

Women in Design

Compiled by Lisa Yong, Secretary, IDSA-SF

*Some names have been changed

Survey 2000

Amy*

Industrial Designer

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Hardware: Mac G3 and HP Pavillion, Epson printer, scanner and Apple Laserwriter

Software: Vellum 3D, Freehand, Photoshop, Alias, Rhino

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

When I was employed by a design firm, it seemed that I was assigned the work that had fast schedules, small budgets and/or engineering constraints, and as a consequence rarely the projects that are more conceptual. The reason I think I got this work is that I am conscious of constraints such as deadlines and manufacturing issues. I have a theory that women tend to be more reliable employees and as a result they get the project that needs someone responsible who can meet the commitments made to the client. Unfortunately, by being reliable, women tend to get penalized by having the duller projects assigned to them. Reliable employees are also often perceived as less creative too and so the interesting blue-sky projects go elsewhere. I'm often working on jobs where the target market is men.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to

your male counterparts?

I often feel that I have to prove myself when meeting a new client. I'm not sure if this is a reaction to my gender or my perceived age (which is older than most clients think) or if the clients treat everyone this way.

One of the things I've noticed with male designers is that many seem to feel that there are no talented women designers. When I hear this said, I find this incredibly insulting and wonder how they have come to this erroneous conclusion.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I don't think so, other than what I stated earlier, that women tend to be more aware of budget, time and manufacturing constraints.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I think it's important for any team member to have a confident manner in order to be taken seriously. Part of creating this impression is good verbal skills and design skills. But also important are the less tangible things like appearance.

Do you see any difference in communication with

clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Most clients are fairly PC. However, I have occasionally been at the butt end of some off-colored jokes from nerdy engineers!

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

I am certainly left with the impression that most design firms are very male oriented and that it would be difficult for a woman to rise to senior levels.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Eileen Gray. She was a talented and prolific designer at a time when most women were staying at home. Not only did her work compare favorably to famous male designers of the period (her house E-1027 was for many years thought to have been designed by Le Corbusier, who bought it), but she avoided male partnership, unlike other women designers of the period: Charlotte Perriand/Le Corbusier, Lily Reich/Mies van der Rohe.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

I think this profession has no room for non-assertive people. Unfortunately we live in a culture that teaches girls not to speak up, to compromise and avoid conflict. In order to get good projects and avoid having the dregs

land on your desk, designers must not be afraid the express themselves to their superiors and teammates.



Carol Koffel

Co-Founder
Gingko Design, San Francisco

What is your educational background?

BS from Art Center College of Design - Environmental Design Major

What's your primary role in your company?

Business Development, Strategy, Marketing and Marketing Materials Design, User Experience design, Color and Materials, Web site design, Client and project management

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

2 female designers, 3 male - 1 female assistant

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Interiors of train, UI design for CD ROM/icons/ web site, color and material development, design interiors for studio, conceptual design/brainstorm of user experience, strategic development of company philosophy/structure of business

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Macintosh based - PhotoShop - Illustrator- Director (no longer)- Fetch -File maker - Excel - standard word processing

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

Clear about my gift to lead, and create space for creative endeavors - gender plays little role

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to

your male counterparts?

Good to be older now, 45, clearly add value to status of company, and guidance to how company is perceived and valued

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

All people are different and we honor these differences

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

Listen, get into action, and be willing to take risks, - your toughest competition is your own vision of the future.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Of course - but everyone has different communication styles

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

NA

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

As high as I can go - the top or adjacent to the top now

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

No

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Changes - and always looking, reading to grow

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Be clear of your intentions, take risks and be active



Susan Choi

Industrial Designer
Astro Studios, Palo Alto

What is your educational background?

Art Center College of Design
Illustration/Product Design

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

Four women out of seventeen people, three of which are Admin. and one designer-me!

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Sport equipment, footwear, several hand held digital devices and communication products. Projects which involve extreme concept driven, product strategy and branding. DAMBFINEDESIGNS

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Photoshop, Illustrator, Vellum on a Mac

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

A feminine touch is defiantly always needed.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

None, I'm lucky. The guys at Astro make me feel like one of the boys. They treat me with respect, and I return the same, except the fact that I'm slow at foosball.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

Sure, every designer approaches their designs differently. I particularly like to go outside, look at things, images and get highly motivated/inspired by all the things surrounding the subject.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

Work hard, do your best and people will respect you,

men especially. Maintain professionalism.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Since it is mostly males who are the client representatives, sure, there is an easier flow of communication between men. However, I've been in situations with female clients, and I found myself communicating more on the project simply because I was female. It's natural.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

Yes, once so far. The situation was obvious to the fact that I am a woman. But you stand your ground to learn and gain knowledge and power for the next time.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

Yes

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Just laugh!

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Mark Newson and Nature

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Work hard, play harder. Travel the world.



Kelly *

Senior Industrial Designer

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

Unfortunately most designers seem to get pigeonholed. I do see some of my male colleagues get high profile projects, but I think personality is more of a factor than gender. The swagger wins. People actually believe that

arrogant artiste act. I ask for consumer - oriented projects. I identify better with the product and end user.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I have a blind spot when it comes to the way men jockey for rank & how they think politically & hierarchically. So I've been missing the game I'm only slightly aware is being played. It's just a different interpersonal viewpoint that they've grown up with. Meanwhile I'm tuned to the feminine channel, which they don't have many clues about.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I think so. I'm less enthralled in the romance of technology, gadgetry & such. My focus is usually more on context than function. But we were all taught the same process/methodology, so that's more similar.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

No, but maybe I'm better.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I've been asked to do more "masculine" forms and color schemes. I don't think the men I work with (who do some quite sensual, feminine forms as well) get asked that.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

Yes, but I think men also have the same problem (maybe a bit less severe, though)

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

They usually involve some kind of power play or sexism. I find sexist ploys tend to emerge when I'm a threat somehow, or the guy's just insecure. So I try to think of it humorously, as a kind of underhanded compliment.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Nature

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

I guess I would advise them to not take things personally & keep their focus on the work. It's not always easy, but it's fun.



Andrea Engelsberg

Graphic Designer

Durrant Architects/iByte Graphics

What is your educational background?

BFA in Fine Arts from the University of Arizona + tech school

What's your primary role in your company?

