



Directions in Digital Media collin cole

My name is Collin Cole. I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Texas in graphic design. I came out of school at a pretty interesting time when there was still enough traditional design, what I consider the fundamentals of design, being taught. And yet even at that time, in 1985 to 1986, I was beginning to see the emergence of the influence of new technology on us as designers. After spending a few years in different studios I started my own business. It grew into a studio of about 25 people. We made the transition from doing a lot of print design and corporate identity work to incorporating multimedia into our work. Before we knew it, I wish I could say it was a plan, we were recognized as a multimedia design firm. About five years ago I came to frogdesign. frog was a company that I had followed throughout my design education. I always had a great deal of respect for the product development company. It was a real honour to join a 30 year old company with such a rich history of design and take up the challenge of starting a digital media group inside of it.

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Just a quick history of frog. I promise I won't turn this into a frog marketing pitch. I bring it up because when we look at the changes that frog has gone through over a 30-year period, there are a lot of parallels to the changes that we face as designers. frogdesign was founded in 1969, which seems like ages ago. It was started in Germany's Black Forest by Professor Hartmut Esslinger when he was just out of university himself. Very early on frog just kind of lucked into some really nice projects. They worked for Vega, a German consumer electronics company. frog made a lot of innovations not just in the design aspects of product development. This was one of the first injection molded plastic television sets. This kind of innovation, got frog noticed by other people.

One of those companies was Sony. frog enjoyed a very productive period in the '70s all the way up to the early '80s with Sony. This is the first Sony Trinitron. Its design language, established by frog, is still the standard for what a television set looks like today. It took the television set out of the big wooden box, out of the big wooden coffin that you might still see in your grandparent's home and made it a piece of art, a design statement. Other things that frog did for Sony included conceptual studies that grew into the Sony Walkman. One thing led to another and frog was noticed by Steve Jobs as he was doing his world-wide search for a design agency to help launch the Macintosh. frog was Apple's design agency of record for Steve Jobs first stint

at Apple and this is where frog really kind of burst out. When you look at this product, even though it's 20 years old, you get a statement about what the company is all about. I can't think of many companies that have made as many mistakes as Apple has over the last 15 years and still has people so passionately committed to their product. It verges on a religious attitude. It's a very nice statement about the power of good design. It's a powerful example of what you can do as a company when you connect with a user, not just on a product level, but on an emotional level.

Today frog has grown out of its product development roots in Germany and it currently has about ten offices worldwide with headquarters in California and three offices there. I come from the Austin, Texas, office where we have about 70 people in the digital media group. There is a studio in New York and a studio in Detroit focused on the automotive industry and some of the mobile technology that's influencing the automotive industry today. Over the last few years we've seen a real rebirth in our European operations. We've opened up a new headquarters in Dusseldorf where I've spent the last two years. We opened a studio in Tel Aviv about six months ago. Israel is a fascinating place, such a contrast between old world and new world, but Tel Aviv is a hotbed for new technology and we're using that office to support the rest of our global operations from a technical standpoint. So, as I said, frog has grown out of its product development roots. About ten years ago it started a strategy department and about five years ago it started a digital media group.

The last 15 years have brought about some dramatic changes for us as designers. It has forced us to examine our purpose and identity in our work. I promise I won't take this cliché comparison too far, but I want to look at the way we're forced to adapt and evolve and the motivation behind that. I started out as a graphic designer doing paste ups with Amberlith ad, all of that good stuff. Just a few years later, the design process is completely different. It has forced

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changes upon all of us, whether we liked it or not. But we need to examine the motivation behind the changes that we are making. Are you changing because you're afraid you won't keep up? Are you afraid that you won't adapt to the changes around you? Or are you changing because you see new opportunities? Here's a quiz to test your motivation for the changes that you're looking at today.

