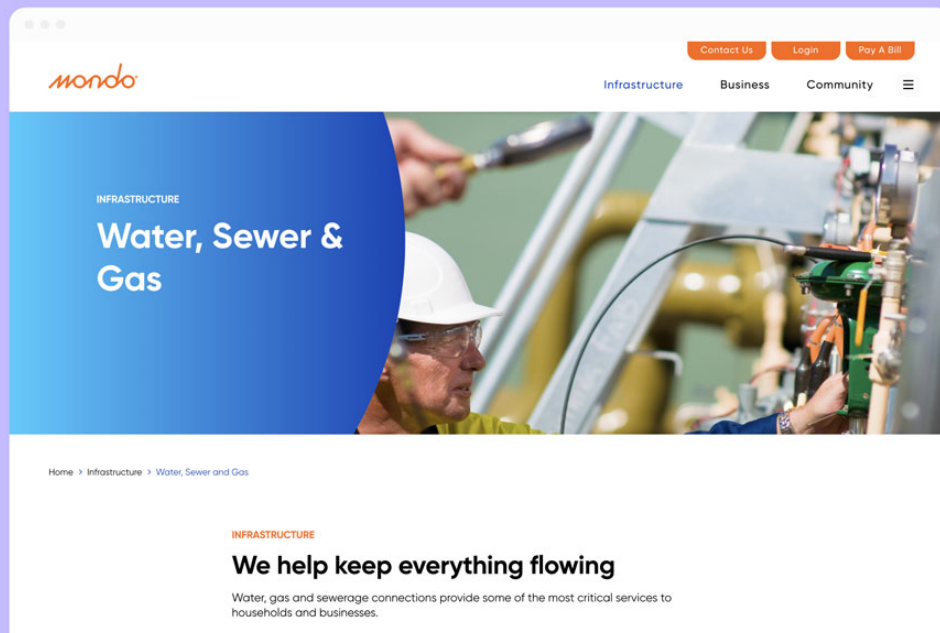
How should students and young designers get involved with AGDA?

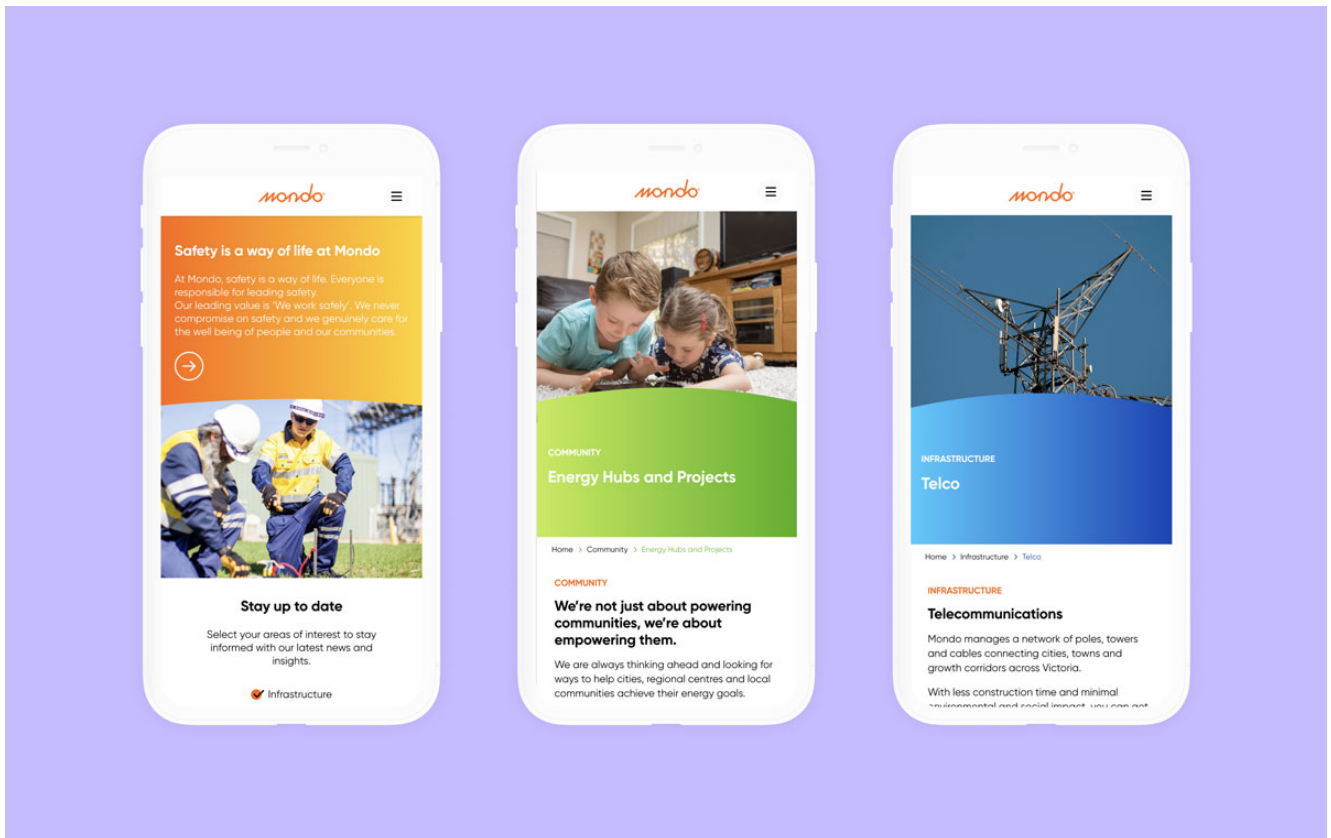
Sign up to be an AGDA member. For students or recent graduates, it's only \$65-\$120 / year, which is well worthwhile if you go to the events I've mentioned.

Members receive a newsletter with details of relevant design events and things happening around Australia. So sign up and

start getting amongst it!

Once you're an AGDA member, there are opportunities to have more impact by applying for the Council or Committee. If you're interested in increasing your impact and exposure even more, that might be something to aim for.





You've sat on the judging panel for a lot of different awards. What do you look for when judging work?

I'm a regular judge for the CSS Design Awards, and the Australian Web Awards. I'm always looking for good ideas, big or small, and the quality of execution of that idea.

It might be the overarching concept for a website, or it could be a tiny little animation in the interface, I get excited by seeing work that is unique and attempting to push the boundaries, or challenge the norms.

Most importantly though, I take note of the user experience, and the journey through the site. No matter how technically brilliant a site is, if it's hard to use or takes forever to load, like anyone I'll quickly lose patience.

What's the best thing about being a creative in Melbourne?

I think it would have to be the depth of digital talent here in Melbourne. Some of the best digital agencies in the country are down here, from smaller boutique shops to the larger

players. It's great to see the calibre of work that is being produced in this city, and at the moment it doesn't seem like there is any shortage of it, there are so many design agencies here, yet there still seems to be work for everybody.

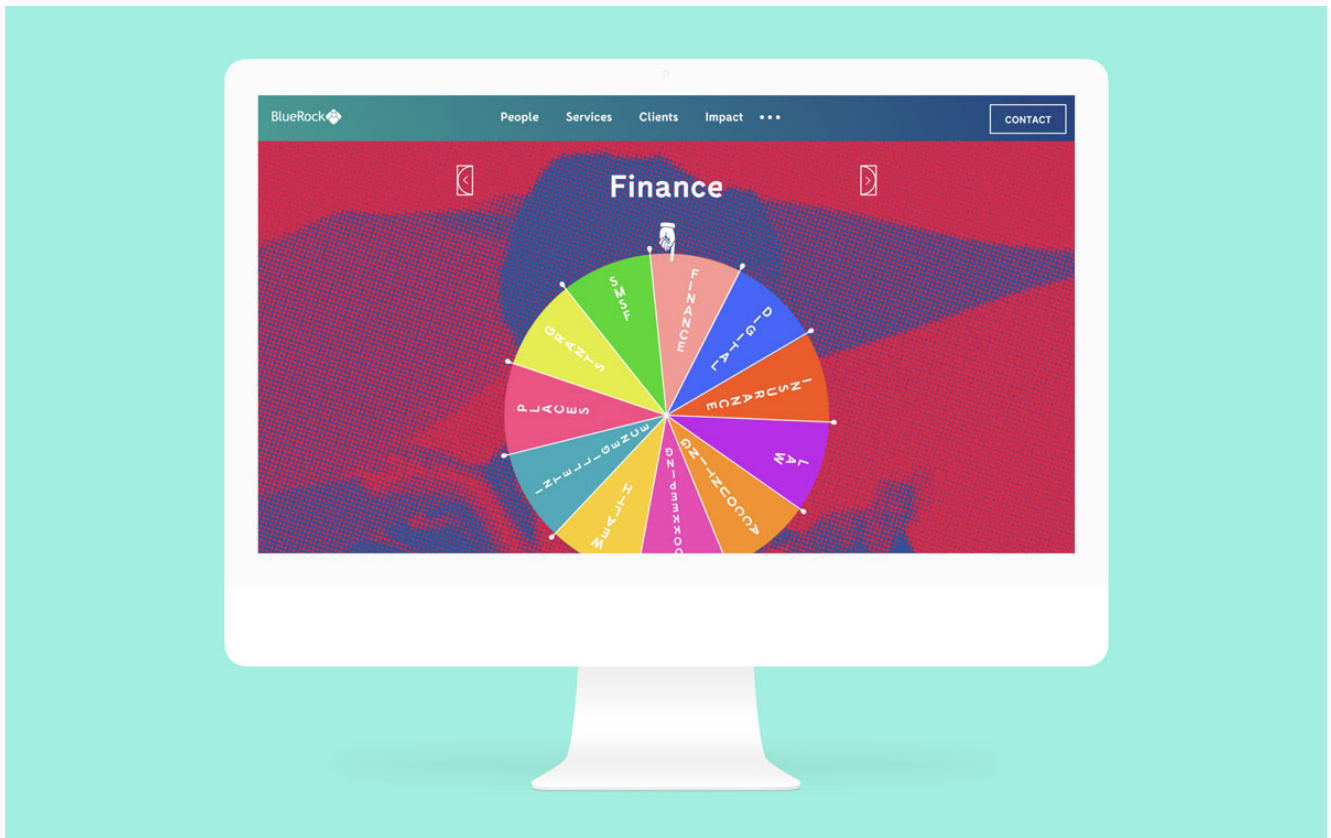
As a result there are lots of employment opportunities for the right skillsets, so if you're a freelancer I'd say there is a need for almost any creative avenue if you market your skillset effectively.