Graphic design (print)

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

40% women

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

1 graphic designer, 5 architectural designers and 1 3D graphics specialist

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Print collaterals, presentations, annual reports, marketing materials, websites, newsletters, logos

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

PhotoShop, Corel, Quark, Illustrator, Flash, Director, Dreamweaver on an IBM

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

Gender I don't feel is an issue... expertise definitely is.

When something needs to be done fast and well, it needs to be done fast and well. Important projects are given to those who have proved they can do them.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

In my company anyone who shows skill and initiative is given an opportunity

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I find that I am more wanting to plan thoroughly before I start working when my counterpart wants to dive right in and figure it out along the way

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I guess to just say what you genuinely think and have confidence in your abilities

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Yes, I do feel that clients sometimes do not take my word or think that I am less skilled because of my gender

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

Yes, I do feel like sometimes I get special treatment, or I am handled more gingerly because I am a woman.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

No.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Sometimes professional courtesy/ kindness is confused with personal interest

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

My director of design is very inspiring, encouraging and interested in seeing both our company and our company's employees grow both personally and professionally.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Don't be afraid to be girly. A woman's vision/ aesthetic is often different than a man's and that is a good thing. Be who you are.

Yvonne J. Potter

Industrial Designer
Day-Alcatel Networks, Canada
Night-YPID

What is your educational background?

Diploma - Architectural Technology, Bachelor of Industrial Design, + many night courses in business, extra-curricular and computer OS & applications

What's your primary role in your company?

Industrial Designer - resolving user interface issues such as shipping/packaging strategies, LED strategies, latch design, cable management, product line branding and corporate design (e.g. wayfinding signage)

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

2 women, 9 men

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

We are all Industrial Designers with bachelor degrees from Carlton University, Ottawa, Canada (a little incestuous, no?)

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Telecommunications switching equipment, signage, custom furniture, design process and project management

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Macromedia Freehand, Vellum (I hate it!), Pro E (I also hate it - the UI sucks!), Photoshop (love it, ...what designer doesn't?), Adobe Acrobat, IBM IntelliStation Z Pro (yes, there is life after Mac....) running Windows NT

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

No issue here, although the guys like my shoes! Sometimes the Mechanical engineers need convincing of the value a designer brings to a project. I don't think this is related to gender.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I think that I need to be slightly more assertive, clear and concise when rationalizing or explaining a decision or idea I have, than my male counterparts. Fortunately, my manager is female and has a lot of respect from my colleagues. This I believe rolls over to me in some instances.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

Probably, but this is due to being a different person, not male or female.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I believe straightforward honesty and a strong sense of self (self respect, self confidence, self esteem, etc.) always commands a respectful audience.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Male sales reps seem slightly more attentive and relaxed when dealing with me than with some of the guys. Issues seem to be resolved in a more compassionate respectful manner.

Maybe they feel sorry for me being the only female designer (the other female is my manager, also an Industri-

al Designer from Carleton University)

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

No, my company promotes self improvement and will promote someone who exhibits motivation and the will to go the second mile.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

A little note on humility - while I was on an internship in Italy, I was drafting a kitchen floorplan when Giangi (an architect and one of 2 brothers/1 sister who own a small furniture manufacturing plant) came to me and said 'If you have any questions, just ask my sister. His sister, Mavi, worked as the administrative manager in the office with me. She does not have a design education. When I asked him about this he replied honestly, 'no, she doesn't have a design education but she is a woman and knows how a kitchen ought to be! I was dumbfounded by this reply and bit my tongue!

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Since my passion is Architecture, Italian furniture and German cars, I'd have to say designers in those 3 areas are my mentors/favorites.... I'll mention no names. I don't agree with pinpointing one person as being the "star" of a successful product/project when we all know how many others help in the realization of such a project.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Meditate, keep up with software/hardware, think clearly, be brave and live life to the fullest! (do I sound like Bruce Mau?)



Tania Lewis

Fixture Designer - Apparel & Accessories
Sears Canada/Teal Design (own company when time/contracts permit)

What is your educational background?

Bachelor of Industrial Design - Carleton University

What's your primary role in your company?

To design, recommend, tender oversee and resolve on site problems with all fixtures (store furniture for displaying merchandise) in the apparel & accessories (A&A) across Canada.

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

In my department, it is approx. 50/50. I do not know for the whole firm, maybe 75% female

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

Once again it is a big company & I can only state info for my Department 728 - Store Planning;

There are 2 fixture designers - both female

2 full-time & 3 temp. Interior designers - all female

4 full-time all female & 3 temp (1 male) visual merchandisers A&A

6 full-time (2 male) & 3 temp all female visual merchandisers for hardlines

1 male photographer/graphics

1 male graphics designer

1 male (hardlines) 1 female (A&A) visual presentation designers

There are some other related jobs that have some design flair but are not necessarily designers

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Any new fixtures for men's, women's, children's, footwear, luggage, cosmetics, fragrances, jewellery, bath&body, coffee shops, travel dept., catalogue, design/approve, draw/spec, tender, supervise MFG & install (first run) and figure out how to fix broken/non-functional fixtures.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

AutoCAD 14/2000 - AutoCAD Inventor (new), drawing materials, tape measure & camera

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences

the projects you receive?

In this position I do not allow anyone to peg me due to gender. There are only two designer and we do everything. No one gets to pick who does what. The only division is due to hardlines versus softlines (A&A), this determination was due to availability of job not gender

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I had a male counterpart in hardlines for a while but he was perceived as the stereotypical flaky designer. I got the work done better, faster and as requested so people preferred to deal with me if they could.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

Yes there was. He had a specific way things were to be done based on his design ethic. Stereos were to be presented this way and linens that way & that is all there was to it.

I try to get input from all parties involved and come up with an appropriate solution that fit into the Sears standards as well.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

If you listen to what people are really saying/asking before jumping in with an answer. Sometimes people do not see the obvious.

Do not complain, do the work do it well and then let them know it was not really your job/area.

Always make your boss look good.

There are always going to be some people who perceive you for whatever you are, consciously or not; female, black, disabled, taller than them, more revered than them, prettier than them etc. There is not much you can do, and not one rule as everyone reacts different to situations. So interact minimally with these people and

cover your back with written material. Then make sure the other parties see your professional, prompt attitude and respect your work.

Know when to say NO - taking on too much work and failing is worse than admitting you need help or cannot fit it in to your schedule without bumping something else out.

Remember the hierarchy of jobs when you complain/ 'gossip' about things. People do not always appear to be who they are.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

NO. Pretty much everyone is on a personal level. There are people that I get along better with but if they don't deal with me with the same respect as I give them their project will not be a priority.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I think people tend to confide more info to a woman, which they should not necessarily be divulging.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

Yes. But not due to gender. There are only so many design jobs and the higher up you go the less 'design' is available. As well the company seems to hire people from outside to fill the higher positions.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

One time, a company thought they had contacted the wrong type of temp. agency secretarial not design.

Another company was disappointed to see a Tania Lewis instead of a Tony Lewis.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

No.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Hold your head high & look them in the eye. Do not give them an excuse to label you before they get to know what your work ethic is like.

Andrea Emery

Senior Creative Lead
Calian, eLearning Division

What is your educational background?

Studied Illustration and Graphic Design in College and went on to attain Bachelor Degree in Fine Arts, Major in Art History

What's your primary role in your company?

My primary role is to work closely with the Instructional Designers to develop graphical user interfaces and build the architecture for learning and teaching programs that are primarily web based. I design the graphics and basic layout of these programs and help to engineer the program.

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

Ratio would be approximately 75% male / 25% female

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

In the eLearning Division of Calian, there are 2 instructional designers, 3 graphical designers, and 5 programmers.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

I am new to Calian - I have only been here a little less than 3 months, but thus far I have worked on the corporate website, a web based learning program for a Management firm and a career website. I have also helped out with promotional projects, i.e. paper graphics.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

For this work, I primarily use a PC and work in Adobe PhotoShop, Illustrator, ImageReady and QuarkXpress. I can also operate a Macintosh - in fact, I feel much more comfortable on that platform.

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

I feel I bring a great deal of expertise to my work because of my background as a graphic designer. I feel that good design is the basis for most every project. I also think that being a mature female allows me to be more direct with people and clients and I don't have a big ego so I feel I can give the best of myself and work with the client as a team unit and deliver exactly what they need.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I think that as a woman in a predominantly male high tech field, there is a constant "battle" to achieve respect. I think it is important to always dress professionally and to carry oneself with dignity. I think that sometimes women are judged harder than male contemporaries are based on what they say and how they look.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I believe women are more caring and tend to be more team oriented. I think that I try to involve the client in every aspect of what I do and try to demystify the process. I definitely work differently - less competitively.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

As I mentioned above, I think it is important to dress professionally, no matter how casually your male teammates might dress. I am very conscious of this and think it is very important - unfortunately, appearance matters. I think if you want to be heard, then you shouldn't try to undermine yourself by attempting to be one of the

boys. It is difficult to do, but it is important to maintain a professional stance at work.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

No, not really.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

No, not at all. I think you are confident in what you can do - if you can walk the talk, then you have nothing to worry about.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

In this particular company, I feel that the sky is the limit. I think if you want anything bad enough, no matter your gender, you can attain it. Calian fosters an environment that encourages people to excel and their voices to be heard. I think that if you maintain a level of professionalism, don't step on anyone on the way up and treat everyone with respect - then you are half way there.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

There are many times I want to scream - many times when I feel frustrated about a point of view I have or feel strongly about and cannot seem to communicate. I think all designers go through that - no matter the gender. As a female designer, I have been fortunate enough to not come upon too many stumbling blocks in my career. I have worked hard to get where I am and have met many wonderful people along the way.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

One of my favourite role models is a good friend of mine named Anne Heaney. I met Anne a few years ago in an advertising firm where we both worked together. She has always inspired me to seek out the best in myself and encouraged me to think positively and most of all, she instilled in me the need to always have a plan.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Yes indeed. The design world is an ever changing place and sometimes it can be overwhelming and hard. The trick is to believe in yourself, your capabilities and to have goals - attainable goals that grow and change with you. In that way, you have little measures of success that you can live and grow by. If you believe in yourself, then anything is possible.

Lucia Matteucci

Industrial Designer

Just moved to the SF Bay Area from Tokyo - still consulting for own clients in Japan

What is your educational background?

Degree in Interior Architecture - Master in Industrial Design

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Bath fittings, furniture, lighting, design research

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Vellum, Macromedia Freehand, PhotoShop, on Macintosh G3

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

The biggest obstacle is being trusted at a professional level. Which for me means that I have to work harder, always be available for extra work and that sometimes I have to impress clients, rather than just satisfy them.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

Personally, I usually tend to reflect, sketch and even write a lot before designing any physical object. I've noticed that most of my male colleagues would dash straight to the model shop after less than half an hour of reflection on the project.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I only try and get to now my team's members really well.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

I've seen it, but I think it's pretty normal and acceptable.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Don't limit yourself because you might face some hardships. Follow your passion and start from areas where your contribution is really needed, be open-minded, build up strong skills and avoid competition at "ego level".

Christiane English

Senior Designer

Philips Design, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

What is your educational background?

Industrial Design studies at Berlin Arts College, Germany
Industrial Design Degree at Bergische Universität Gesamthochschule Wuppertal, Germany

What's your primary role in your company?

Designing products for Philips Medical Systems

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

The medical group consists of 5 product designers, 2 females, 1 secretary female, and a manager.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Medical imaging devices, their maintenance and related interfaces and accessories. Projects range from pre-development concepts to re-designing covers on existing machinery. Projects last between 1 day and 3 years.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

These days we work on PCs with Word, Lotus Notes, Rhino 3D, Vellum, PhotoShop, Illustrator, PowerPoint etc.

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

I am not afraid of politically difficult projects, projects that are not obviously glamorous or limited in scope. I will get all other projects too.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

They play 'football', a common game with well-known rules. I play something else; sometimes it takes a bit longer to achieve a common ground and the respect.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

It seems that I work more structurally and have less problems making decisions for the client - but I am not sure I'm facing a gender difference here.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

Still trying to change tactics, so far not one strategy worked with all counterparts. The most difficult to deal with are ambitious males in comparable age and power, easier are elder men and young women in similar positions.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Yes, I listen more.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

One client evaluated that a project lasting for 2 years, has suffered from my maternity leave (4 months) as a project leader.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

There are barriers in the boss' heads, but I feel that they can be moved to a certain extent. I'd rather face the barriers when I have to ask myself whether I want to play to rules set or how far I want to bend them.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Once a client was very concerned whether I would join the project we just started up all to the end, he had bad experiences with Philips Design before. After he kept on asking about it, I suggested he wanted to know whether I was pregnant. He changed colour and was quiet.

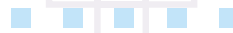
Once a client, I never met before, told me that he had seen me earlier the day walking over the plant and turned his head. Since his daughter would call that macho behavior he felt somewhat guilty till he realized he had not been the only male turning his head. I think what he expected me to value is openness.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

My professor from school, Toenis Kaeo, is a true mentor but no good role model at all.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Men are not like all the other women.



Beverly Dywan

Industrial Designer and owner
Design in 3 Dimensions, Canada

What is your educational background?

BA Fine Arts, AOCA Industrial Design

What's your primary role in your company?

Chief designer, project manager, boss

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

4 females/1 male (currently - I choose the best person for the task, not by gender)

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

4 exhibit designers, 1 admin

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Museum exhibit design

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

CAD- Vectorworks; Graphics- Illustrator, Quarkexpress, PhotoShop; Admin - MS Word & Excel, FileMaker Pro

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

Having a background in Fine Arts before training in Industrial Design helps when working with Art museums. Being a female helps because most clients are female and it is easier to deal with them.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

No problems this way with colleagues, just with people contracting our work who don't understand design. It's a process of education usually.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I tend to work more strongly on the conceptual end instead of the structural, to start with.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I look them in the eye.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Male clients often talk directly to the men, assuming they are in charge.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

Our clients love our work. We often design galleries for kids and I can draw on direct ideas because I have a child. I don't know if the same level of personal experience works with the male designers I know.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

I liked designing so much I started the company...

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Many times when I would bring a male employee to a meeting and clients would assume that he was my partner, whereas this virtually never happens when I bring a female designer.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Both women and men are mentors I'd say. I especially like Dieter Rams because he is so true to his vision, and really transcends any age group.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

To thine own self be true.

Change the status quo, don't worry about what the boys have been doing for years. Women have better insight into designing for sustainability because they have direct links to the future through their children. Not to say that men don't, but I feel women are much more likely to be thinking in this direction.



Heather Martin

Research Fellow
Royal College of Art, Computer Related Design
Research Studio, London

What is your educational background?

BA (Hon's) Industrial Design, MA RCA Computer Related Design (Interaction Design)

What's your primary role in your company?

To conceptualize and visualize future technology products and systems, with an emphasis on the social, cultural and emotional impact of such technology.

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

In our department 75/25% male/female

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

Most of them are designers and trained in Architecture, Industrial Design, and Graphic Design. Others are trained in Fine Art, Computer Science and Experimental Psychology.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

As an Industrial Designer, I designed TV's, hi-fi's, mobile phones, microwaves, vacuum cleaners etc. At the RCA I build conceptual products. Last year I worked on 3 working prototypes for a digital camera project. I design the look of the product, as well as the experience of using it. This involves building the electronics and programming stamp chips to control exactly how the product behaves interactively. I am currently designing interactive products/furniture for a project titled 'Workplace of the Future'.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Macintosh for PhotoShop, After Effects, Premiere, Director, Illustrator, Word, Freehand, Vellum, SoundEdit, QuarkXPress, Netscape. PC for coding Basic Stamp.

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

I don't feel that my gender has any effect. It's my expertise that effects the projects I receive. Through my education I have learnt to visualize concepts, build models with embedded electronics and do Director presentations and films of ideas to explain how a product is used. Because I have had the experience of doing all of these elements, it now means that I can communicate with ex-

perts in each field and understand the limitations of each medium. However, my level of expertise also involves some naivety. This helps me to push the experts into questioning their assumptions on technology and what it can do.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I don't think I will ever get the same level of respect as a male who has done the equivalent qualifications and work experience as myself. Rather depressing. On the other hand, I do get noticed and remembered probably more than a male because there are less women in the Industry.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

On occasions men have commented about my work, saying that it is obviously designed by a woman. They mainly describe it as more subtle. I also tend to avoid over complicating the functionality of a product just for the sake of it.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I have been told on many occasions that I am assertive, say what I feel and can appear quite abrupt and direct. Because of that I think I get noticed. I don't see this as a tactic to get noticed. It's more about being honest with what you know or believe in. I still think there are some clients who wouldn't regard me as being very important within a group because of my age and sex. My tip would be to be patient. Usually, over time, the work they see you produce begins to speak for itself and in turn earns you respect.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

If I am showing work to a client (with a couple of male colleagues) I don't think the client would ever assume I was the boss. I did have one incident when I was working as an external design consultant for a large Korean manufacturer. I attended the meetings with my boss

(male) to present our work (to about 15 men). For the first few meetings, unlike my boss, they didn't shake my hand or notice me at all. It was only on at the end of the last meeting that one of the Korean men came up to me and shook my hand. In response all the men came up to me and shook my hand. Rather bewildered I asked my boss why they had suddenly changed their approach to me, who told me it was because up to that point they had thought I was the secretary. It was only at the end of the meeting that my boss had informed them that all the designs they had been looking at were in fact mine.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I think they probably regard me as an asset because I am seen as balancing an unhealthy majority towards men in the industry.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

On several occasions I have felt that I should get better paid. There are obvious limitations in what you can earn as an academic, but I am paid the same rate as a man who recently joined us, who is 6 years younger, has no work experience and very little of his work published. I have got 6 years work experience. This is the second time in my career that I have felt some discrimination. It has definitely been a contributing factor in leaving both places of work. Incidentally, I felt the situation regarding pay and status was much more balanced when I worked in the USA.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Back in 1993 I went for a job interview at a well-known UK design consultancy. After I had shown my portfolio to the director he said that he really liked my work but thought I should play more on the fact that I was a woman. He told me to tailor my portfolio to female products only (such as hairdryers, razors etc.) so I would really stand out. I walked out of the interview angry and degraded as I had just completed a 4-year BA in Industrial Design where I had designed, amongst other things, a

personal stereo and a digital photocopier. When I worked in the States I designed part of a John Deere Combine Harvester. Yet I was still advised by one of the UK's more respected designers to concentrate on designing a female product range. Thankfully I didn't get the job. I was politely told I wouldn't fit in.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favourite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

There are many artists, rather than designers, that inspire me. If I had to name a designer it would be Toshio Iwai. I think his work is beautifully crafted and magical to use. He uses the computer to generate experiences that just cannot be seen or felt in the real world.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Be patient, but don't get walked over.

Yohko A. Fukuda

Senior Product Designer
Adobe Systems, Inc., San Jose

What is your educational background?

BS in Product Design (this is an engineering degree unlike most other Product design programs)

What's your primary role in your company?

I manage several product lines. In charge of ensuring sound design process and good design direction for products.

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

By the end of next month, Adobe Product Design group will have 4 female designers, and 8 male designers. I don't know the ratio for Adobe as a whole.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Web applications, photo editing and sharing desktop

applications for the home user, Japanese versions of products, for the home, web sites, small business web products

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

PC, Win98. IBM ThinkPad. MS Office, PhotoShop, Eudora, MS Project, FileMaker, Corporate Time, Mimio, Net Meeting, Acrobat, Visual SourceSafe, Perforce, Illustrator, IE, Netscape

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

I don't think it does.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I believe I have to be very careful not to fall into the stereotypes. I put extra effort not to seem "emotional" or "irrational." I strive to present myself as an assertive, intelligent person who has a lot of knowledge to share. I am blunt, and to the point. I don't want to seem "bitchy" so I try to stay calm and use as much logic in my arguments as possible. I try to dress so I look older - I think young women aren't taken as seriously.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I don't think so.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

Same answer as for question "What obstacles or hurdles"

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

I haven't noticed.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I don't think so.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

Yes, because software is still a male-centric industry. The design group currently is in the engineering division, and the VP of engineering will always be a male with an engineering background (not a design background).

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

I've had incidences with Japanese male team members (I am Japanese-American) that had to be escalated to the GM level. Fortunately, I had the support I needed, and the Japanese man apologized. I have had problems with Japanese men several times in my career. It's amazing the assumptions someone can make about you, simply because you are female.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

I don't have one role model. However, I see attributes in other people that inspire me.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

We've got to keep pushing. Don't cheat your potential.



Julie Laser

Design Manager
Pollen Design, New York

What is your educational background?

University of Cincinnati, class of 1993, bachelors in Ind. Design

What's your primary role in your company?

Small company...design, manage, fix computers....

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

3:1

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

All industrial designers

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

All kinds. From consumer electronics to housewares to transportation design.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Macs- Illustrator, PhotoShop, Vellum, Word....

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

At this company, gender does not influence the project selection. Expertise in an area has an influence, however, it is also important not to be "pigeonholed" in the same type of work. At other companies, I would often receive the "feminine" projects.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

Fortunately, there are few hurdles to cross in our company. The respect is gained on equal footing ...good work=respect. The men are always very supportive.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

It is difficult to say. We were all trained to be industrial designers in similar ways, therefore approaching the problems in similar ways. However, our life experiences, being opposite sexes, are different, leading to often, very different design solutions. (And that's the idea, right?)

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

Carry yourself with confidence, speak up, stand up for your ideas, and listen to others.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Male colleagues at times seem to be bolder, louder, and "jump right in", being "pushy" and persistent

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

Wisdom...hmmm. Make it very clear to your boss what your goals in the company are. Ask them how you can go about reaching those goals. What experiences will you need, in what areas will you need to improve. That way they are clear on what you want and you are clear on how to get there. Then, work really hard!

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

At a different company, always being given the "feminine" project. Also, being the token female on a design team gets a bit tedious. It would be nice to have a few women with whom to discuss a project.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

No one person. The designers I work with inspire me. The immediate surroundings in NY are a constant stimulation. Many magazines, conversations about design, new materials and processes....

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

There are so many interesting things you can do within industrial design. Don't be afraid to try a different area if you're not happy where you are. If you're not happy with something, think of a better solution and... SPEAK UP! Defend your ideas if you feel they are strong. Don't forget that you do not have to think like the "boys". People want you for your experiences, your knowledge, and your input as a designer and as a woman.



Stephanie Henze

Senior Designer
Insight Product Development, California

What is your educational background?

BA in Human Medicine, BA in Product Design

What's your primary role in your company?

"Head Designer", "Voice of reason"

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

The Californian office is so far too small to give a sufficient answer.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Medical, Furniture, Software applications, web interface

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Apple/NT, Vellum, Rhino, PhotoShop, Illustrator, studio 32, Icon Factory.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

Definitely: More from the practical point of view, more thorough, tend to push for research and most of all: tend to listen better to briefing and to question it.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

The naked truth (or opinion) wrapped in humor.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

Just a general observation from the software and web design field: Since those fields are new playgrounds and have a higher percentage of women due to the high demand in general, a lot of cliché rules and observations I made in the ID field did not repeat themselves.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

The company models of the future are going to be very

different from what we know today. Breaking the ice in the old, known structures seems to be a waste of energy with all those new opportunities around the corner. Yet it is important to learn from these old structures in order to not let the same mistakes repeat themselves on the new playgrounds. If you can only go so far in a company-find another one or even better-create your own.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Do not hesitate!

Linda Kruus

Industrial Designer and owner
Crocus Product Design, Canada, started in March 2000.

What is your educational background?

BID with distinction from Carleton University, 1995.
Small business start up course offered by HRDC.

What's your primary role in your company?

Contract designer, manager, administrator, and marketing.

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)?

1 1/3 females to no males.

How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

1 out of 1 1/3, although the third has taken industrial design courses (University level)

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Garden tools design, appropriate technology design, outdoor tool design, fabric and cover products.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Pro-E, Corel Draw, Word Office suite, Word Perfect, Simply Accounting, Pentium 3 with 19" monitor, scanner, printer, etc.

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

I believe that there is a definite correlation between gender and projects assigned or received, but I do also believe, thankfully, that expertise still accounts as the greater influence.

Here is an exception:

In my previous job as a garden tool designer, I was given an apron to design, and it was made openly clear that it was given to me because I was female (because at the time I did not have a particularly strong background in sewing or textiles, I must conclude that this was the primary reason for giving it to me rather than any of my male colleagues (ratio of 8 males to 1 female)).

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

Whether it is because I am female, and thus think in a slightly different manner than my male manager (in my previous job) or whether we simply thought differently because we were two different people, I am not certain, but I am certain that the arising conflict hindered me from gaining respect for my thought process method that I take when designing. My hunch is that if I was male and still thought differently from my male manager, I would have been given a bit more leeway and faith in the way that I thought.

Another conflict which arose during my previous employment was that after my confidence rose and I had become comfortable declaring my opinions and thoughts, I was told that I was being too opinionated and my discussion was not welcome. I am almost positive that had I been male that my opinions and penchant for discussion of issues would have been received more openly and with a greater level of respect.

See next question for further thoughts on this question.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I think that as a female I tend to focus more on the

user aspects of a design. I am very conscious of how the products will or will not be used by a broad range of users. I tend to dwell on making the ergonomics comfortable for smaller and weaker anthropometrics.

As a female, I think that potential users are more open to explaining their user woes of a product, although not the more mechanical improvements needed. This is to say, that I make for a good sounding board in the research and marketing parts of product development, but I do not always feel that my thoughts regarding more mechanical and production oriented topics are taken as seriously than if I was male. This is a guess, it is hard to say for sure, because I've never tried to be a male designer.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

I now purposely try to hold my comments back when in discussion with a bunch of men, until I am fairly confident of the worthiness of my thoughts. This is sad in that it hinders the possible creativity which spawns from stupid and random thoughts. Basically I guess it is only men who are allowed to have stupid thoughts, because if I as a female speak one out loud, well I then face an up hill battle trying to convince those around me that I am not a ditz, (doesn't help to be blonde).

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

I have an easy time speaking and dealing with clients, more so than some of my former male colleagues, but I think this is predominantly due to different personality types more than anything else.

Some clients are somewhat surprised when encountering a female designer, but I don't feel that from a client's point of view that I have ever been seriously treated inequitably (business is still the bottom line). However, some clients like the male buddy kind of camaraderie that they can have with a male designer, but then again when dealing with a female client, perhaps they may be equally as happy when deal-

ing with a female designer. The only inequity here is that in my experiences, there tends to be more male clients.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I did approach one client, who had dealt with my company on previous occasions. I got zero response from them. When a male colleague approached them on the same topic three months later, he received an immediate and positive reply. Part of the discrepancy seemed to be that my colleague had been the one in contact with them in the past, so they knew of him. However, because we were both from the same company, I thought the difference in reaction very unusual and suspect that my being female may have had something to do with the fact that they did not take my approach seriously, that and the "Dear Gentlemen..." header on their replies.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

No, because I am the boss now! And I tell ya, it is a good feeling to be rid of harbouring thoughts of inequity.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

See above.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Bucky Fuller, my brother, my parents, my grandmother.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

1. Stick with it, don't let the ratios get you down. Realize that as a female you will inherently bring a new and thus beneficial outlook to any male dominated work place. A lot of men actually like to be enlightened and can be very supportive. They clue in to the fact that it's kind of nice having a female presence around.

2. Try not to dwell on any unfairness that you perceive because you are female, being bitter does nobody any good. On that note, don't stay in a job where you are constantly being treated unfairly and there is no change of attitudes on the horizon. There are many other opportunities and more appreciative people out there that it isn't worth trying to change the backwards ones if they ain't budging.

3. Be aware of the possibility of inequity, especially when an incident happens and you are racking your head trying figure out what the hell you did wrong (you may not have done anything wrong other than being female).

4. I personally like to point out obvious inequities, but I reserve my comments to only when it is an important or reoccurring issue. Even with a reserve of this type, I found that I have been labelled "feminist" in a sneering kind of way.

5. Some people, men and women, of the older set and from other cultures are simply not used to seeing women capable of and doing the things that we do as designers. They may also use terminology like "dear". There is a big difference between those that traditionally think in this way and those that have a real disbelief against the potential capabilities of women. It is important to realize and recognize the difference.

With the first type one may calmly speak with them about the issue, approaching them in a quiet moment, face to face, and let them know that you prefer not to be called "dear" and that you CAN operate the machinery and lift the boxes: if you need help you'll tell them. 'No hard feelings, just so you know' kind of message. In my experience they will usually apologize and an interesting conversation on culture will follow.

The second type one must deal with in a different manner, either avoid them and any conflict if possible, or face up to them and don't let them pull any crap on you. It is important to contact a higher authori-

ty if their attitude gets to a point where it disrupts your work (this includes situations or words which have distressed you so that you can't concentrate on your work). And honey, if it is the big boss who is doing it to you, well then, you'll have to make up your own mind as to how much you are willing to put up with.



Maaïke Evers

Senior Industrial Designer
Lunar Design, San Francisco

What is your educational background?

The Design Academy in Eindhoven, The Netherlands

What's your primary role in your company?

Industrial Design Consultant

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

13 Females in a company of 46
14 ID total (3 females)
13 Engineering total (1 female)
6 graphics and imaging total (4 females)
13 Marketing and support (some part time) (5 females)

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Commercial: Iomega: Zip drives, Compaq: Presario tower, HP: flatpanel, towers and peripherals, Elumens: Vision Dome, Palm device, Mitsubishi: cellphone, Motorola: cellphones, LGoldstar: design language for a ovenrange.

Medical: Cardiac Mariners: Vasular system

Conceptual: personal accessories and objects, furniture, nightlights, eboneeser and silent dreamer.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

PhotoShop, Vellum, Illustrator, MS Office, MS Outlook,

MS PowerPoint on Mac and minimal Alias

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

Sometimes I am given a project in order to give my "female perspective". But that maybe occurs once out of 15 projects. I believe that I am more often asked to give my "European perspective".

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I believe that it is important not to emphasize the obstacles to de-emphasize the differences. Gender differences should be viewed in the same category as personality or cultural differences. Usually these differences are around us all the time and can cause difficulties. It should not affect the achievement of high goals however. It is important to ignore personal issues and focus on the challenges you are really there to face.

