

## THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY EXPECTS FROM GRADUATES



BY AMANDA KERN  
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So you think you're ready for a creative career? Are you ready to step into a cool new job that allows you to express your creativity? Or perhaps you have a knack for this creative stuff and you're excited to show off your talent? Well, creative talent is definitely important, but we'll let you in on a well-known secret that you might not be aware of — creative talent is only a fraction of what is expected by employers. In fact, talent alone is not the driving factor in getting a job in the creative industry. You might want to listen up as we share with you qualities that will make the difference in not just landing a creative gig, but also rocking at it.

Now that we've got your attention we should probably let you know that beyond your creative talent is the experience you gain while you are in school. Obviously, it's important that graduates looking for a job have a healthy creative process and are technically capable of executing their concepts. However, there's only one thing worse than a good idea that can't be executed and that's the execution of an idea that's not strong to begin with. If you speak with employers of creatives, they'll agree that just learning how to use the software is not the convincing factor in landing a job. In fact, most will likely let you know that a degree alone doesn't qualify you for your dream job as a creative either. No time is better than now for you to develop the skills that will lead you to success.

Take advice from Central Florida's 2006 Best of Show ADDY Award winner Kevin Scarbrough, "Learn from everything. The good experiences and the bad experiences. Find some nugget you can take away to improve your career and you'll be better for it." Make the most of every minute you are in school, and by doing so you'll be better prepared to get the job you'll love.

Professionals agree that recent graduates are also expected to have good oral, written and visual communication skills. You might find this shocking considering the lack of enthusiasm college students have toward public speaking, reading and writing courses, but 35 percent of surveyed professionals say they would not even consider hiring a recent graduate for an entry-level position without these communication skills. If you can't explain your own ideas and creative process, then it's easy to understand why an employer wouldn't want to hire you. ADDY Award-winning interactive design student Kenny Roy offers insight into his experience working in the industry: "Walking into work prepared to design is only a portion of my day. I have to be in constant communication all day — ready to continually offer and receive feedback and criticism." So if you know what's good for you, you'll take advantage of the time you are in school to practice and gain confidence in your communication skills, it'll certainly make a difference when it comes time to get that creative job.

It's equally important to note that employers don't want to get stuck working with a person who requires someone to hold their hand through



every step of a project either. Klaus Heesch, of award-winning Orlando, FL design firm, Juicy Temples, says that students need "a passion for learning more. A degree doesn't mean that you are done learning." Other professionals shared similar disappointing experiences with recent graduates who seem to expect their degree to qualify them automatically for a job and — what's worse — a salary that pays them more than what the seasoned professionals are making!

Recent graduates who spend their formal education doing just what they need in order to get their degree might be disappointed with their job prospects. Learning how to use the right tools and techniques to execute an idea will help you qualify for jobs, however, you cannot overlook the fact that professionals like to see graduates with other qualities such as enthusiasm, initiative and eagerness — all of which a creative portfolio should clearly demonstrate. Heesch puts it this way, "I am tired of primadonnas that think they know it all and don't have the sense of responsibility, dedication and desire to work late nights to get a project done on time, or to simply put that 'little bit extra' into the piece that may just make it remarkable." There's a lot to admire about those that not only complete the steps of a project, but are passionate about their work and LOVE what they do.

In the end, your creative portfolio won't hide your weaknesses, it will magnify them. Spend the short time you have while in school making sure your portfolio demonstrates more than just your creative and technical abilities. ■

This article is based on a survey of industry professionals conducted in Central Florida by Valencia Community College's Graphics Technology Program (<http://multimedia.valenciacc.edu>). For more details on survey results, visit the article "What the Industry expects from Graduates" available online at <http://tinyurl.com/w4znpj>.

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Kristy Pennino earned her MFA in Visual Communications from Virginia Commonwealth University. She uses her extensive education and 13 years of design experience to teach her students that throwing marshmallows at strangers is an important part of being a successful graphic designer. Pennino prunes her neighbor's hedges as a stress reliever and pretends she can speak fluent German when communicating with her German clients. If you find that \$100 bill that she lost the other day, e-mail her using Comic Sans in ALL CAPS at [kpennino@valenciacc.edu](mailto:kpennino@valenciacc.edu).