What's your opinion of design education in Australia currently? Any advice for current students to make the most out of their studies?

I don't think I'm an expert on the state of design education in Australia, that's probably you guys! However, it does seem like there are more options open to students these days than ever before, from free design blogs, cheap online courses like Udemy, to specialised private design schools like Shillington, to the many new offerings from the Universities.

I think the most critical thing above all is to have a desire to learn and get better. If you have that you can really make the most of whatever stage you're at or situation you're in.

Also, don't hesitate when it comes to investing in yourself. Buy the tickets to that event, buy that book, enrol in that course. I wish I had done more of these things sooner.



Any hot tips for design interviews? Any do's or don'ts?

Make sure you go to the interview with your laptop or iPad, with additional projects and working files ready to show just in case. Show up on time, and dress appropriately. If you're going for a role as a designer, this does not mean a shirt and tie. Your Nikes will be fine. Make sure you know many of the agency's projects intimately and be ready with a list of questions of your own about the company and the role. Oh yeah, and don't ask how many holidays you'll get.

Apart from the basics, if you've made it to the interview, a lot of the hard work is out of the way, now it's just time to relax and be yourself and if everything is meant to be it will happen.

Just don't forget it's not all about what the company needs. You need to make sure that you feel like they're a good fit for you as well.

Who or what's inspiring you at the moment? Want to share any

shout-outs?

In terms of work that is inspiring, a couple of agencies that come to mind are global agencies Resn, MediaMonks and Basic. I'm always excited to check out their work when judging the Awards.

Of course I need to send a massive shout-out to the whole team at Ignite Online! Whether it's design, development or digital marketing, they are all incredibly skilled at what they do, and are all awesome humans to boot!

A couple of my good mates are also doing some inspiring things and shaking up their respective industries, so they're worth a shout-out! Matt Stanlake is reinventing the healthcare industry with Upwell Health Collective and Steve Abbott is helping to build an online platform that is streamlining rental property management for landlords called myRent.

Aside from that, my wife and daughter are always an inspiration!

What's on the horizon for Ignite?

We're about to move into a large new office on Brunswick St in the heart of Fitzroy here in Melbourne which is really exciting! A small portion of it will be a coworking space which we're looking to rent out to freelance creatives, so definitely get in touch if you're interested. We've also got a couple of really interesting projects underway currently, and a lot in the pipeline, so it should be an exciting second half of 2019.

Next year and beyond, we're looking to continue to create industry-leading work, grow as a company, and recruit the best digital talent that Melbourne has to offer, so if you're interested in joining us in our journey, be sure to check out the careers page on our website or email us at jobs@igniteonline.com.au.

Anything else you'd like to share?

Go out there and get amongst the industry. Commit to reading a book, buying tickets to an event, and sending your folio to five agencies by the end of the week.

Huge thanks to Anthony for this amazing interview! Be sure to check out Ignite Online's website, learn more about AGDA.

<https://www.shillingtoneducation.com/blog/interview-anthony-wymond-founder-creative-director-ignite-online-agda-vic-councillor/>