Females are different than males and differences create turbulence, only the ignorant feel uncomfortable with these turbulence when in fact it can create a much more colorful environment.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

Females tend to be a little bit more emotional in their design approach and form development. But I must admit that I know male designers out there that are even way more emotional in their approach. The approach is different by education, culture, gender etc., the end results that I have seen have always been on a similar level.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

See two questions above

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Nope

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

Nope

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

Nope

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

Many colleagues and designers inspire me. Here are a few that probably inspired me the most for different reasons. Buckminster Fuller on a grand scale, Mike Simonian on a day to day quality level and from David Gresham I have learned that you do not have to loose your character and personality in order to be good.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Use your creativity!



Jeanette Numbers

Senior Associate
Fitch Inc., San Francisco

What is your educational background?

BS in Industrial Design University of Cincinnati

What's your primary role in your company?

Industrial Designer

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

In the San Francisco office, there are 16 women of 35 or so people, one product designer (me), 2 environment/interior designers, 4 graphics, 2 interactive, 2 research, and the rest are support/admin.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Computer accessories, disk drives, cell phones, game con-

trollers, lots of toys (worked at Fisher-Price for 4 years prior to Fitch)

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

PhotoShop, Illustrator, Alias

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

Since I am currently the only female product designer in all of Fitch, I am asked to sit in on many projects that are female oriented. Otherwise, the work is spread pretty evenly in the office. I am not bothered by being asked to sit in on these projects, I feel like I'm there to offer input the other designers might not have, and to make a better product that I may ultimately be using.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

None

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

We do have different approaches but I don't think my approach is different from a male female perspective.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

There may be something subconscious, but I feel the playing field is pretty even.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

No

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

No

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

No

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

No

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

N/A

Monika Conway

Industrial Designer
IDEO Product Development, Palo Alto.
Previously at Designworks/BMW/USA, LA (Transportation Department)

What is your educational background?

Studied Industrial Design in New Zealand, 4 year degree (School of Architecture and Design, Wellington)

What's your primary role in your company?

Industrial Designer

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

Only one other female Industrial Designer in the Palo Alto offices. (Total employees:150)
Myself-only female designer in studio of 8 Industrial Designers. IDEO also has Human Factors Design, Interaction Design, Engineering etc.

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

@ Designworks/BMW/USA: Anything and everything from a computer to train exteriors, plane interior, farm equipment, limousine interior, medical products, furniture, audio/visual equipment...

@IDEO: Medical products, consumer electronics etc.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Photoshop, Corel Painter and Wacom Tablet, Vellum, Alias Wavefront (3D), Illustrator, Quarxpress etc.

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences

the projects you receive?

If you show your interest and enthusiasm in all aspects of Industrial Design, you gain enough experience and respect to work on any project! (Your interests are important). Although I think many women naturally have better skills than males with initial research/investigation/collating/organising activities.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

That my approach to design is more than just including a female perspective, but that I really do enjoy designing a train exterior, and yes, I really do want to learn how the mechanics work.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I like to show more sensitivity to materials, colors, and I like to be inspired by all forms of design, nature, fashion, transportation, materials etc.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

Not to stand out just as 'the female designer', but to fit into the team as any one of them would, at the same time convey what your strengths/skills are.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Many clients are surprised to see a woman designing a tractor, but if they see your enthusiasm and understanding of the product, they are excited to get the female perspective on the product also. So initially, many clients direct the communication to the males, until they see some understanding and ideas from the female.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I had a client who picked up the small sensitivities to the product concepts, that they realised the males had not thought of, and that got them really excited.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

You can eventually get to wherever you want to (interest and enthusiasm)

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

A bunch of roses from a client-laugh and scream!

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

My home country-New Zealand. The unique culture, the land, the people, and the fresh thinking. An isolated but innovative source of inspiration.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Interest, enthusiasm, motivation...



Angela *

Industrial Designer

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

So far, it has been a stream of technology products PDAs, DAPs, Bezels, Phones, etc.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Lots of Alias Wavefront on an NT, as well as the usual assortment of Vellum, PhotoShop, Illustrator, Free-hand etc. on a Mac.

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

I would like to think that because I am a female I am more interested with the user's experience with a product than my male counterparts.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I feel that my work must always be up to the highest quality to be recognized. I also have felt that in my business communications and interactions with clients that I must always remind them of the authority I have as an employee of my company. Always remembering to carry business cards and sign all my business communications with my title and information.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I would like to think that as a woman I approach a design problem differently from the men I work with, but I have never felt that it invalidates either of our methods. Furthermore, I have never determined what makes the most profound difference sex, personality, or training.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

What always has worked for me, especially in school, was becoming "one of the boys" playing their games, and not reacting to what was said and done "as a girl". Plus just playing hard with them, not making excuses, and not expecting any special treatment or compensation.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

I actually go to great efforts to not "write like a girl". It is actually a conscious effort to remain forceful; to hit the bullet points and then to end the communication without any "wasted words". I do this because I perceive that the stereotypical female communication method is offensive to my male colleagues, and clients.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

I have noticed a few times in a large meeting setting that I am the only woman in a room, and I find it disturbing that there are not more women represented.

I have also perceived that I have been treated exceptionally well BECAUSE I am a female. While great treatment is desirable, it is at the same time offensive, because

whatever the outcome it is different treatment solely because of my sex.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

I don't know enough about that, but I'd like to believe that there are no limits, although I am almost certain that there are many. I haven't tried to cross that road yet.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

When I got my first job right out of school and all my male colleagues from school who were still out of work said that I got the job because I am a woman.

The difficulty of being a woman in a male dominated field is the constant concern that you are where you are in the industry because you are a woman, not because of your talents.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

It really doesn't matter if you're a chick, as long as your good and you believe in your skills, then you can do whatever you want. Or at least that is my dream.



Laura Taylor

Industrial Designer
ZIBA Design, San Jose

What is your educational background?

Industrial Design bachelors degree

What's your primary role in your company?

Industrial Designer

What is the ratio of male to female staff in your firm (or design school)? How many of them are designers? (please list the various design disciplines e.g. graphic, industrial, interaction, web, multimedia etc)

Just 1 woman in an office of 5 men

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Makeup foundation applicator, packaging, medical product

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Rhino, PhotoShop, Illustrator...PC NT workstation

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

If the project is specifically related to women then my expertise would be sought immediately.... but otherwise my expertise is applied to any project that we receive as a small office.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I think the most obvious hurdle would be staying as competitive and assertive as the males of this profession. But I think everyone in this profession male or female must maintain this state of competitiveness. I really don't think that it is that difficult to achieve the same level of respect as the males in this field if you are good at what you do and you are passionate about design, it will show and the community will embrace this no matter what gender, race, etc.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

I think everyone approaches a design solution differently i.e. Joe is not going to approach a solution the same as Frank or Cindy. So the answer to this question would be yes.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

Yes, women generally are more sensitive to peoples needs and I think this makes them more concerned and more inclined to understand where the client is coming from.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

Not yet.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

I am not completely experienced with this yet but from what I have been told and what I have observed there is not a problem with shooting for the level you want and achieving this.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Not yet, I am still new to the professional world.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

I do not have one designer who inspires me because I like to draw from several....it would be to limiting to take inspiration from just one individual in a profession that is as diverse and subjective as Industrial design.

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Never sacrifice your values as a woman in this male dominated field and look to the instructors who are sensitive to your needs as a female designer.

Gina *
Industrial Designer

What kind of projects or products have you worked on?

Medical equipment, sports products, consumer electronics, furniture, housewares, tabletop, corporate identity, packaging.

What kind of software and hardware do you use?

Hardware: Macintosh G3
Software: Illustrator, Vellum, Photoshop, Quark XPress

How do you feel your gender or expertise influences the projects you receive?

At this point in my life (meaning: I may have thought so at an earlier age) I do not feel that my gender influences the types of projects that I pursue/receive, but

my expertise definitely does. There are certain areas of design that I am very proficient in, and areas where I am not. I know the difference between the two and select clients or projects accordingly. I also know how to get out and get outside expertise when it is necessary.

What obstacles or hurdles, if any, do you face in achieving a level of respect that is comparable to your male counterparts?

I feel that we all face hurdles in this area, whether we are men or women. Dealing with people is a sticky activity and often times we don't get the respect we deserve because of mindsets out of our control. And, how do we measure respect? Money? Fame? I don't think that those are adequate measures. Trust and reliability are. When someone recommends me for a job, I know that I have received a level of respect, based on the work that I do, not based on what gender I am.

Is there a difference in the way you approach a design solution compared to your male counterpart?

This could take a long time to answer, but I suppose the short answer is yes.

Are there ways you carry yourself that allow you to even the playing field with your male counterparts, to be heard on your team? Any tips?

As with any job, doing that job well, over and over, is what evens up the field. Also, finding the niche that you can excel in, and that few or any others do is a big advantage. Watch others, see how they interact with people, be observant, listen, listen, listen. Learn how to play fair, and keep an eye out for those who do not.

Do you see any difference in communication with clients between yourself and your male colleagues?

YES! Being collaborative, even with clients, is an aspect of communication and work style that I think that is common (though not unique) in women. I know that I am into hyper-communication, meaning that there is not enough that can be communicated to client, though, there may, at times, be too much. Knowing where to draw the line and when to draw it is important.

Do you have any interesting client responses to your

interaction on a project that might be different from your male colleague?

No.

Do you feel you can only reach a certain level within your company structure? Any words of wisdom?

No. Though this does not deny the fact that there is a *glass ceiling* of sorts in the design world. I work for myself, I have my own firm. It is not by pure chance that this has occurred. I also get others involved in what I am doing and do not hold what I am doing too close to my heart. Again, the collaborative mode steps in as I feel that the most can be gained from this method of working.

Can you recount any incidents in your work life as a female designer that makes you want to laugh or scream?

Sure, but they most often have to do with ignorance and nothing to do with the fact that I am a *female designer*. It does have a lot to do with the fact that I am a female though. The one challenge that I have for *female designers* is that they should view themselves as women first. If you can look at the issues that women deal with on an everyday basis, in and out of the workplace, it will help in developing strategies and goals that can affect what goes on in our profession.

SCREAM:

Once when I was working for a small company (about 25 people) I got into a bit of a verbal altercation with one of the salespeople. More quickly than I thought it could happen, the co-worker had grabbed me by the neck of my shirt and had pinned me up against a wall, about a foot off the ground. Mind you, this wasn't that long ago. There was a lot that went through my mind during that 6 seconds, and more that went through my mind during the next few years. Ego, emotion, morals, childhood, all of these are factors that determine how one person treats another. Now I know that that other person (a male) had quite a few problems and none of them were directly related to me.

There was another instance where a co-worker that I had been intimately involved with (yes this happens a

lot when men and women work closely together) became verbally abusive after our relationship returned to that of strictly co-workers. It became so unbearable that I had to leave the job. I didn't pursue legal action as I felt that it was better to just get out of the situation than try and get retribution. I am a big believer in karma, and have been able to actually witness the karma in action a number of times. That is ultimately more satisfying than any legal action or monetary award!

LAUGH:

I try to laugh everyday.

Who's your role model? Do you have a favorite designer, teacher, mentor who inspires you?

My role models have been all the women I have worked with over the years, single mothers especially, and the many compassionate and trustworthy men I have had the opportunity to work with. The person that most influenced me was my second boss out of school. He was an engineer, not a designer, though much more creative than a lot of designers that I know. His ability to pull together multi-disciplinary teams and get the best results out of them was uncanny. My favorite designer is Ettore Sottsass as I applaud his ability to work way beyond his *retirement* years, and the way in which he blends work and living together. He sure seems to have fun at what he does too!

Any words of wisdom for the new generation of female designers?

Find what you are passionate about. Work hard. Have fun!

WE have over 50 women industrial designers listed with both the local Bay Area IDSA and AWID chapters, and we're pretty sure there are more out there in other parts of the world as well.

In order to bring to light the achievements and good standing of our small yet powerful female design community, we conducted this quick survey via email with our fellow female designers (of all fields) to find out more about them.

The ultimate goal of the survey was to share our experiences, to see if there are any similarities or differences in the way we do things and what we can learn from them. If nothing else, we hope that it at least reassures other designers—to give them that "hey-it's-not-just-me" feeling.

We received an incredible number of responses from women designers working in the US (the Bay Area, New York), as well as Canada, the Netherlands, and England. A big thank you to all of you who have kindly responded to the survey. If you have any feedback, comments, or other interesting ideas for survey questions, we welcome the prospect of a follow-up survey as long as people are interested.

Please contact lisa.yong@philips.com.

