



Information Design

YOU

YOUR GUIDE TO A CAREER IN
INFORMATION DESIGN

PART OF THE **DESIGNING YOU** SERIES

Information Design YOU

Your Guide to a Career in Information Design

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FDR Publishers

2018

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Did you find a typo? Let us know! Please email the details to info@DesigningYOU.org and we'll correct it in the next edition.

Info Design YOU is dedicated to all of our past, present, and future students.
Be curious and never stop designing you!

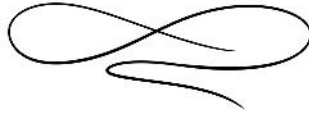


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INTRODUCTION

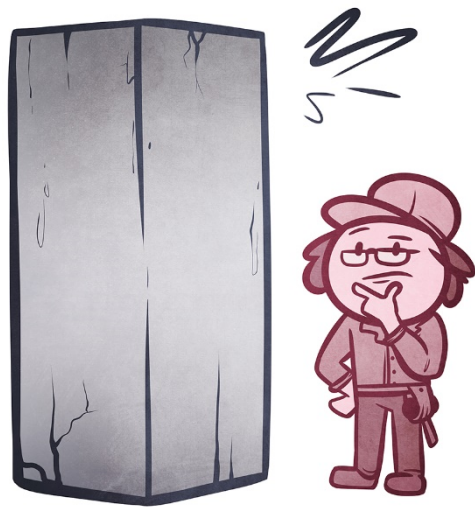
It's about Designing YOU

Info Design YOU is part of the *Designing YOU* series. *Designing YOU* isn't just a series of books and podcasts, it's a process of viewing yourself and your life more strategically.

It's about exploring and being curious.

It's about designing a map for making decisions big and small—a map that helps you address the relentless questions and unsolicited advice about your future you're getting right now.

This series of books is written for a specific time in your life. You're likely attending (or maybe have graduated from) college or university. Your future is starting to actually feel like *your* future. That's exciting and scary. Even if you think you know where you want to end up, there's no Google Map that'll get you there. Life is rarely that obvious. Each one of the roads on your journey offers detours, pit stops and often a few intriguing hitchhikers.



SO, WHO DO I WANT TO DESIGN?

“EVEN IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHERE YOU WANT TO END UP, THERE’S NO GOOGLE MAP THAT’LL GET YOU THERE.”

Now is the time to make some weighty, often intimidating, decisions for yourself. That's why building your own map right now is so critical.

Throughout the process of designing you, you'll need to be **intentionally curious**. Intentionally curious people look at the world—and their place in it—and wonder about the big picture:

- How do things work together?
- How do these pieces connect?
- How can I influence things?
- How can I improve things?

Like any new skill, intentional curiosity takes practice. As you start to get curious about things, be humble enough to recognize that you don't know it all. Humility creates a hunger that can only be fed by answers.

In *Designing YOU*, we answer some daunting questions you may be asking:

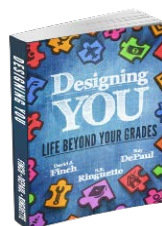
1. Why do I **like certain things** and not others?
2. How can I choose a program or courses at school that are **right for me**?
3. What questions should I ask in **interviews**?
4. Does **emotional intelligence** really matter?
5. How does my **gender impact** my life?
6. How can I find a **mentor**?
7. Am I more of an **artist or an analyzer**?
8. How can I tell **my story**?
9. How do I **prioritize and balance** all the things I want in life?
10. What should I do if **the world changes**?

Refer to the Appendix for a summary of the *Designing YOU* process.



Throughout *Info Design YOU*, you'll see a numbered puzzle piece. This icon will recommend you go to a specific step of the *Designing YOU* book or eBook for additional information.

Please go to DesigningYOU.org to download your complimentary eBook copy of *Designing YOU – Life Beyond Your Grades*.



INFORMATION DESIGN YOU

Information Design YOU (aka Info Design YOU) is a guided tour through the diverse and emerging world of information design. Today, modern information design professionals, from user experience designers to e-learning designers to social media managers, specialize in researching, analyzing, designing and communicating information in a variety of forms, from words to images to screen. By the end of *Info Design YOU*, you'll be able to confidently step in the direction of your future because you'll have a solid understanding of what you need for success in this industry now and long-term.

All aspiring information design professionals are faced with the same crucial questions:

- What are the **different careers** in info design?
- What **does it take** to be an info design professional?
- What's the **future of the info design** profession and what does this mean to me?
- How have other info design professionals **got to where they are today**?
- And the inevitable... **how much money can I make**?



In *Info Design YOU*, we dig into answering each of these questions with intentional curiosity.

Step 1: Explore the information design career landscape

To make the world of info design feel as familiar as your school, we explore:

1. What are the **different careers** in info design?
2. What **knowledge and skills** do I need?
3. What are the **major trends** in info design and what do they mean for my future?

Step 2: Define your destination

Your destination is where you want to be in your career 10 years from now. We call this your 10-Year Professional Mission. Knowing your destination will help you make decisions, big and small, along the way. You'll define your destination by the end of this section, but it will evolve with you over time, too.

Step 3: Develop your Mission Map

Like any epic journey, this one will require some serious planning. You'll need to determine the knowledge and skills required to achieve your 10-Year Professional Mission and map out a plan to achieve them. To inspire you as you plan this odyssey, we review 12 Mission Maps inspired by the career journeys of real info design professionals.

Reflection and *Info Design YOU*

Living in the moment is essential to a good life—but so is personal **reflection**.¹ Taking thoughtful notes and noticing what works and what doesn't ensure you're always gathering new information, analyzing it and evaluating what to do next. You'll be reflecting with the goal of trying to connect it all together. To do this, you'll ask yourself questions in three basic categories: What? So What? And Now What?

What?

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen?
3. What did you do? What did others do?
4. What was your reaction?

So What?

1. What were your feelings when it happened?
2. What are your feelings now? Are there any differences? Why?
3. How do you think others feel?
4. What was the impact of what you did?
5. What worked well? What didn't?
6. What did you learn? How did you learn it?

Now What?

1. What are the implications for you and others?
2. What would you do differently next time?
3. What information do you need to move forward?
4. Why is this learning important to you?
5. What actions are you going to take?

Your best tool for reflection is a *Designing YOU* journal. Though there is no shortage of digital tools to capture thoughts and information (smartphone, vlogs, blogs, Google Drive or a combination), we find that an old-fashioned handwritten notebook is the most effective for your *Designing YOU* work.



Going forward, when you see this symbol in the book, grab your journal and get to work. Remember to refer back to this list of questions as you reflect.²

There are no rules for when or how to use your journal but consider it a catch-all for the thoughts flitting through your head that you don't want to lose. There's something rewarding about filling a little book with your questions, thoughts, ideas and interests.

In *Info Design YOU*, we try to avoid info design jargon, but sometimes we just can't help ourselves. Fire up the [media & communication dictionary](#) while you read, and jot down any unfamiliar terms in your journal.

A LIFE IN INFORMATION DESIGN

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT CAREERS IN INFORMATION DESIGN?

Information design professionals inform, explain and facilitate understanding. They're experts in design and storytelling in all kinds of media. Professionals in information design construct, select, manipulate and refine information with a specific goal in mind. Think about all the ways we consume content today—watching, reading, listening, interacting—and where we find that content, through our digital devices and beyond. It's ubiquitous and it's all competing for our attention. That's why graduates of information design programs are increasingly in demand across industries. The need for clearly expressed information is growing. Most careers in the field of information design require no specific certification, but a post-secondary credential and a portfolio of content are proof a graduate has the necessary skills and knowledge.

Think of careers in info design as existing on a spectrum. Find your optimal place on this spectrum by considering three key questions:

1. What **functional information design role**—the actual job—do I want to do?
2. What **industry sector** do I want to work in?
3. What **type of organization** do I want to be part of?

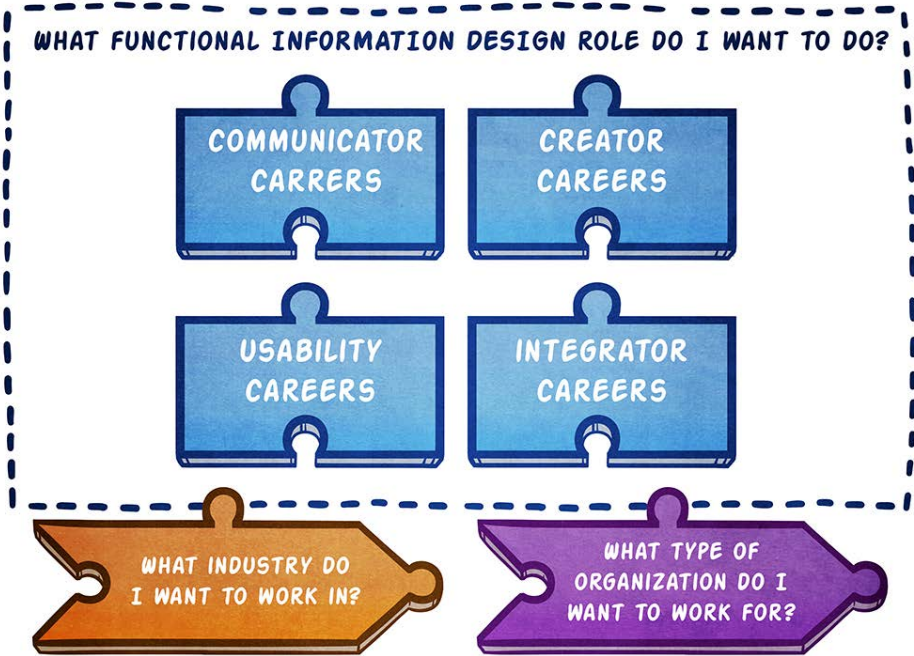
Tackle these questions in the order that makes the most sense for you. For example, your passion may be advertising or sports, so you'll answer the industry sector question first. Or you may know in your heart you're an entrepreneur and you'll love to work in (or found) a design start-up, so you already know what organization type you're looking for. Or you may be drawn to a career as graphic designer or product manager, meaning you already know what actual job you want.

What functional information design role do I want to do?

There are a lot of diverse careers in info design. Information design professionals are experts at creating artifacts—from museum exhibits to website designs to product packaging—that help people locate and understand information and apply it.

Think of a career in info design as falling into one of four broad clusters based on the goal of the content. For example, if your goal is to educate and convey information—look to the *Communicator* careers cluster. If your goal is to connect people with information and content, you're in the *Creator* careers cluster. Or are you a person who likes to really understand people and how you can make their lives better? That's the *Usability* careers cluster. Lastly, if

you're driven to bringing it all together across the clusters, look to the *Integrator* careers cluster.



The Communicator



Potential jobs

Instructional Designer
E-Learning Coordinator
Content Developer/Designer
Digital Learning Strategist
Data Visualizer
Technical Writer
Copywriter/Editor
Knowledge Management
Coordinator

Summary

1. Who is the information for?
2. Is it for a specific audience or a broad audience?
3. What information obstacles are people encountering?
4. What is the best way to prepare the content?
5. Who isn't typically considered as impacted by this information / problem?
6. What barriers may impact our success?

The Creator



Potential jobs

Service Designer
Exhibit Designer
Wayfinding Specialist
Graphic Designer
Digital Designer
Web Designer
Typographer

Summary

1. Who is the information for?
2. How might we imagine a different approach to a problem?
3. How might we imagine that there is an information problem even if not previously identified?
4. How might we challenge norms and expectations of the project?
5. What is the best way to prepare and organize the content?
6. What barriers may impact our success?

Usability Expert



Potential jobs

User Experience Designer
UX/UI Designer
Ethnographer
Design Researcher
Interaction Designer
Human Factors Specialist

Summary

1. Who is our end user?
2. Who is the audience?
3. What is the best way to prepare and organize the content?
4. What response or behavior are we looking for from the end user?
5. What barriers may impact our success?
6. How will the user be accessing our content (what platforms)?
7. What methods and tools might be used to develop the user test.
8. What are the technical needs for our production?

The Integrator



Potential jobs

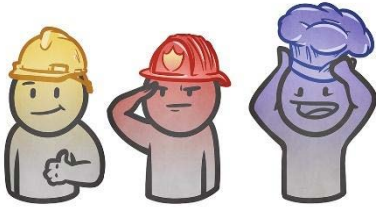
Project Manager
Communications
Coordinator
Social Media Manager
Design Manager
Design Consultant

Summary

1. How can we most effectively integrate creation, communication, planning, and management together to maximize value?
2. How might we imagine a different approach to a problem?
3. How might we challenge norms and expectations of the project?
4. What is the best way to manage the project and the people doing the project?
5. What barriers may impact our success?

Whatever cluster you find yourself drawn to, you can benefit immensely by **exploring different parts of the information design career spectrum**. For example, if you love the idea of being a UX/UI designer (Usability cluster), think about also spending some time working in the Communicator cluster, for example as a technical writer. This broad experience will make you an ever-better info design professional. These are considerations you can build into your Mission Map later.

What industry sector do I want to work in?



Industry sector characteristics have a huge influence over the day-to-day jobs of people working in the world of info design. For example, an exhibit designer for a tourism bureau produces much different content from one working for a global technology company. Similarly, within any given industry, different roles demand different skills. The exhibit

designer’s day-to-day for that global technology company is markedly different from UX designers for the same company. At the highest level, think about this question as a choice between the three big sectors below: corporate, public/non-profit and entrepreneurial. Each of these three sectors can be broken down further into sub-sectors.

Corporate Sector	Public/Non-profit Sector	Entrepreneurial Sector
<p>Sub-sectors: Corporate marketing & communication Marketing & communication agencies Creative sector (network production) Design agencies User experience firms Corporations (in-house design)</p>	<p>Sub-sectors: Government, provincial and municipal (e.g. city or town) Public sector agencies Non-profit agencies Foundations Post-secondary institutions</p>	<p>Sub-sectors: Independent Consultant Freelance/contract Social innovation sector Start-up businesses Emerging businesses</p>

WHATEVER CLUSTER YOU FIND YOURSELF DRAWN TO, YOU CAN BENEFIT IMMENSELY BY EXPLORING DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE INFO DESIGN CAREER SPECTRUM.



In *Info Design YOU*, when it's time to narrow in on a particular sector, we recommend you go to Step 4 of *Designing YOU* and complete the exercises in the section titled, "What Do You Love to Do?" Afterward, consider whether a particular sector would fit your responses. For example, if one of your answers was "I love being in control" you may want to explore entrepreneurial sector. If it was, "I like doing and learning lots of different things," explore working for a design agency.

Most people don't know what industry sector they love (or hate) until they've experienced it. If you're like most people and you're uncertain, then be sure to include opportunities in your Mission Map to get diverse industry experience. Find those opportunities through things like internships, summer jobs and volunteer work, or by working in a communication agency (which typically have diverse clients from a range of industries). You may even find out that a sector you assumed was boring lights your fire. At the very least, you'll be able to put your assumptions to the test.

What type of organization do I want to be part of?

Like industry context, an organization's size (and scope) will influence careers in your discipline. Given the reach of information design in so many diverse fields the role of an information designer would be influenced not only by the size of the business but also by a number of other variables including the professional field. For example, the entire job of someone in the information design field will be dramatically impacted depending on the company's size. So, the UX/UI designer for a small regional start-up focusing on the energy services sector will have a very different focus than a UX/UI designer for a global consumer company like Apple or Samsung. Therefore, the job may have the same title, but the actual role and skills required will be totally different.



It's time to grab your journal for your first reflection. Think about each of the three questions and your early impressions of how you'd answer today. Does the job, sector or type of an organization jump out as most important to you? Why? This early reflection on "why" is important. It should start to raise questions and assumptions that you can explore with further research.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A PROFESSIONAL?

The knowledge and skills required to be a successful info design professional fall into two clusters.

The first cluster is **job-specific knowledge and skills**. These include the knowledge and skills required for a specific info design job. For example, being able to conduct expert interviews or create a systems map.

The second cluster is **core transferable skills**. Whereas job-specific knowledge and skills are specialized, core transferable skills can be used in lots of contexts. For example, being organized is a critical skill regardless of whether you're an accountant, a marine biologist or a designer.

In the charts that follow, look at the knowledge and skills that various career paths in info design might require. Don't worry if some of the knowledge and skills are unfamiliar at this point. You can refer to these charts later in *Info Design YOU* when you're identifying the current gaps in your knowledge and skills.

Core Transferable Skills

Core transferable skills are foundational and allow you to pursue diverse career paths at graduation. These core transferable skills can be clustered into five major areas. Refer to the glossary in the appendix for detailed definition of each skill.

Core Thinking Skills

Demonstrates thinking skills:

- Analytic thinking
- Transdisciplinary systems thinking
- Problem solving
- Adaptive thinking
- Intentional curiosity
- Thoughtful creativity

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS



Core Communications Skills

- Ability to communicate effectively for different audiences using written, verbal, & non-verbal mediums
- Effective listening
- Persuasive storytelling
- Conflict resolution & negotiation

Core Organizational Skills

Evidence of organization skills:

- Self-starter
- Time management
- Follow through
- Perseverance

Core Interpersonal Skills

Evidence of interpersonal skills:

- Cross-contextual competency
- Effective leadership
- Self-confidence
- Work ethic
- Effective team player
- Emotional intelligence

Confident use of Digital Technology

Technology use is integral to functioning both personally & professionally. Most career pathways require using technology to communicate, problem-solve & conduct research. Note, this is different than task-specific technical literacy.

Job-Specific Knowledge & Skills



Job-specific knowledge and skills in info design are broken into four major clusters. Each cluster includes a series of specific knowledge areas and skills that are more (or less) important for different roles. Refer to the glossary in the appendix for detailed definition of each skill.

Management Skills

Knowledge & ability to:

- Manage the design process.
- Manage multiple workflows
- Develop and implement program schedules
- Manage budget and financial issues
- Manage internal and external stakeholders
- Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole.

Research & Insights Skills

Knowledge & ability to:

- Formulate focused and practical research questions
- Develop and execute qualitative research including observation, interviews and text analysis
- Develop and execute quantitative research including large data-set statistical analysis
- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour including personality, interests, learning and motivation to understand usability
- Systems mapping and knowledge transfer

Communication Skills

Knowledge & ability to:

- Translate content into a persuasive, evidence-based story
- Apply written vocabulary including technical, descriptive and narrative to suit a wide variety of audiences
- Write and design style guides, spreadsheets, tables, dashboards
- Apply content management strategy
- Conduct user testing
- Use specialized technology to prepare, edit and distribute content across media platforms
- Leverage social media

Design Skills

Knowledge & ability to:

- Design branding and visual identity systems
- Apply visual design fundamentals
- Apply data visualization
- Build prototypes out of variety of materials
- Apply information architecture principles various online and print mediums
- Critique and improve design artefacts.
- Use current digital design tools

As you develop your Mission Map, you'll **need to prioritize** all the transferable and job-specific knowledge and skills that best fit your professional mission. For example, the skills required by a UX designer are different than a project manager, though there might be some overlap.

To prioritize what experience and education you'll need, think about knowledge and skills for each job on a **four-level rating system**. Overall, you want to focus your limited time on the areas that offer maximum return.



<p style="text-align: center;">Level 1: Not required</p> <p>Depending on what career you're pursuing, there will be a bunch of knowledge and skill areas that you won't even require a "good at" to deliver on the vision of your <i>Info Design YOU</i>.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2: Good at</p> <p>"Good at" reflects an ability to engage and understand a topic but not be completely fluent (let alone an expert) in. For example, you may not be an engineer, but you'll need to know enough to be able to effectively communicate to consumers how to use a product.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3: Great at</p> <p>"Great at" reflects advanced knowledge or skill in an area. You may not be the best in your organization in this area, but you're close.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4: Expert</p> <p>You need to be an expert in this knowledge area or skill. This is a "need to know," not a "nice to know." For example, as a researcher, you better be great at managing and analyzing big data and in conducting qualitative and observational research.</p>



At this stage, you might be asking yourself, **"How can I be good at all these things?" You can't be. Start by identifying your current knowledge and skills, with evidence to back it up.**³

Replicate the following table in your journal. List the skills you currently have and rate them using the four-level system above. Come up with **at least ten individual** knowledge areas or skills for info design and for transferable skills. **The most important part of this exercise is the proof that you can do what you say you can do.** That evidence could be in the form of a certificate or associated work experience.

For example:

Cindy knows she is "great at" leadership (an interpersonal skill). Her evidence is that she was head bartender at the university pub with six staff reporting to her and experienced no staff turnover.

Marco is “great at” written communication. He has strong evidence of this since he publishes a popular blog for students at his university.

My Current Knowledge & Skills	Level Rating (1-4)	My Evidence Is...
My core transferable skills are...		
My information design knowledge & skills are...		

Once you have completed this table, review it with family, friends and any current mentors you may have. Having a fresh set of unbiased and trusted eyes can often be an important reality check.

What’s a mentor?

A mentor is a trusted advisor on everything from school to jobs to volunteer opportunities and what clubs to join. This person may be a professional acquaintance or a friend. We recommend the best long-term approach is to build a team of mentors with diverse backgrounds and expertise (some professional, some personal). Dive into Step 3 of *Designing YOU* for advice on how to develop your mentor team.

THE FUTURE OF INFORMATION DESIGN

WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

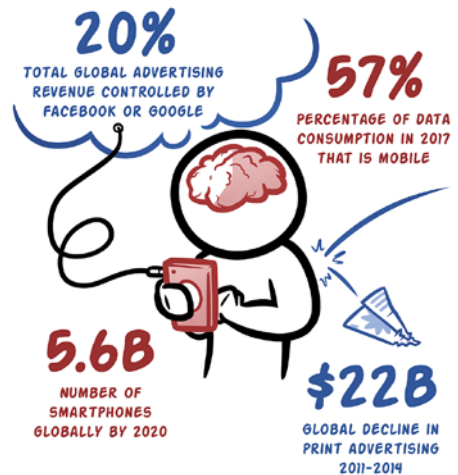
Info design is one of the fastest-changing careers today. Some powerful trends—from technology to the gig economy—are redefining the info design world. **Many information design jobs from a decade ago no longer exist or have evolved beyond recognition.** Mapping your 10-Year Professional Mission is going to be a challenge, but it's also an opportunity to rise above the herd.

It's essential that your Mission Map accounts for the info design professional of tomorrow as carefully as the info design professional of today.

We won't pretend to predict how info design careers will change over the next decade. That's not realistic. What you can do now is **go in with your eyes wide open** to the prevailing trends that'll influence info design and figure out how these could affect your mission. Consider the list of the following eight trends as a **starting point** for what you must always keep in mind as you define and live your 10-Year Professional Mission.

Trend 1: Technology—Friend or Foe?

In the past two decades, technological innovation has upended the jobs of professionals across industries. The Internet, social media, mobile devices and big data analytics are only the tip of the digital iceberg. In the future, wireless connections will be built specifically to keep up with the “Internet of Things.” Home appliances, security cameras, cars, office devices and personal devices are increasingly and seamlessly being connected to the Internet. Plus, advancements related to artificial intelligence, machine learning and cognitive computing are going to change our lives—and our careers. For example, artificial intelligence will define many aspects of life in the future, ranging from driverless cars, to household automation, and even automated warfare.



These advancements will create huge opportunities, but also threats. Automation long ago replaced many of the menial and skilled tasks in manufacturing. Automation may soon do the same to skilled knowledge workers. For example, software already contributes to the news media, both by analyzing trends for editors to assign human reporters to cover, and by performing rote work like publishing corporate earnings or sports scores. However, in many domains, smart machines will become our partners, augmenting our own skills and abilities. For example, advancements in technology will give corporations the ability to monitor

working conditions in supplier factories anywhere in the world in real-time to ensure they're meeting minimum contractual health and safety standards. The cascading effect of technology on design is only limited by human imagination.

What it Means to YOU

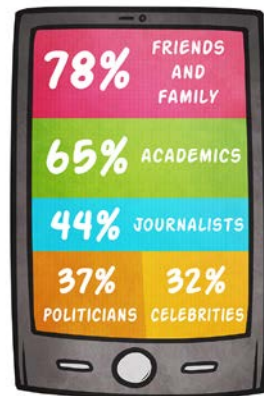
There are two implications for you. First, being a professional in any field requires a minimum level of technical literacy. Not every information designer will need to be a programmer, but you'll be required to understand the constraints and opportunities that evolving technologies create and how they affect your work. A big part of this will be effectively leveraging these advancements to enhance your own skills. Second, as an info design professional you'll need to "future-proof" yourself by developing a diverse mix of rare skills that will be difficult (or impossible) to automate.

Trend 2: The Transformation of Trust

The expansion of digital technology and how people use it has turned everyone into a potential source of content and influence online. User-generated content—such as social media posts or online reviews—becomes increasingly valuable as trust in brands and large institutions (including governments) is displaced by trust in people.

This dynamic has massive implications on how people are influenced and behave. Our reliance on recommendations from trusted friends and family is growing. Edelman, a global public relations firm, conducts annual large-scale research on the evolution of trust. Long ago, their research identified that people trust people like them. This is a comfort zone. It's also an echo chamber because we become more and more reliant on our network—and only our network—for information and knowledge. Forty percent of people say they get their news from Facebook. In fact, they don't get their news from Facebook; they get their news from "friends" on Facebook. The result is things that were once defined as objective "facts" are being challenged. The 2016 U.S. election brought a new term to prominence: alternative facts. "Alternative facts" are not actual facts; it describes when people believe what they want, regardless of evidence. This is a result of the decline of institutional trust and the rise of the echo chamber. Can you see how that might be a challenge for your role as an info designer?

WHO DO I BELIEVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?



What it Means to YOU

Trust is at the heart of information creation and consumption. Without trust, content becomes useless. People have become the content, and good content is monetized. But to be useful today and in the future, content must be gathered, stored, analyzed and visualized. It must be repurposed and remediated.

At the same time, pressures will mount around personal content ownership and ethical use. The implication of this trend is huge—not just for information design, but for society. People will no longer defer to media or government as trusted sources of information; rather, they will refer to their networks of trusted people. Understanding the source and influence of trust is core to your job, regardless of where you work in the info design spectrum.

Trust is core to the human existence, so invest in educating yourself on the psychology and sociology of trust. New opportunities are emerging across the info design spectrum for those who can create custom content for social media and networked platforms to drive engagement. For example, NowThis produces content across the social web—issue-based videos for Facebook, visually compelling stories for Instagram, breaking news for Twitter, animated GIFs for Tumblr, ephemeral videos for Snapchat and instant messaging stories for Chinese social platforms like Weibo.

Trend 3: The Threat of Privacy

What about the other side of trust—privacy? This may be the biggest issue facing information designers over the next decade. The future of info design and communication isn't technology, but rather our trust in technology.

Think about next-generation tech trends, like wearables, augmented reality, the internet of things, driverless cars, and so on. How many data breaches—the hack of 40 million of Target's® customer accounts; or the security failure in Jeep's® Wi-Fi system that allowed a remote takeover; or the WannaCry ransomware on Microsoft® Windows that demanded payment from affected users in return for their data—will it take before people start to question their trust in the technology they've become dependent on?

What it Means to YOU

Data security and privacy is a massive growth sector, not just for technology companies and engineers, but also brand managers. “Brand” is simply a fancy word for trust. We love our brands because we trust them. Until we don't anymore. Great information designers today, and in the future, will recognize this threat and will need the knowledge and skills to proactively plan for it.

Trend 4: The Future is Transdisciplinary and Systematic

Technology is eliminating both real and perceived distances between people and organizations. This means diverse people from different contexts can collaborate and connect in unprecedented ways. Context may be defined by culture, socio-economic conditions, organization size, industry type and the team composition in which one is working. The ability to



understand and apply knowledge from across disciplines and think like the experts in those disciplines will be essential. The age of simple linear and siloed (isolated) thinking is over. The future will be defined by transdisciplinary systems thinking and collaboration. That means diverse teams will gather to pull together targeted information from broad sources for better results.

What it Means to YOU

Just as linear, siloed thinking isn't good enough, neither is linear, siloed education or a linear, siloed career path. You need to be able to analyze relationships across many contexts and have intentional curiosity. For this reason, preparing for a transdisciplinary and systematic future requires a Mission Map that leads you through a breadth of diverse experiences and contexts. If you can see how all the dots connect, you'll become infinitely more valuable to an organization.

Trend 5: Big Data. Big Thinkers.

The Internet, social media, mobile devices and the "Internet of Things" not only redefine how we access content, but also the nature of evidence and research. This volume, velocity and variety of data will create new and complex sources of information to piece together.⁴ Organizations such as WikiLeaks, and the mass volume of research they made public, will be old news. The volume of data in the future—public and private—will be like digital puzzles made up of millions of pieces that need to be arranged to tell a coherent story.

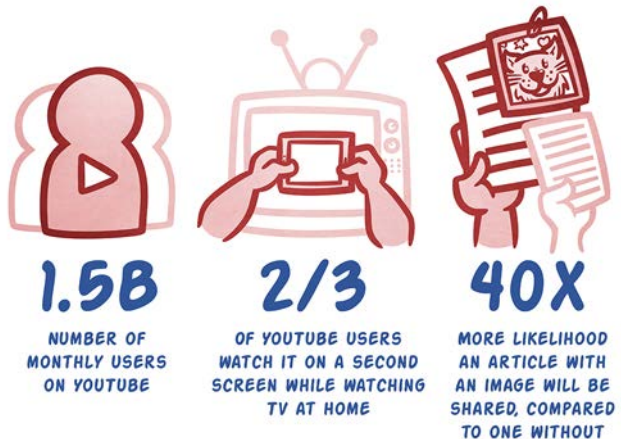
What it Means to YOU

The rise of big data has a two-pronged impact on you. First, it will spawn an entire sector of specialist researchers who have designed ways to segment society and analyze large data sets. This data will enable modeling of social systems at massive scales, both huge and infinitesimal. It will also enable analysts to identify connections that previously were invisible. These connections need to be communicated simply and precisely.

Future careers in research, analytics and design will demand complex skills far beyond being a good number cruncher. The researchers and knowledge managers of the future will look more like anthropologists than statisticians. However, for big data to make sense, we info designers who can communicate it to the right audiences. To do that, you'll also need to be able to realize the result of an action across multiple functional areas within a business—financial, technological, operational, cultural and societal—to really understand these complex systems.

Trend 6: The Rise of On-Demand and Transmedia Content

Today, media consumers can watch and listen to the programming they want, when they want. It might be a "binge-worthy" series or documentary on Netflix, or an audio podcast they



download from Apple Podcasts or Stitcher. Or they might find all types of media content as they scroll their Facebook, Twitter or Instagram feeds. The expansion and fragmentation of digital media from websites to podcasts to YouTube and Snapchat have magnified the role of content in info design. Those who can efficiently harness content—especially user-generated content—to build brand advocates will rise to the top.

Research shows that the medium influences how we consume content. The result is that people digest bite-sized stories in video, tweets, GIFs and photos in seconds. In fact, studies suggest how we process information is changing as we adapt from text to video or other forms of content. Some people will want to dig deeper than those few seconds; many will not. For example, some may simply read a headline, whereas others will watch embedded video and follow links to related stories. Therefore, the medium is really, really defining the message.

What it Means to YOU

Content may be king, but it must be customized for the audience and the medium. So, it's less about the tools that are used to make design, and more about your capacity to adapt yourself and the content you create to any communication platform and content provider. Future opportunities are there for those who can generate original content and convey complex thoughts efficiently across media. And while some traditional media empires are enduring shrinking audiences, the demand for content for live-streaming is growing fast.

New info design professionals are increasingly being trained to leverage that market and the growth of transmedia storytelling. Today's companies need an expanded skill set to work across media; they need to collaborate with people and organizations that can access the media channels to develop and distribute content across a range of platforms.

Trend 7: People-Driven Design

Human experiences are becoming more important than products and that means the values, ideals and aspirations of individuals and communities are critical in information design. Getting large-scale, public input into a design—crowdsourcing—goes back more than a decade. Over the next decade, crowdsourced decisions and co-creation will expand dramatically with enhanced technologies and evolving audience expectations. The result will be a continued redefinition of the design process.

What it Means to YOU

The days of “build it and they will come” are over. You'll need to learn how to engage your audience (and other people) constantly during the entire design process and beyond—often including people as direct co-creators of products and services along with your brand. In doing so, they'll assume an increased ownership of the outcomes. This trend is spawning an entire sector of specialist researchers who have designed ways to engage better with people in the design. The result is careers in research and analytics will demand complex skills far beyond being a good number cruncher. The researcher of the future will look more like an anthropologist than a statistician.

Trend 8: YOU Inc. The Rise of the Freelancer

As traditional advertising revenues decline, media outlets will continue to restructure and focus on lower costs to become more agile. For most of the last century, having a job in info design meant going to an office and receiving a paycheck every two weeks. But today in Canada, 21 percent of the workforce (and almost 40 percent in the U.S.) is made up of freelancers who work for themselves.⁵ That's more than 4 million people and growing by 10 percent a year. In the communication sector, 17 percent of positions today are contractors or freelancers.⁶ This freelance economy is becoming mainstream as companies and talent alike recognize the benefits of employment on-demand.⁷

What it Means to YOU

With the new economic model, your career in info design may be less about a job and more about freelance work. A freelance economy can be both exciting and stressful. It's exciting because you'll be working with diverse clients and you're your own boss. If you want to go to Australia for six months, no one can say no. It's stressful because you have to pay the rent (and for a flight to Australia).

Your success will be dependent on two factors. First, being mediocre at your job is not an option. You'll need to constantly innovate and find ways to create value, because if you don't someone else will. Second, you will need to have a robust network of professionals who recognize and value your expertise and talent. These are the advocates who will help sell your value and ensure you can pick and choose your clients (and pay that rent). Moreover, there will be an increasing demand for transparency and accountability. Through your expertise in usability, technical writing, rhetoric, and visual communication, you must practice within an ethical, moral and political consciousness. Therefore, who you've worked for and, through your work, how you've demonstrated consistent ethical decision-making will become central to the success of YOU Inc.

Does Sex Matter?



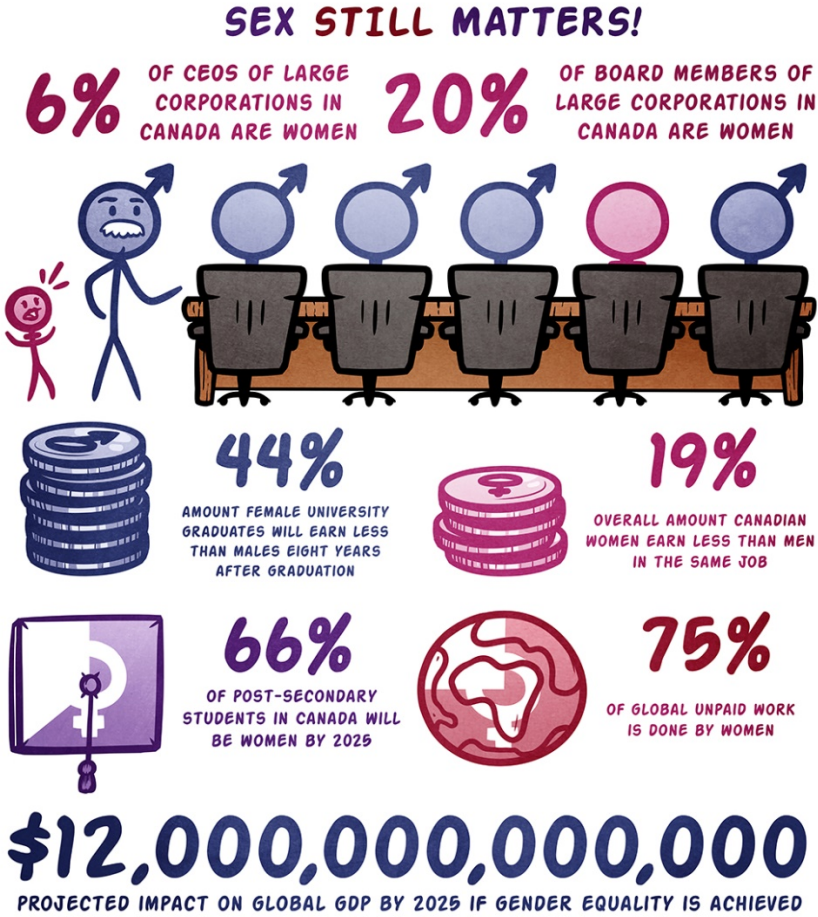
Though it's not a "trend," an important issue to consider when it comes to your career is sex. And by sex, we really mean gender here. The basic difference between the terms "sex" and "gender" is that **sex refers to biology**, while **gender refers to cultural and social perceptions** of (and biases toward) appropriate roles for different genders. There's a load of really complex research suggesting society plays a massive role in designing you based on their view of your gender.⁸ This research also suggests the brains of men and women are wired differently. Studies also show that we still treat men and women differently.

The guidance in *Info Design YOU* is **applicable, regardless of your gender identity**. As you launch your professional life, however, there are **gender realities in the workplace worth understanding** and incorporating into your thinking.

For example, research shows the value of building diverse teams; companies with gender balance on their boards and executive teams perform better than those without it.⁹ Yet,

women remain drastically underrepresented in the senior ranks in many fields and equal pay for equal work remains elusive.

Similarly, many employment fields remain so-called “pink ghettos,” where women are overrepresented, there’s little room for advancement and pay is often poor.¹⁰ **The reasons behind this difficult reality are multifaceted.** They include women’s career choices, career disruptions (e.g. taking time off to raise children), stereotypes, discrimination and many other factors.¹¹ **There’s no “quick fix.”**



Infographic note: 12

Society has not yet achieved true equality. This includes not only gender, but also areas such as sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, ability and religious beliefs. Keep this all-in mind when you’re designing you.

For most of us, unconsciously or otherwise, our expectations of men and women are different. Sheryl Sandberg, the chief operating officer of Facebook, wrote a bestselling book called *Lean In*, in which she discusses how we all have **powerful unconscious biases about gender roles and gender behaviour**.¹³ Think about it: The same behaviour that's viewed as strong, positive leadership from a man is often seen as negative and overbearing when it comes from a woman. For instance, more than 60,000 women and men were asked whether they preferred male or female managers. While slightly over half of respondents reported having no preference, the rest preferred male over female managers by a 2:1 ratio. Justifications for this preference tended to focus on negative stereotypes about female behaviour, such as women being too "emotional," "moody," "catty" or "dramatic."¹⁴



It's human nature to notice other people's biases, while being blind to our own. Regardless of your gender identity, when you find yourself judging a woman for behaving aggressively, ask yourself whether you would be as critical of a man acting the same way. Also consider how prepared you are to challenge gender bias when you observe it happening around you. **Gender bias is deep-seated, so we all need to be self-critical to weed it out.**¹⁵

We can be hampered if we think of "men's jobs" and "women's jobs." As you read on in *Info Design YOU*, you'll research potential jobs and conduct informational interviews to explore what sort of opportunities might be out there for a person of your skill set and interests. This process provides a prime opportunity to push beyond any (often unconscious) gender biases you may have about your future professional life. The great thing about conducting informational interviews is you're exploring possibilities, which should include possible jobs that you might not consider at first because of your gender. **Don't rule out any role simply because it seems stereotypically more suited to another gender.**



Be sure to talk with people in non-traditional gender roles. Is their field of work improving for the underrepresented gender? Or are there still deeply entrenched barriers that are difficult to overcome? As part of this process, consider your own willingness to be in the minority in your field. Does the thought of being a trailblazer appeal to you?

With some research, you should be able to determine whether the role in question is an opportunity to improve diversity and foster equal opportunities. For example, when investigating an industry or company, research their current leadership teams. If there is some degree of diversity, that's a promising sign for prospective women and minority candidates. If it's

entirely white men, look into whether the organization is doing anything to encourage diversity. You may also want to check into the organization's work/life policies. Does the organization subsidize daycare? Top up parental leave benefits? Pay for fitness club

memberships? In a competitive market for talent, you want to define a mission and join an organization that recognizes people as its most important asset.

Finally, **your 10-Year Professional Mission might include a consideration about starting a family.** Since the biological reality remains that not everyone has the potential to give birth, “starting a family” has different meanings for different people.

Having children is a particularly difficult thing to plan years in advance. In fact, even after a woman is pregnant, it’s impossible to predict exactly when her maternity leave will start. **The more realistic approach is to expect to update your Mission Map down the road when you are ready to start a family.** Or as Sheryl Sandberg puts it, don’t “lean out” of your career until you’re actually pregnant. You might miss wonderful opportunities if you put too much focus on a possible future pregnancy that may or may not happen as planned.¹⁶

The Last Word: Never Stop Asking Questions

Every great info design professional knows research—competitive intelligence and environmental scanning—is core to identifying opportunities and threats. Consider these macro-level trends as a start and rigorously continue to evaluate other trends, both inside and outside of info design.

Look at this type of market intelligence gathering as a daily task. **Follow lots of industry leaders on social media channels or blogs.** Find out what they’re thinking about and the questions they’re asking; remember to keep asking yourself the implications that emerging trends have on your life as an info design professional.



DEFINING YOUR PROFESSIONAL MISSION

When you know your destination, you can use it to support your decision-making enroute. To define your professional mission, you'll consider your current and future experience, knowledge and skills, all of which create your unique value as a professional in info design.

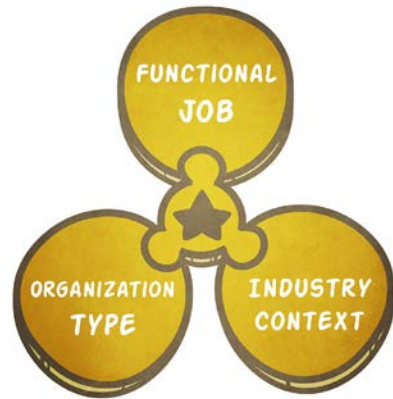
First, make sure you've answered the questions from the start of *Info Design YOU*:

1. What **functional information design job** do I want to do?
2. What **industry** do I want to work in?
3. What **type of organization** do I want to work for?



In your journal, consider these questions once again. Have your answers changed? Why? Why not?

WHAT'S YOUR 10-YEAR PROFESSIONAL MISSION?



You'll need to tap into that **intentional curiosity we talked about earlier**. **Great research starts with asking great questions**. Below are some **thought-starter questions** you may want to consider as you start exploring your professional mission:

1. What are the different types of careers in info design?
2. How is the field of info design changing? What's driving this change?
3. What parts of info design are growing the fastest?
4. What type of education do I need to be successful in different info design jobs?
5. What are the most important knowledge and skills for info design jobs in each career cluster?
6. What's the starting salary for info design jobs?
7. Do people stay in info design for their entire careers?
8. What are the common entry-level positions in info design?
9. How does the locale impact careers in info design?
10. What international opportunities may exist in info design?

Answering these big questions can't be rushed, so go slow and expect this part to take weeks or months to complete. Don't forget that predicting the future is hard and few of us get it right, so when doing your research, use **the principle of triangulation**: If

you see or hear something from three credible sources then there's a very good chance you should pay attention and add it to your Mission Map.

Step 1: Conduct Secondary Research

Your secondary research, sources will include:

- government reports (e.g. employment studies, census data)
- annual reports of companies, periodicals (e.g. newspapers)
- other media (e.g. podcasts)
- scholarly journals
- commercial information (e.g. American Info Design Association)
- credible online publications (e.g. Scientific American, Fast Company).

This research will uncover industries, educational programs, people, books, websites, podcasts, companies and jobs in info design you've never heard of.



Replicate the following table in your journal and use it to track your research. Keep notes on the sources of your information and the nuggets you find. The invaluable part about existing information is that it can trigger questions. Jot down these questions for your informational interviews later on.



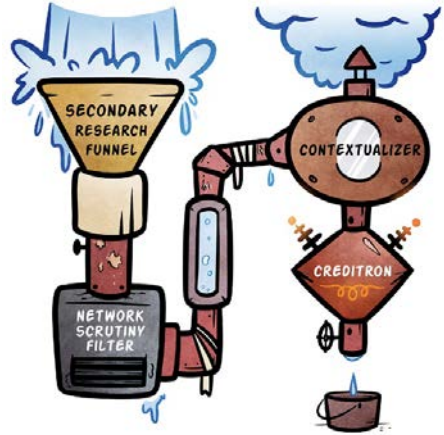
As a starting point to answering these questions, we suggest you follow the detailed research process in Step 4 of *Designing YOU*. Below is a condensed version of this process. Here's a sample table to see how you can identify opportunities:

Potential Opportunities	My Questions
Start my own Podcast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How much can I get paid? ○ What type of education and experience do I need? ○ Do I need to move?
Wayfinding Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What type of education is required? ○ Are there internships available? ○ Where are these jobs?

Step 2: Analyze Information design Job Postings

Job postings are easy to find online and are invaluable for identifying emerging opportunities and trends in the areas that you love. They can also expose you to the types of jobs that exist in your areas and companies of interests. Also:

1. It's simple to collect a large and diverse sample. Review **a minimum of 25 job postings** in a specific area you love to ensure an effective comparison.
2. Many job postings are archived and are accessible via www.archive.org/web, so you can assess trends over time.
3. The extra work you put in to summarize the job postings can help you identify trends and themes that may not be obvious to others.



When you're summarizing job postings, it's helpful to collect information on several major areas of employment that you're interested in. Use a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets to track the answers to the following questions:

Company Details

1. Industry
2. Size of company (e.g. number of employees)
3. Location (the location may reflect culture, language and compensation)

Job Details

1. Title
2. Level of position (titles can be misleading)
3. Responsibilities (e.g. does it mention what they'll be doing?)

Qualifications

1. Education (do they specify a major?)
2. Professional experience (years and type of experience)
3. Professional credentials (does it mention specific credentials are required?)
4. Industry engagement (does it mention if active involvement in a professional association is important?)
5. Personal attributes (does it mention the importance of any specific interpersonal or communication skills?)
6. Are each of the qualifications "required" or "preferred"?

Below is a sample of a summary table of job postings related to the job of an UX designer.

Professional Mission	Major Themes	So What?
Technical Writer/ Designer	<p>60 percent require a university degree.</p> <p>All jobs ask for previous experience in technical writing and design with the majority asking for a minimum of three years.</p> <p>90% request submission of a portfolio. 80% specify wanting both writing and design samples. 30% also specify wanting evidence of video design.</p> <p>Only 10 percent make mention of organization size and scope.</p>	<p>I must complete my university degree in communication, but the specific major or minor appears to be a secondary consideration.</p> <p>I need to break into technical writing while in school to build evidence of my expertise. Work term!</p> <p>I should get diverse experience to build a digital portfolio of work.</p> <p>It remains unclear how a technical writer role will evolve over the next decade. I need to interview professionals to better understand emerging trends.</p>

Step 3: Networking and Talking to Real Information design Professionals

The next step is to immerse yourself in the industry by meeting and interviewing real info design professionals. These people can tell you what the next ten years of info design may look like. It's important that you do the work in Steps 1 and 2 first so that you go to your interviews armed with enough information to get a deeper level of knowledge.



In Step 4 of *Designing YOU* we walk through a detailed process on how to network, book interviews, and get the most value out of these meetings. Each interview will raise new themes or questions that you'll want to explore and test in future interviews.



One useful approach to determine what you're trying to learn from these interviews is to notice the assumptions you're making about the field, industry or job, and then use the interviews to test these assumptions. For example, your earlier work may have uncovered design as a possible career path. To dig deeper into design, you would list a set of assumptions and how you might validate them. For example:

My Assumption	How I Can Test This
To be an information designer I need to be a great artist.	Explore what courses are required. Interview designers about the skills they use every day.
I need a degree or diploma in design or the fine arts to work as a graphic designer.	Search past job postings to look for qualifications. Interview a broad range of designers to explore their pathway.

How do I book an interview?

The first rule of an informational interview is respect. **Every person you want to interview is doing you a favour.** Most of these interviews won't exceed 30 minutes, so they need to be laser-focused. Consider the following:

1. **Connect through a mutual contact.** For example, "Hamid Zakari suggested I contact you because of your expertise in..."
2. **Make it personal.** Demonstrate you know something about them through your digging. For example, "I see you also studied accounting at the University of..."
3. **Be persistent and keep asking.** As you're the lowest priority in their inbox, you'll likely have to send a couple of reminders. Be polite and persistent and if they say no, ask them for anyone else that they could suggest. This'll ensure you'll have a return on your effort.
4. **Make it easy for them.** Offer to work to their schedule and meet them at their office or anywhere they'd like to meet. This interview is for you—not them. Don't be surprised if the interview is a month or more out. Professionals are busy people.

What should you ask?

In addition to the questions above, below are some more thought starter questions to consider asking during your interviews (there is an expanded list in the appendix of *Designing YOU*):

1. What does your current job entail? What does a typical day look like?
2. What kind of decisions or issues are you often faced with in your job?
3. What type of training or education prepared you for your current job?
4. What's the best part of your current job?
5. What's your least favourite part of your current job?
6. What courses at school best prepared you for your career in info design?

7. If you could go back to school and start all over again, would you do anything differently?
8. Did you do a co-op or internship in college/university? Would you recommend this? Why?
9. Are there specific extracurricular activities that might help me prepare for a career in info design?
10. What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?
11. When you reflect on your career so far, what would you do more of? What would you do less of?
12. When you look at people who have succeeded in info design, what characteristics do they tend to have?
13. What would you suggest is the most important thing someone entering info design should know?
14. If you were going to do it all over, would you become an info design professional again?
15. What do you wish you'd known before you became a professional in this field?

Consider this only a start

Ideally, this interview is not simply a one-off. A core objective of this process is for you to **build your professional network** and identify mentoring candidates. Following the interview, ensure you send a note thanking the interviewee for their time. Personalizing the note by identifying some key themes they highlighted shows you were paying attention and reinforces the value of the time they spent with you. In your note, ask if they'd be open to keeping in touch so you can reach out with any additional questions.

Step 4: Defining your Professional Mission

Once you've completed your informational interviews, you should be closer to defining your professional mission. There are three stages to defining your mission:

What's Your "What"?

For the first stages, let's go back to the original three questions we asked.

1. **What** functional info design job do I want to do?
2. **What** industry do I want to work in?
3. **What** type of organization do I want to work for?



Your research should have inspired you to be able to **answer at least two of these three questions**. In addition, you should have a sense of priority. Replicate the table below in your journal.

Here is the challenge—you need to project yourself 10 years into the future.

These aren't just questions for next week or next year... but a 10-year target.

The 10-Year "What"	Your Mission	Priority
I want to be a...		
I want to work in....		
I want to work for...		

Here's a sample.

The 10-Year "What"	Your Mission	Priority
I want to be a...	UX/UI Designer	1
I want to work in....	Technology	2
I want to work for...	A company that does their design in Canada	3

What's Your "Why"?

The limitation with the above exercise is that it tells us what you want to be, but not **why anyone would want to hire you** compared to other candidates. Therefore, the next step requires you to articulate "why you?" compared to others. This will allow you to create your unique value proposition—in other words, what makes you the best choice for the job. Remember, you're projecting 10 years into the future here. To do this, complete the table below:

Your Professional Mission	
For...	Who's your target industry or company?
That...	What's their specific need that isn't being met?
I am...	What's your functional info design job?
Who...	What's your specific skill or knowledge that'll satisfy their need?
Unlike...	Who are your competitors who are also trying to satisfy this need?

I...	What unique skills and experience do you have that'll differentiate you from all the other employees?
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Here's a sample of how these questions might be answered.

Your Professional Mission	
For...	A professional sport team.
That...	Needs to leverage both data and visual content.
I am...	A curator of innovative and targeted content.
Who...	Is both a data scientist and a visual designer.
Unlike...	Those who are either data analysts <i>or</i> creative specialists.
I...	Am a seasoned professional in data analytics with a degree in fine arts.

In answering these questions, consider the things you love to do and what you're good at combined with real opportunities in the marketplace for you to make a living. If all those elements are there, you've just defined your professional mission! If you have trouble answering these questions, it probably means that you'll have to go interview more people or find some additional information. Be honest with yourself.

What if I get stuck?

Remember, getting to the point where you can articulate your professional mission is hard but important. **Don't be in a rush to move on and don't be frustrated if you conclude you don't have any unique value yet.** At the start of this process, this is understandable.

A key goal of this process is to identify the knowledge and skills that'll make you unique and valuable in the future. The difference between the you of today and the you of tomorrow is the gap that forms the foundation to your Mission Map.

Articulating your 10-Year Professional Mission Statement

Now, you'll condense your answers to these six questions into a concise **10-Year Professional Mission Statement. Keep it under 100 words.** Your mission statement offers a simple description of the future you. Having this mission statement allows you to check if you're spending your precious and limited resources (time and money) on a meaningful purpose.

Here's the trick to an effective mission statement: It can't be constrained by history, the status quo, your comfort zone or your current identity. Your 10-Year Professional Mission Statement is about defining your professional identity; it will be a big part of your personal identity.

At this stage, you don't have to fully understand how to achieve your mission, but you should be able to see some of the major milestones along the way. Below is an example:

“In 10 years, I will be a UX designer for a global technology firm. I will be an expert in human-centred design, user testing and emerging industry trends. I will be a sought-after public speaker and a mentor for emerging talent in UX design.”

Defining your 10-Year Professional Mission is hard and it’s a house of cards. When it all comes together it feels great, but sometimes the littlest unexpected thing (good or bad) can disrupt it all.



For this reason, we encourage you to **map out at least three** 10-Year Professional Missions based on **three distinct “what if” scenarios** using the table below. When you’re considering the possibilities for your “what ifs,” be aspirational. For example, “what if” in one of your scenarios you stay in the city you grew up in, but in another scenario, you move to New York? What if in another scenario, you decided to stay agency side for the next decade? But in a third scenario, you decided to go to a large multi-national company? The system-wide implications of one “what if” may be massive or small, but through “what if” planning you can start to understand life’s trade-offs. (We are only considering the professional mission “what ifs” here. In *Designing YOU* we challenge you to think about all the other potential “what ifs” that could influence your future, such as relationships.)

The goal of reflecting on these “what ifs” isn’t intending to paralyze you, but to inspire you. Instead of being crushed when circumstances get in the way of achieving your chosen professional mission, you’ll know that it was only one of many possible scenarios.

“What If” Scenario A: _____	“What If” Scenario B: _____	“What If” Scenario C: _____



As part of the “what if” reflection, engage your mentors for input. Refer to Step 3 of *Designing YOU* if you don’t have a mentor yet.

Don't Forget About Everything Else

If you've come this far, you have a pretty good sense of what your professional mission looks like. Maybe you aspire to be the user-experience designer in New York at a global agency or a data visualization expert for environmental nonprofit. Your professional mission should be audacious. Your ambition should highlight the gaps between the you of today and the you envisioned in your 10-Year Professional Mission.

However, there's one problem. You're more than just a paycheck; you have relationships and other passions that extend beyond a career. This is **everything else in our life that is important and only you know what those things are.**

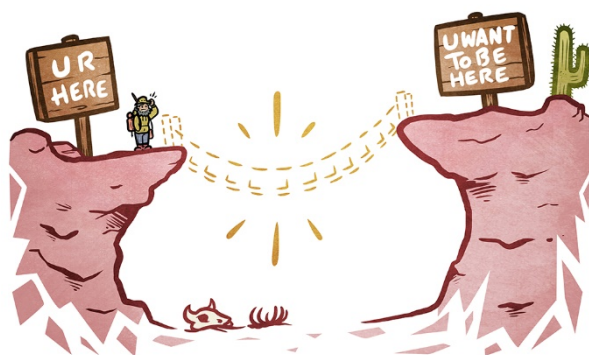
Over your lifetime, you and the world around you will continuously change. This re-iteration process is common. It's a sign of a great professional; a professional who doesn't fall in love with a single idea, but rather one who is prepared to change and adapt when the evidence tells them it's time.



At this stage, we recommend you head to Step 5 of *Designing YOU* and test your professional mission relative to **everything else** in your life.

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE

Your 10-year mission is aspirational and ambitious. It's a little scary, but it's supposed to be. The ambitiousness in your 10-year mission highlights gaps between the you of today and you in ten years. If your mission is the destination, then the gap is the journey—it is the actions required to reach your destination.



The map to get you from here to there involves a series of complex and interdependent activities. In this section, you'll build the Mission Map to get you to your 10-Year Professional Mission.

Link Your Professional Mission to Knowledge and Skills

To create your Mission Map, you'll first need to understand the critical skills core to your 10-Year Professional Mission. Then we'll address the gap between here and there.

First, recall the four career clusters we introduced earlier: inform, promote, entertain and operate. At the highest level, any jobs that fall under a specific career cluster require a **common set of knowledge and skills**. You probably saw this trend in the research you did earlier when certain knowledge areas or skills kept appearing over and over. This is because certain knowledge areas and skills are critical to specific career clusters. So, if you want a career in the “creation” cluster, there are minimum skills you'll need to develop. **On the next page, we break down the critical info design knowledge and skills required by the four career clusters.**

Refer to our four-level ranking system from “not required” to “expert” and rank the knowledge and skills relevant to your 10-Year Professional Mission. By the time you're ten years into your career, you'll need to be at least “great at” (and often an “expert” in) each of these areas.





The next step in developing your Mission Map is a **professional gap analysis** so we can plot your journey. **Complete the Mission Map Table 1** below, which considers the following four questions:

1. What are the specific priority knowledge and skills (both info design and transferable) required to achieve your 10-year mission?
2. What is your evidence these priorities are important (e.g. interviews, research)?
3. What is the required level you'll need to achieve in 10 years?
4. What is your best guess of your level today?

The third and fourth columns represent your professional gap. **There should be A LOT of gaps. Your Mission Map will allow you to close these gaps over time.**

Mission Map Table 1 – Mission Map Gap Analysis

Specific Priority Knowledge and Skills	Evidence this is Important	Required Level in 10-Years	My Level Today
Data analytics	7 of 10 interviews. 70% of job postings.	Expert	None

Be sure to share your results with your mentors.

Bridging the Gap

For most twenty-somethings, ten years may as well be 100 years. As a result, a lot of people get frozen by the daunting task of looking ahead ten years. One of the biggest barriers to moving forward is the question:

What is the first *real job* I should get after graduation?

There's a problem with this question. "Real life" doesn't begin after graduation. It's happening right now.

The development of your foundational knowledge and skills is happening in the context of five professional types of **building blocks experiences**:

1. education & learning
2. employment experiences
3. volunteer experiences
4. contextual experiences
5. relationships

The knowledge and skills you defined as critical to your 10-Year Professional Mission can't all be learned by accident. Rather, they need to **be the outcome of an intentional development process**. In other words, the expertise you'll possess in ten years, whether it be a social media manager or being an instructional designer, won't be a fluke.

PROFESSIONAL YOU BUILDING BLOCKS



Let's review each of these experiential building blocks. In your journal, **consider the sample questions based on the current you and the you 10 years into your career.**



Education and learning refers to traditional forms of education (like university or college) and other forms of lifelong learning ranging from professional development courses to awesome podcasts and books.

Questions to explore:

1. What should I major and minor in?
2. What specific courses should I take?
3. Do I need to go to graduate school?
4. What certifications will I need?
5. What podcasts should I listen to?
6. What books should I read?



Employment experience means every job you'll ever have—full-time and part-time alike—that contributes to your skill development (even beyond info

design). While in school, this could include co-op terms, internships, and part-time and summer employment.

Questions to explore:

1. What type of internships or co-op positions should I take while in school?
2. What could be my first job in info design when I graduate?
3. What are the benefits of working for an info design agency compared to working for a company?
4. How can I get employment experience, so I can become knowledgeable across all four career clusters?
5. How much time should I spend in various jobs?



Community experience includes all those volunteer and extracurricular activities that contribute to your knowledge and skill development. This might include involvement in clubs, teams or community organizations.

Questions to explore:

1. How can volunteer roles support the development of my key knowledge and skills?
2. How can volunteering support my networking?
3. What types of organizations align with my values?
4. Do I want to assume a leadership position in an organization?



Contextual experience includes international experiences, industry experiences, organization size and scope, and travelling experiences.

International experiences: Paid or unpaid international work experience.

Questions to explore:

1. What are the benefits to doing a semester abroad?
2. How can working internationally contribute to my info design knowledge and skills?
3. How is working internationally in info design different than international info design?

Industry experiences: Specific industry sector experiences throughout your career.

Questions to explore:

1. How could my choice of industry sector change my job as an info design professional?
2. Should I work agency side, client side or both?
3. “Should I get experience in corporate and commercial communication or news and current affairs?”
4. I’m not very technical; does this mean I’m at a disadvantage?

Organization size and scope: The size of an organization can have a significant impact on the scope and depth of a role.

Questions to explore:

1. How does working for a startup help me?
2. What are the benefits and risks of me building an entire info design career in a single large company?
3. Should I take a job at a large global multinational organization to meet my goal of working internationally?

Travelling experience: International experience and exposure to diverse cultures can contribute to your personal and professional development.

Questions to explore:

1. How can travelling internationally contribute to my knowledge and skill development?
2. If I take time out of my career to travel, am I risking being passed by people who don't?
3. Can I blend my desire to backpack around the world with a desire to work internationally in info design?



Relationships captures three major categories—mentors, networking and personal relationships.

Questions to explore:

1. How can mentors help me get ahead?
2. How can my professional network contribute to knowledge and skill development?
3. My professional mission is part of my life—but it's not my whole life. How can I ensure I maintain successful and fulfilling personal relationships while still pursuing my professional mission?

Sample Mission Maps

Before you develop your own Mission Map, we'll review 12 sample Mission Maps based **10 years into a career**. Each map is a summary based on interviews and surveys of real people and their real experiences in info design and in life.

There is never just one single map to get from here to there. **Consider these sample Mission Maps more of a compass than a GPS.** They won't tell you exactly how to get from here to there, but they'll point you in the right direction, tell you where to start and offer example attractions along the route.

**THERE IS NEVER JUST ONE SINGLE MAP TO GET FROM
HERE TO THERE. CONSIDER THESE SAMPLE MISSION
MAPS MORE OF A COMPASS THAN A GPS.**

Below are the 12 Mission Maps included in *Info Design YOU*.

1. Instructional Designer
2. Senior Information Architect
3. User Experience Designer
4. Social Media Manager
5. Service Designer
6. Project Manager
7. Director of Research
8. Communications Manager
9. Technical Writer/Editor
10. Digital Designer
11. Exhibit Coordinator Designer
12. Principal of a Design Consultancy

The “10 years into a career” bit is important because **the real people behind these Mission Maps all started in a place like you.** It was their diverse experiences that made them what they became.

The 12 Mission Maps are composed of the following sections:

Job Title & Sector: Pay attention to the sector or industry.

Job Description: What this hypothetical person does in their role.

Salary Range: What this position earns in Canada in 2018 dollars.

Priority Knowledge and Skills: The knowledge and skills required to be an “expert at,” “great at,” and “good” at in year 10 in this position.

The Tip: Something so important about this person’s role they had to tell you about it.

Building Block Experiences: This section is broken down by the five professional building blocks and examines how each contributed to this professional’s knowledge and skill development.



Regardless of your 10-Year Professional Mission, **read and reflect on all the samples below** and take lots of notes. You may not be interested in being an exhibit designer, but you may find it interesting how a person may have started in the non-profit sector; you may not aspire to be a knowledge management coordinator, but you may find it valuable how someone used extracurricular experiences to develop their networking skills.



Instructional Designer—Mid-sized National Corporation

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$45,000–\$95,000

My job is about creating a positive learning experience for people. My goal is to construct instructional design or instructional systems design to support efficient, effective, and appealing acquisition of skills and knowledge. In other words, my designs make learning more fun and more straightforward. The systems I design can be used at a formal learning institution (from kindergarten to post-graduate studies and continuing education) or within a government or industry context. The content I design might be used for face-to-face teaching, e-learning or a combination.

The Tip: Your school major will not differentiate you academically, but your minor can. Pick your minors with a clear intention of signaling interest and expertise.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills

- Manage the design process
- Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities and society as a whole

Research & Insights Skills

- Formulate focused and practical research questions
- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability

Communication Skills

- Translate content into meaningful information
- Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences
- Conduct user testing
- Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms

Design Skills

- Build prototypes out of a variety of materials
- Apply information architecture principles to various online and print mediums

Additional Job-Specific Skills

- Lead and manage training for design projects using instructional design theories, practices and methods
- Design, develop and maintain training curriculums
- Design and develop instructor-led, e-learning and virtual learning for employees

Core Transferable Skills

Be an expert at all core transferable skills:

- Thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical literacy

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

Education & Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor of Communication (information design) with a minor in marketing• Completed AMA Digital Marketing eLearning Certificate Module• VP of local chapter of Toastmasters• Became TED Fellow	My major in information design introduced me to the importance of innovation, problem-solving and process. I took a minor in marketing.
Employment Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In university I completed a work term at an e-learning company. This company offered me a position upon graduation.• I was on a structured development plan with my company and in five years worked with a great team• Following the development plan, I was promoted to team lead	My big break came in my work term. It showed me what I love to do and what I am good at. It also allowed me to demonstrate this to others. I didn't always love the jobs I was assigned to do, but I realized that to become an e-learning expert, I was accountable to the whole business from a product's design to distribution. Finally, my commitment to the organization built my personal brand equity—I have an excellent professional reputation.
Community Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• On the board of my local UX organization• I chaired the fundraising committee of my child's pre-school	Volunteering not only allows me to contribute my skills to my community, it broadens my network and relationships. The diversity of these relationships forces me out of my comfort zone.
Contextual Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Becoming a parent changed who I am as a manager	Balance requires discipline and perspective. I've become a better manager because I've internalized the principle of "don't sweat the small stuff."
Relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My network is diverse—art directors, designers, copywriters, project managers	I built relationships with senior stakeholders early on. I found people naturally like to share their knowledge and impact others, so I made sure they knew the difference they made to me.



Senior Information Architect—Usability Firm

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$90,000–\$120,000

My job is about organizing and categorizing data to make it meaningful for an end user. Before the architect can best point users to the data they seek, he or she needs to know how or why the user is seeking that information in the first place. The information architect then uses that base categorization model to create the site structure of a website or the interface for an information application. My goal is to make the complex clear.

The Tip: Find your professional community and engage in it actively while in school. Every professional has been where you are and wants to help. Book a coffee with one person a week and ask them this single question: “What is the one thing you’d tell your 18-year-old self?”

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

<p>Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the design process • Manage multiple workflows • Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole <p>Research & Insights Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate focused and practical research questions • Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability • Systems mapping and knowledge transfer <p>Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply content management strategy • Conduct user testing • Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms 	<p>Design Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build prototypes out of a variety of materials • Apply information architecture principles various online and print mediums • Critique and improve design artifacts <p>Core Transferable Skills</p> <p>Be an expert at all core transferable skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking skills • Communications skills • Organizational skills • Interpersonal skills • Technical literacy
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BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communication (information design) with a minor in marketing • I’m continually updating my multimedia technical skills 	<p>Technical communications is changing fast; stagnation is a career killer. My information design degree and related experience taught me how to concisely communicate complex issues. Today, what was once technical writing has become technical communication. Keeping up to date was critical for my promotion to manager.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in retail telecommunications sales during university • Completed an internship as a technical writer for a technology start-up • Did a second internship for a large global technology company and was offered a full-time position at graduation • After four years, I was promoted to technical 	<p>My employment pathway was intentional. I built my technology credentials early at home, but with a vision of working in a global technology company. My big break was doing internships for both a start-up and a large global company. The pace of the start-up was exciting, but I learned I need structure. The processes embedded in large companies supports this need.</p>

communication manager. In this role, I have two writers, a designer and videographer report to me.	
Community Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I founded the technical writing society at my university. Today, I am an alumni mentor for Arts and Computing students. • I'm an active member of the Society for Technical Communication. I chair our professional development sub-committee. 	Being engaged in my professional community is critical for my career. It provides me access to senior people and mentors. It also acts as a lens for what “leading-edge” looks like in technical communication and the professional development required for success.
Contextual Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing an international exchange program in high school sowed the seed for my life as a traveler 	It sounds like a cliché, but the exchange program I did in high school was life-changing. After this, the question wasn't “if” I would travel again, it was “where should I travel next?”
Relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm focused on building international networks 	I have a genuine passion for other people's stories and this interest is reciprocated. I consider my international relationships a constant opportunity to learn from others.



User Experience Designer—Large Health Services Organization

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$84,500–\$102,600

I oversee the development of communication material that reaches hundreds of thousands of individuals from various cultural backgrounds. My job is to manage several integrated projects end to end. Some days this may be managing the development of a website and another day I might be coordinating the launch of a digital campaign. My job is about being super organized and ensuring all the people and moving project parts are connected and working together. The primary focus of my work is to develop better user experiences and increase efficiencies.

The Tip: In a world of hype for big data and analytics, people forget design is about connecting with real people. Get out from behind your screen and talk to someone different every day.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills	Design Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the design process • Manage multiple workflows • Develop and implement program schedules • Manage internal and external stakeholders • Act in a responsible manner with regard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply data visualization • Build prototypes out of variety of materials • Apply information architecture principles various online and print mediums • Critique and improve design artifacts

to the needs of people, their communities and society as a whole

Research & Insights Skills

- Formulate focused and practical research questions
- Develop and execute qualitative research including observation, interviews and text analysis
- Develop and execute quantitative research including large data set statistical analysis
- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability

Communication Skills

- Translate content into meaningful information
- Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences
- Conduct user testing
- Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms
- Leverage social media

Core Transferable Skills

Be an expert at all core transferable skills:

- Thinking skills
- Communications skills
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical literacy

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communication (information design) with a minor in computer information systems (CIS) • Completed UX/UI design certificate via distance learning from San Francisco State University (work-funded) 	<p>My major in information design, combined with my training in CIS, gave me the foundation to work in the dynamic world of UX. The certificate in UX/UI design was challenging but is now what sets me apart.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in sales for an electronics retailer part time in university • Completed a work term while in school as a communications and outreach coordinator for a non-profit organization • Started as a web developer and UX specialist following graduation for a mid-sized user experience consultancy. • Recruited by one of our clients (an energy company) as a knowledge management coordinator. In this role, I designed the 	<p>Taking a position for a mid-sized user experience firm allowed me to better understand the knowledge-management industry and learn to manage clients. Having junior roles early on gave me the ability to understand how to work with people. Some people I loved. Some I didn't. But it gave me a better sense of the type of people I thrive with and the culture I succeed in. One day, one of my favourite clients offered me a job I couldn't turn down.</p> <p>The skills I gained from my information design work term and my other employment experience</p>

system that stores all company information including documents, photographs, maps, manuscripts and audiovisual materials.	gave me the combination of hard and soft skills my current employer was looking for.
Community Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was very active in student government and was VP—Communications for the student union in my final year of university • I am an active member in in the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) 	Student government allowed me to gain exposure to a variety of perspectives and learn from others about what motivates people. It also forced me to be excellent at time management. This is an essential lifelong skill. I attend one IABC conference annually. In addition to the networking potential, it's an important window into the future of the industry.
Contextual Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have worked in both independent consulting and for corporations 	The best decision I ever made was to do consulting early in my career. Every day was something different. I'd be building a new website for a client one day and designing a database the next. I had to learn fast if I wanted to be profitable.
Relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with diverse clients and managers from different parts of the organization 	My clients and peers aren't all technical. I learned very early that to succeed, I'd need to learn how to speak their language. I can translate my job in a way my colleagues appreciate.



Social Media Manager—National Retailer

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$64,000–\$86,000

I am the voice and the ears of my organization. I monitor, contribute to, filter, measure and otherwise guide the social media presence of my brand in real time, and often have a team working under me to keep on top of a constantly shifting Internet landscape. I must remain in contact with my online community and maintain an image that corresponds to my organization's desires and goals. I am responsible for the public's perception of us.

The Tip: Join a club that is outside of your comfort zone. There is magic in being different.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement program schedules • Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole 	Design Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build prototypes out of a variety of materials • Critique and improve design artifacts. • Use current digital design tools
Research & Insights Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate focused and practical research 	Core Transferable Skills Be an expert at all core transferable skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking skills

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions • Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability <p>Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate content into meaningful information • Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences • Write and design style guides, spreadsheets, tables, dashboards • Conduct user testing • Leverage social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications skills • Organizational skills • Interpersonal skills • Technical literacy
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BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in social innovation • Diploma in digital marketing and design • Continuing professional development courses to maintain familiarity in digital technologies 	<p>My strength has always been my narrative writing. I knew from an early age I wanted to write in some capacity. Adding a social innovation minor (and additional education in digital design and marketing) helped me find a critical sweet spot in today’s content-driven world.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During my years as a university student, I worked as a website designer and content creator for a local retailer • Completed a work term at a digital agency as a project coordinator • Worked full time one summer as the social media coordinator for a local economic development agency • After university, I was hired as the social media coordinator for a local retailer 	<p>I built on my formal education by taking increasingly senior positions that developed my skills to create immersive rich content. These roles all demanded the fundamentals of a good story. What is my plot, who are my characters and how do I connect to an audience to make them care? I remember watching a TED Talk by Andrew Stanton, one of the lead writers at Pixar, about how to tell a great story. This was when I first realized how I could make a living doing what I love to do.</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I teach a pro bono course to non-profit organizations, so they can leverage real-time content to drive engagement • On the executive of local photography club • Volunteer for the United Way 	<p>I’ve learned a lot by doing. I gained proficiency with the tools and channels I need for my job, but also learned what resonates with different audiences. I realized early on my passion for creating and finding content is significant and can make an impact on the things that are important to me.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active blogger and digital storyteller • Consumer of popular culture and the factors that drive trends 	<p>It sounds silly, but I focused on becoming famous in my organization for being the person who knows what’s going on with everyone. This is part of my unique value proposition.</p>

Relationships:

- I seek mentors who are opinion leaders with diverse experiences

I need to be social and easy to get along with because if I am, people will let me into their world, allow me to document their stories, and trust I will act in their best interest.



Service Designer—Local Museum

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$64,000–\$86,000

My job is focused on the creation of thoughtful experiences using a combination of digital, audio and tangible mediums. My skills provide all kinds of benefits to the end-user experience, including entertainment, education, and hopefully delight. I look at every contact point between our customer and our organization.

The Tip: View school as only a small part of your education. While in school, commit to working (or volunteering) at least 20 hours each week with a purpose. Become a bartender to develop interpersonal skills; volunteer doing digital marketing for a non-profit; become a leader in a club. This forces you to get out and apply your education.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills

- Manage the design process.
- Develop and implement program schedules
- Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole

Research & Insights Skills

- Formulate focused and practical research questions
- Develop and execute qualitative research including observation, interviews and text analysis
- Develop and execute quantitative research including large data set statistical analysis
- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability
- Systems mapping and knowledge transfer

Communication Skills

- Translate content into meaningful information

Design Skills

- Apply data visualization
- Build prototypes out of variety of materials
- Critique and improve design artifacts.

Core Transferable Skills

Be an expert at all core transferable skills:

- Thinking skills
- Communications skills
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical literacy

- Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences
- Conduct user testing
- Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communication (information design) with a minor in marketing • Completed AMA Digital Marketing eLearning Certificate Module • Dale Carnegie relationship selling course 	<p>I took a minor in marketing because I realized in my career my job is about sales. The Dale Carnegie course connects my info design skills with practical sales skills.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed a work term at a technology education company. This company offered me a position upon graduation. • I was promoted twice over five years. I now lead a team. 	<p>Recognize and value work experience as a critical dimension of your education. I learned about accountability. Design played a pivotal role in the overall business model. Understanding design as a means to an end – not an end unto itself – changed my career.</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of the local design association • Chaired fundraising committee for my university 	<p>Volunteering opens my network and relationships with a purpose. These are now lifelong friends.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became a parent 	<p>Balance requires discipline and perspective. I've become a better manager because I've internalized the principle of “don't sweat the small stuff.”</p>
<p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My network is diverse—art directors, designers, copywriters, project managers 	<p>I built relationships with senior stakeholders early on. I found people naturally like to share their knowledge and impact others, so I made sure they knew the difference they made to me.</p>



Project Manager—Communication/Design Agency

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$84,500–\$102,600

Our clients are big and so is the risk. My job is to manage client projects from start to end. My days are diverse; I'll manage the development of a \$100,000 website and coordinate the launch of a \$10-million international digital campaign. I must be organized, or else. If I do my job well, our client is happy, and we're profitable. If I do it poorly, our client is unhappy, we all lose money ... and our agency may lose the account.

The Tip: Pick external certifications that align to your mission and build a plan to get these one by one. They signal expertise, intentionality and focus.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills

- Manage the design process
- Manage multiple workflows
- Develop and implement program schedules
- Manage budget and financial issues
- Manage internal and external stakeholders
- Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole

Research & Insights Skills

- Formulate focused and practical research questions
- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability

Communication Skills

- Translate content into meaningful information
- Apply content management strategy
- Leverage social media

Design Skills

- Critique and improve design artifacts.
- Use current digital design tools

Additional Job-Specific Skills

- Lead and manage projects utilizing information design theories, practices and methods.

Core Transferable Skills

Be an expert at all core transferable skills:

- Thinking skills
- Communications skills
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical literacy

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

Education & Learning:

- Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in marketing
- