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What every business needs.

And how.

What is your next brilliant product?

Where is your next big success?

Which competitive advantage can you sustain?

What new markets will you conquer?

How much profit can you predict?

Growth, we all have learned, is no longer automatic. The past has less to teach us than we need to know. Consumers are jaded, markets fragmented and disposable dollars scarce. Risk is everywhere, and pressure produces rigidity, making it difficult to try new things. More than ever, time is our enemy.

This, as every visionary knows, is a rare moment of opportunity: one that rewards creativity and compensates companies that have learned to cultivate the brilliance of individuals and instill an effective process for innovation in their corporate cultures.

Despite commonly held beliefs, real invention is rarely the terminus of a carefully developed brief. It begins before the assignment is written, and is inevitably the difference between efforts that lead to meaningful new ideas and those that produce derivative results. It is an ability to identify inchoate opportunities and see openings where others can't. Invention never should be saved for problem solving. It should be engaged first to recognize the most rewarding problems to solve. It is not for the faint of heart or narrow-minded.

Happily, we have a plan.

It's called design.



Design can create desire,



improve intelligence,



impact productivity,



Speak volumes,



Start a revolution,



and eliminate frustration.

Design is a profession based on conception: on helping to define an opportunity, then develop a solution that will fulfill it.

Subsequently, design includes the identification and management of the team that will bring it to life, whether it is a product, communication, event or place.

We offer you the following process as a way to make design an integral part of your business, and to allow designers to make your success an integral part of design. It will make you an even more sagacious client. It is a method for partnering, a guide to the most effective use of teams, and the most potent, efficient, reliable way to get from A to B when you are not quite sure what B is.

What follows is a framework through which design can be incorporated into your business. Its purpose is to clarify, assess and communicate the responsibilities and methods of the design process. It is a scalable, tried and true process, one which is suitable for solving any problem that requires creative thinking.

1

DEFINE THE PROBLEM.

Articulate a clear, actionable brief. If the problem to be solved is vague, the work will be generic. Over and out. This is the point at which you either inspire or confuse your team. Be as specific as possible, as this first step has a greater impact on the work than any other step you will take. Experienced designers will help you refine the brief because they will bring to it the clarity that leads to great work.

2

SET CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND DEFINE SUCCESS.

What is to be accomplished with the work you're commissioning? **Who is to be moved, and to do what?**

Setting clear metrics for success makes it more likely that you'll achieve them.

3

DEFINE THE APPROACH.

A well-articulated strategy is not only a roadmap for reaching your objectives, but also a way to clarify all team members' responsibilities, avoiding both redundancies and dropped balls.

4

ELICIT BUY-IN AND SUPPORT.

Who are the people who need to believe in the project and champion it? It is critical to build support early on rather than surprise people when it's too late for them to contribute. They will be more likely to go to bat for you and to sanction whatever risks you need to take.

5

GATHER INFORMATION.

Immersion and research are critical to success. Share all the information you have with your team and let them live with you as needed to understand the relevant nuances of your customers and your business.

6

DEVELOP AND PROTOTYPE IDEAS.

The role of a designer is to have ideas – and to inspire them in others. Designers are adept at “seeing” patterns and developing insights, and then visualizing them so others can understand them easily. During this phase, prototypes that illustrate the idea and link it to the objectives and the audience must be developed.

7

ANALYZE THE OPTIONS.

This is the time to put emotion and “ownership” of ideas aside and think through the ramifications of the concepts on the table. Invest in market testing if it makes sense.

8

MAKE THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS.

Whether or not you believe that numbers lie, numbers don't take the place of experience and instinct. Make the choice of direction based on as much data as you can gather, and then on gut. **The most practical direction isn't always the best one.** This is the moment to revisit your objectives and remind yourself that it's not worth the time and effort to be just like everybody else in your industry.

9

MOBILIZE THE TEAM.

Once you've chosen the solution and have buy-in from the necessary people, the execution phase begins. Everyone gets their marching orders.

10

PRESENT TO INTERNAL AUDIENCES.

There are undoubtedly many people who will be critical to the success of the project. This is the time to share the objectives of the project and the proposed solution with them so that they can understand and support it.

11

TAKE IT PUBLIC.

By now all the plans for distributing the product should be in place. All efforts have led to this moment of unveiling.

12

EVALUATE SUCCESS.

Gather the team to take stock of what worked and what can improve. To the greatest extent possible, measure the success and collect data. Then change what you need to, and what you can.

Executive Summary:

What you have just read (or not) is a process by which businesses can create value and market demand through innovation.

It is done in partnership with designers.

If you would like to learn more about design, please visit www.aiga.org

12 STEPS TO SUCCESS, AT A GLANCE.

1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM
2. SET CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND DEFINE SUCCESS
3. DEFINE THE APPROACH
4. ELICIT BUY-IN AND SUPPORT
5. INFORMATION GATHERING
6. DEVELOP AND PROTOTYPE IDEAS
7. ANALYZE THE OPTIONS
8. MAKE THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS
9. MOBILIZE THE TEAM
10. PRESENT TO INTERNAL AUDIENCES
11. TAKE IT PUBLIC
12. EVALUATE SUCCESS.

AIGA is committed to advancing the understanding of the value of design and the process of designing through advocacy, education, publications, conferences and spirited conversations. It is the largest and oldest association of professional designers in the United States.

If you would like to know more about effective examples of designing to create value, go to www.aiga.org/designing.

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MeadWestvaco

MeadWestvaco partners with AIGA to help business understand the opportunities to create value through effective communication design.

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