What is change? How do you look at change? Is it exciting and empowering? Is it giving you new opportunities that you haven't been able to do before because you were categorized as a certain type of designer? Is it a chance to learn something new? Or is change something that you'd rather just avoid altogether? Over the last ten years, there has been such a focus on technology. Has that created opportunities for you? Has it given you more control over the design process in

your work? Or has it forced you to become a computer geek and something that you maybe went to art school to avoid in the first place?

Many times we feel like pioneers because this industry in the eye of technology is so young. You can look at pioneers in any field and you can see them as brave and adventurous people, source of inspiration for you to follow. But were pioneers often killed and eaten? There's a price to pay for anybody who's going to step out in front of a crowd and try something new. Many times that fear makes us hesitate and miss opportunities, not just business opportunities, but real creative opportunities that help us redefine what design is.

If we look at the changes and you can see in the '80s, we introduced the computer into our studios, whether we liked it or not. I think I touched a computer in my last semester at school so of course I put it on my resume and got a job from an older guy who I think was really afraid of what he saw coming. But you know whenever we saw the computer in the studio a number of things happened. I think typography was set back at least 20 or 50 years as we found a new respect for what our typesetters had been doing for us for years. Designers went crazy with pulling down the font menu and trying different combinations. And I think that until now designers really struggled with designing the way they used to within the constraints of this new tool. But I think other designers found a new freedom in it. It meant control over the process, every step of the process. It used to be we'd do a marker or shoot some photography, hand it off to a printer and cross our fingers. The computer and the way it developed gave us control over those processes and let us make decisions, accidents along the way that created some solutions that we wouldn't have found before. And again, a lot of people avoided it. But I don't think anyone has been able to avoid its influence and I think it's taken well over a decade to digest the computer as a tool into our creative process.

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The next milestone that I kind of set down here is the early '90s whenever we saw multi-media, a lot of CD ROM production come into the market. Technology intruded even further. This really forced this pairing of design and technology that a lot of us were very uncomfortable with. Again many people were intimidated by it, but I think the others saw new possibilities and tools that we can use as designers to communicate our message and produce new things.

Just when it seemed that that was actually getting to a point where we didn't have to deal with 120 pixel wide video or some of the speed limitations of the CD ROM medium, the Internet came along. And wow we had all kinds of new technology to deal with. And trying to design for the Internet in the mid '90s was really tough. You know never before had design been so painfully dependent on the technology that brought it to the customer, brought it to the viewer. And again I think that was the reason for many of us designers to hesitate at that point and miss some of the opportunities. But unlike desktop publishing and multimedia before it, the Internet not only changed the way that we worked as designers, but it changed the way that our clients do business, did business. And it wasn't just a new design tool. It was a new business medium. And again like designers, many companies avoided this for awhile anyway. Others saw new opportunities, not only creative opportunities, but business opportunities.

The first generation websites were pretty naïve and kind of funny to look back on. But sadly we still see much of this today. We call it brochure wear where it's simply taking the corporate brochure and putting it in HTML and calling it a website. Early websites were really from a creative point of view still struggling with the technology and not understanding the opportunities that the medium brought.

Second generation web sites I think we started to recognize new design disciplines and new areas that we need to be concerned with. Such as interaction design and information architecture. How do we structure information and design a sequence or pathway through the information for different kinds of users? This helps us take kind of a giant step forward in terms of our strategic importance to the clients who we are working with. Our design was no longer kind of subject to the disposable needs of marketing. But it became an integrated part of our client's business as they looked at ecommerce and ways to use this medium to communicate with their customers, get feedback from their customers and actually sell them products.

Now for the purpose of this talk, the kind of a third generation websites and really the company's business on the web is their business. Their identity on the web is mirrored in their corporate identity. They're not only using the web to put up their corporate brochure, but they're

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using it to nurture their customer relationships and to collaborate with their business partners. I think that the recent activity in the stock markets around the world over the last 9 months has been, if you're not a stockholder, a bit refreshing because it's been a real sanity check for some of the craziness that's happened over the last several years and it's really refocused the Internet on the time tested fundamentals of business and communication. To draw an analogy, I think you can compare the Internet to early filmmaking. If you look back when the technology first became available for moving pictures, what did people do? Well they had a stage like this with actors on it and they put a camera somewhere down the front, kind of the best seat in the house and filmed the action. And it took awhile before they realized that hey, wouldn't it be more interesting if I could have the camera up here or over there from the side, or down from the bottom. And that brought in the whole era of editing and really giving the viewers something that they couldn't have experienced sitting at a live performance. And that's how we've been with the web today. The early sites were not much more than sticking a camera in front of the company brochure and just now we're starting to see some of the other possibilities.

Another example I like to use is with talking about integrating any new technology into the public awareness and the general public use and the airline industry is one where the technology has really been around for 100 years or so. You know it's something that was done at the time for

technology's sake and then they have to figure out what to do with it. It took a good 30 years for the technology to get to a point where they could really start using it for some commercially viable applications as flying cargo from one location to another. It took 50 years or another 20 years after the first stop to really expand that to passenger travel and just about a full 70 years after the technology was developed to get it into common everyday use for your personal use and business use. And when you think of it in those terms it's hard to see, but the Internet as we know it today, has only been around 6 or 7 years. And when you look at the speeds that were making changes it's really exciting. I can be really scary or it can be real exciting. When you think of the impact that has not only on business, but your role with their clients in their business and the opportunities that that brings you.

In my short career during the time with the early multimedia, I had a lot of designer friends that at the time drew a line and said, "You know I'm a graphic designer. I'm not one of these new media designers." Or maybe they were a product designer or they were in some other area of design. But I think all of them were defining themselves by the tools that they used or the vehicle that carried their design work. And I think that way of thinking really misses the point and I think for you sitting here, if you're sitting there thinking of yourself as a graphic designer, I'm a print designer, I think you need to take another look at what your purpose is. A designer is a problem solver and regardless of what the medium is, design is the tool that we use and it doesn't really matter what form it takes. We all develop expertise in certain areas, but we have to be careful not to let that limit you or what the opportunities are that you have. And I think that this broader definition is challenging on one hand, but very liberating on the other because it allows us to see the connectivity between the different design mediums. Print, brand multimedia, product...all of these work together to accomplish higher, more strategic goals and form strategic solutions for our clients. And when design is applied creatively and consistently across these different media, it's really a powerful differentiator in the visual noise that you have today in television, the internet, print and kind of a media overload that the average consumer faces. But it also challenges us to refocus our personal aspirations and trade in our personal taste and need for expression into more analytical business appropriateness. It challenges us to trade control over the whole process for collaboration with our friends and colleagues in other disciplines. And it challenges us to trade in the comfortable ways that we've been doing things over the years for the uncertainty and hopefully excitement of something new. And not to oversimplify things, but I do ask you to think about why you're in this business in the first place? Do you want to make art or express yourself? Well, I want to do all those things too, and there's nothing wrong with that. But again that narrow definition of design can leave you a step behind and pigeonholed as a stylist, which really diminishes the value of you as a designer.

The way you define yourself really depends on the attitude and motivation that you have to change. To bring Mr. Da Vinci back into it, I think he would have fit in really well today. If you look at the way that he combined art with science and technology to come up with breakthrough ideas. Not all of them worked, but there was a lot of experimentation and multi-disciplined work

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going on. He looked beneath the skin to find out and really understand the way things worked. And if we can take an attitude of being interested in the way things work and the technology that lies beneath the skin, we can create new things. Because technology really isn't much without design. No one questions the possibilities technology brings, but we have to ask ourselves how these benefits are made real to the average consumer. How does it get past the Palm Pilot carrying geeks or the computer guys into the homes of the average family. We have to look at how we apply technology and use design to make things more meaningful and more human.

Design makes technology more useable, less intimidating and more approachable. I think about why I would want the Internet on my television. Design helps me look past the technology and see the benefits and, looking forward to the next 10 years, design is going to be asked to play a bigger and bigger role in making technology real. The right balance and the right way to incorporate that into our design process. Information, architecture and interaction design. Again as we look at the depth of information out there and the wide range of users that we're trying to talk to, the way that we structure that information and design that interaction becomes critically important. And at frog we've really seen a big boom in our user interface business. I think as the web's matured, it's not enough anymore just for something to look good, but there's this whole balance between the architecture, the interaction, the visual aesthetics that create an overall user experience. And again as technology increases we have more tools to work with again on the Internet and some of the more media rich tools come into use.

And we're working on new platforms. Again whether you're a graphic designer or a digital media designer, we have a richer Internet to work in. We have user interface design in consumer products and software. As technology becomes real and finds its way into our homes it needs design and we'll find ourselves working on new technology enhanced home appliances. And again, one of the fun things, one of the things that I've most enjoyed over the last 10 years is working with people that approach design from a different angle than I have. And included in that group is technology. It's really an odd mix. It's an odd couple. In our company we have a pretty large technology group, a larger design group and it's funny you can look at them in the hall and you know who's who. We speak different languages, we wear different clothes. But again it's getting past these cultural differences that's a must today. You've got to find a way to do it. Whether you bring it into your own company or you find partnerships with technology people you can work with. It's really important to put those two together successfully to take advantage of the opportunities that we have today.

Just a quick word about project teams. As we've grown out of very established product development processes and brought in new design disciplines of brand and graphic design and digital media, it's been a real challenge to put those different design teams or project teams together in a way that was practical, efficient and got everything done. I won't use red the next time. The red circles are the creative and technical leads representing the design disciplines whether it be brand, product or digital media. We have project management and strategy.

Those, that every small team of four or five people form the core group of a project and

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most of the projects we work on are really multi-disciplined design programs that have different sub-projects and it’s really important that there’s a consistent and cohesive creative division. And that’s what we ask this core group to come up with and maintain throughout the later phases of the project. Because as the project moves on, it does get parted out into a web site or a video or print collaterals or product and it’s important that the creative leads of these different groups communicate, co-ordinate and collaborate their efforts together. And again we call this creative convergence. This isn’t frog specific, but it shows that you can be an expert in any one field, but I think the challenge today is to look beyond your own field and see the connections, the natural connections that exist between a company’s web site and a company’s print collateral and how they fit together into an overall product strategy to present an identity to their consumer. And it’s a lot of fun. And I think that what this does for all of you as designers is it makes your design more valuable. You’re no longer the person that comes in and decides what the new company colours should be, but it’s using design as a tool to further the goals of the company and let’s face it, you can charge a lot more for that.

So I’d like to just step through some examples and wow these colours are bright. This is a project that we worked on with another agency and with the Ford Motor Company to develop a new line of electric vehicles. This is I think there’s three or four cars and a couple of other devices in the study. We didn’t do all of them, but it was really done as an experiment and you know they have these auto shows all the time showing their concepts or things you may or may not see 10 years later and we worked on this vehicle which is a closed community vehicle. It looks like a golf cart because it’s designed for a closed community, a retirement village or a country club type of thing. And it’s where our product guys had a lot of fun. It looks like they all went to Art Centre because they all draw like this. But we worked on exterior concepts, interior concepts of how these vehicles could incorporate some new technology messaging devices, wireless communication, GPS devices. The car has kind of the equivalent of AOL’s Instant Messenger, so if you’re driving on the golf course you can see where your friends are. If you’re old and lost you can find your way back home. And it was really fun being able to take this concept and not just from this very high level sketching phase, but down to a very detailed level engineering look at the feasibility of the technology. And this is something that we really believe in at frog because it’s easy to get caught up in the what ifs. If technology advances just a little bit farther we might be able to do this or we might be able to do that. AT & T had their famous commercials back a few years ago of you know, some day you will. We always try and balance that concept with some practical realities that technology forces on us. And so we took it all the way through CAD drawings, the engineering mechanical and electrical engineering for the whole vehicle. And then we got to have some fun on the marketing side as well. This was rolled out at the Detroit Auto Show in January. We designed the trade show stand, the kiosk, the interactive kiosk that went with it. The content for the kiosk that let people come and see what they could do with this. We got to produce videos that communicated the concept for it, incorporating a lot of fun effects. 3-D animation, 2-D animation with live video. For somebody that went to design school, graphic design, that’s a lot

of time to go on kind of a Hollywood style kind of video shoot and do great screen filming with motion tracking and bring that into the computer.

Let's take a little poll of the audience. How many of you are graphic designers or how many of you consider yourself graphic designers? I would imagine most everyone here. How many of you are working in studios right now kind of under 30 people? That's a lot and that's about what I'd expect. How many people in either larger agencies or larger agencies or kind of corporate design groups? More than I expected there. How many students? Wow. Well I think that again the way we look at design, the way we define design, especially for the students out there, it's a great opportunity to try some new things. I still always feel I have to balance that with kind of a responsible dose of be good at something. I think this whole multimedia industry has created a lot of designers who have tried to leapfrog...no pun intended, over some basic steps of learning

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some fundamental principles for designing. And I think it shows, painfully when you look on the web today. I think one of the most exciting things for me right now, aside from that sound is the chance for graphic designers to influence what we've been calling new media, digital media, multimedia today. Because within our company you know we started out in very separate groups, very separate divisions and we started to see a blurring of that line and we're actually encouraging that right now as we work on these larger programs. Because we do have guys who know the technology inside and out. They're pretty good designers, but you know they might not see the turning between a t and an a. So I'm really excited about seeing more and more people formally trained and experienced in graphic design having a real positive influence on what we've been calling multimedia. Almost back. Any questions in the meantime?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: What platform are you doing your presentation on?

CC: The question was what platform am I doing the presentation on. It's just as you can see from the icon, a director engine that we've written for ourselves. It's just a slide show engine. It lets me either the night before or the morning of a talk, throw slides in a folder and most of the time it works.

Q: What are some of the fundamentals that are skipped?

CC: What are some of the fundamentals that are skipped? I think that you know, 10 years ago

I would just say it's design. You know people are skipping through, understanding typography. The web is so difficult when it comes to typography and when you look at a global site that has to have HTML text, you're really at the mercy of what's on people's systems out there. Typography often gets ignored and I think there are so few designers in the multimedia field right now with no more than about one course worth of typography...it's really sad. Yes.

Q: Essentially what we find is that we're losing the understanding of the audience. They're more into self expression and into cloning something that they think they are recognizing. We all are capable of recognizing something that is good. We're good at cloning it, but when you look underneath it's so jury rigged together it terrifies every single thing.

CC: Exactly. Especially in the multimedia field it kind of ties the two comments together. Designers have gotten by with a lot of tricks. You know I'd rather be a filter in PhotoShop, oh look it has a drop shadow, or it's glowing or moving. That's trying to trick you into saying, look it's worth looking at. And so I think you're exactly right. People are getting by with smoke and mirrors in a lot of cases.

Q: I don't think it works because back in the schools when they're teaching design and they're just happy to see them, oh you've got a great looking portfolio, manage to print something on the colour printer, go get a mark and go get a job. They're not really taking responsibility to teach them the basics.

CC: That sounds like a teacher. Yes.

Q: I leave off marking the co-op students until I know them and they show up and say they don't have that choice so they admit it and they're not kicked out. They come and visit us and we have long talks and they say well we'd love to but watch.

CC: You know I think we're also guilty as employers and people who are running design studios because we desperately want that person coming out of school to be able to do something on that first day. So you know PhotoShop? Great, I'll hire you. OK, I think we're back to where we left off and I'll go to the next example.

About five years ago we worked with a German company called Karstadt. Karstadt is one of the largest retailers in Germany and they bought a brand, the company went out of business, Duvall. Duvall made home entertainment devices. They made a lot of turntables and lot of people have had them, but the company went out of business and Karstadt bought the brand name and frog was brought in to create a new product line around this brand. We developed 32 products for Karstadt that all had a certain theme to it. And when we looked at the brand we said well what are the assets that the brand has and it was this connection that people had with the past, of a warm memory of that scratchy record that they put on their turntable and so we developed this language that kind of combined new technology with design influences from 40 or 50 years

back. And the products ranged from portable CD players, to this is one of the boom boxes, television sets including all the packaging and collateral that went with them. And this is one of the high end component systems that featured a detachable 900 megahertz LCD interface. Again reminiscent of the old car radio with the two big knobs and the push buttons at the bottom. This device is supposed to let you control all of the components of your stereo system including your television, VCR. And this is really one of our first user interface projects and we approached it probably not very scientifically, but it was a great lesson for us to see the balance that's needed just in the usability of a product and that emotional quality that makes somebody want to use it. And in product design 10 years ago they would have designed this product and left a hole in the middle and sent it off to somebody and who knows what you'd have in the middle. So what we try to do is say, you know this is part of the product. This is as much of the experience of using the product as anything that you touch or put on a shelf. And we'll see if this little video plays next. We also got to make some promotional pieces for it and again, it's all about taking this retro futuristic theme and carrying it out throughout everything that the customer saw. Wow, it's small.

So, it's fun getting to do that kind of stuff. For somebody who started out doing paste up boards and that sort of thing it's really really exciting to take an idea and as designers that's what we create: our ideas and see that idea applied consistently across so many different things. I'm going to move through these last examples pretty quickly so we can save some time for questions.

Vetell is a company about number three in the video conferencing market which is a pretty shallow market. They came to frog with a big problem with trying to increase their market share and we had the opportunity to do a complete makeover starting with their corporate identity and carrying that throughout a whole range of video encompassing products. Input devices. This is the remote control. It's a touch sensitive tablet and keyboard. But when it came down to it, video conferencing is not about whether you're holding a remote control or typing on a keyboard, it's about interaction between people. And whenever we looked at the design of the product, again as a product design company we would have made a very nice piece of sculpture for somebody to put in their conference room. But by broadening that definition of design, we tried to look at the entire experience and that was very much about what people saw on screen. Prior to our redesign they had kind of the very basic standard Microsoft Windows gray buttons and that lovely interface and we said why not carry that design theme throughout the entire product including the software. So this is some of the start up screens. One of the call interfaces. And again just because you put a lot of nice colours and buttons in there, there still should be the underlying ergonomics the same as you would have if you were designing a physical product. But again this is what gets the face time with the customers. This is what reinforces what that company's trying to do from a branding point of view.

Another example along the same lines, a little bit more fun because it was an actual environment. We worked with Lufthansa in Germany and before I lived in Germany I didn't realize that if you go into an airport in Germany it is Lufthansa. There are other air lines there, but they're

everywhere. And so the difference that we're able to help realize in this case was very satisfying. We started out with some very subtle refinements to their brand. Lufthansa has been around for years. They were pioneers in aviation technology, but they never escaped that kind of German stereotype of the ones that yes the planes are going to work and you're going to be reasonably on time, but you aren't going to get much service or much warmth whenever you step into the airplane. So with that in mind we tried to work some emotional connections that we could help people make. And again we looked at what they had as assets and it was that heritage of the older aviation days. This is a detail of one of their old airplanes that's very well known in Germany. We took that as a design detail, extended it into their business lounge, but in the larger environments of the ticketing counters, check in at the gates and carrying that all the way through to the actual airplane environments. This is actually a full size model of the actual product which is a lot of fun going to the model shop and seeing them cutting these huge pieces of foam and materials and putting them together. And this is a business class seat. And we were able to redesign the first class, business class, economy class seats, even the toilets. So if you fly Lufthansa you have the whole experience.

Just a quick word about Dell. We launched Dell.com at the beginning of the year and this is a case where this is a web site that was making about 25 million dollars a day in unassisted direct sales on the Internet. Getting them to make any changes is risky. It's risky for them and it's risky for us as a vendor. Because if we were to take the site, this is the original site, make it look a little

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nicer and their sales drop 5%, we'd be fired the next day. So what we focused on was not so much the visual aesthetics, but looking at how the site was constructed. Dell's a global company. Their sites are up in, I'm forgetting my numbers, but many countries around the world, many different languages and each regional location was making some modifications to the site for their own regional use. And this resulted in very inconsistent application and communication of the Dell brand. So we tried to break that down not into a finished website, but into a lot of smaller pieces that we could design and we could develop a design language and a tool kit for these companies to use around the world so that whenever it was put back together, whether it be in India, Israel or the US, there was a consistency to it. And a consistency across their different business units.

And a last example. Another German company, SAP, the third largest software company in the world that not many people have heard of or really understand what they do. SAP suffered a bit from the same things as Lufthansa. They were generally accepted very well for their technology. They were by far the market leader in ERP, Enterprise Resource Planning industry which is kind of the guts of any huge company around the world. But somehow from their focus on the technology they'd lost their connection with their user and with their customer. So we were asked

“It’s easy to get focused on the technology on either the constraints or even the possibilities of the technology.”

to come in and add a little warmth and try and make that connection.

It started out with the refinement of their branding and their whole brand system and sub-branding. And we did this through an initiative called Enjoy SAP and if anybody knows SAP it sounds like such a contradiction like jumbo shrimp. It’s very difficult because just looking at their flagship product which is R3, this is what you get. And people have to work in this for four, six or eight hours a day, five days a week. Not very enjoyable. So we worked on two levels. One is we looked at how their applications were structured and then how they looked. The colours are a little off here, but again there’s a big difference in designing a website and designing an application that somebody works in for eight hours a day. And so things are subtle. Things are a bit reserved, but they’re little details, you might call them gimmicks, but in the upper right corner there’s a little pool of water that ripples whenever there’s server activity. There’s a lot of nice subtle, animated feedback for the user. But again like Dell, the challenge here was not just creating a few good screens, but SAP had I think four or five thousand different R3 applications specialized for different industries that resulted in over 50,000 unique screens in a lot of different languages. And to be able to make any kind of change in that, that would be consistently applied, we had to break it down into the pieces that made up these applications. By creating that new design language, it worked together and served as a tool kit for their developers. We came up with something that’s a lot more enjoyable to work with. And that’s been extended to their web applications, miacippi.com and portal today.

So I think that the last half of my talk, the point I want to make is it’s easy to get caught up in the technology. It’s easy to get focused on the technology on either the constraints or even the possibilities of the technology. But we have to remember that we’re selling to people and there is an emotional aspect involved. If it is not enjoyable to use people aren’t going to use it. They aren’t going to buy it and you aren’t doing your job as a designer. So we try and bring a little element of fun, a little bit of element of entertainment to everything that we do. I’ll leave you with this last little video. Thank you.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: You’ve covered a lot of ground with business you’ve addressed, specifically the multimedia brand and product developing, I have three questions. How does advertising fit into your one stop model? Do you accept that as an advertising assignment and if you don’t and you turn it down and you have partners?

CC: The question is how does advertising play in what you’re doing in multimedia? I think that from just the few clients that we’ve shown here, these are large companies. We are not an advertising agency. I think we have our hands into enough things as it is. But so we view advertising agencies as one of those partners. It’s another opportunity to help build a consistent message and advertising plays a critical role in the delivery, in the creation and delivery of that message. So

it's always been tough, no matter what I stand up here and say, for any kind of design studio to work with an ad agency because there are always the battles over the creative control, but at frog we've certainly tried to incorporate that and see the bigger picture of the part that it plays in the delivery of that message. Most of our clients have their own advertising agency relationships. We certainly make connections with them and try and work with them the best we can.

Q: Relating to your work on Dell, were you guys involved in the new logo that they're sporting and what's your take on that?

CC: Specifically with the new ecom logo. No we did not develop that logo. I think Dell is at an interesting point right now in their development where they're trying to move from being a product company to a solutions company and that's what everyone wants to be these days. So that's how that fits into kind of their grand scheme of things is trying to get out of the very slim margins that selling desktops and servers brings. And so, no we didn't design it. I see that as part of their bigger strategy and evolution.

Q: I'm interested in what you have to say about what kind of research packets you are truly giving them.

CC: Sure. And as I said I think there is an extreme difference between the two and it's funny working with some of our clients where we've done software user interface design for them. And they're all facing this transition now of putting those applications online. They say we want it to look webbie or you know, what they're saying is they want the look of a website on their software application. And over and over we find ourselves with the task of explaining to them why they're different. Because you know your average time on a website is a few minutes versus a productivity applications where you're using it for hours. The way we approach it is really focused on the user. We very early in the process profile our target users. We get as specific as we can about them. We check ourselves along the way based on how these different types of users would react to our solutions and use them and we test them. We do focus group testing, usability testing on a large scale, small scale, formal and informal.

Q: What kind of software are you using?

CC: I'll give you first my standard answer to that because it's a question that comes up a lot. If I want to get into this field, what do I need to sit down with at home at night and learn? You still have to learn design. The applications are going to change. The applications can be learned over the course of a year, but like I say you skip these fundamentals and you're dead for the rest of your career. At least until you take a step back. So now to answer your question though, we use...every designer in the studio uses PhotoShop. The use Illustrator, just kind of the basic Adobe applications. We use Flash, a lot of macromedia products. Flash and Shockwave. Over the last three years I'd say our direct to work that used to end up on CD has just about disappeared which is a shame because it's a lot of fun and really powerful still and has many advantages of

what you can do online. But we take those same skills and we're using them in our Flash and Shockwave right now. Yes, we have Media 100 editing suites and all the audio is digital as well.

Q: How do you manage the creative vision?

CC: Yes, sure. How do we manage the creative vision across so many different disciplines and kind of who controls that within a project? It is the person that takes the initial lead in a project. And the truth is I can stand up here and talk about all these nice multi discipline projects. Many of them start out as client relationships that come to us for one thing. They come to us for a website or they come to us for a product. And it's a certain mindset that you have to take on as a company that helps your client see the connections between these disciplines. So if we can get the right attitude within the different disciplines, that kind of sharing of the creative vision comes quite naturally. So in a multi discipline project it generally has some kind of focus whether it is digital or product or brand. But I go back to the diagram in the core group. It's still the vision is a result of the collaboration of each discipline. So it's not always maybe the most efficient way to do it. It's certainly chaotic at times, but that collaboration is very important for the final product.

Q: Careerwise, do you find that people are, I mean you mentioned specialty versus generalist and also do you find people are morphing their careers a bit...they might start as a designer and they get more into the strategy?

CC: Yes. Sure. How do I sum that up? Morphing careers. Starting out as one thing and getting your fingers into other things and I think just within our own group we've seen a lot of people who have started out maybe in product design. And product designers are wonderfully adaptable to user interface design because it's not designing a thing. It's designing an interaction with the customer. So we see a lot of designers coming in with one skill and when you can see the connections between the design disciplines, you see the opportunities to work as a designer maybe outside of your original skill set. So I also brought up the point of the blurring line between our brand group and our digital group and I'm sorry to throw that brand word around so liberally. Between what I would classify before as a kind of a straight graphic designer and a multimedia designer, sometimes there doesn't need to be a distinction. It's simply the delivery vehicle for your design. So we see that morphing quite often and encourage it when we can.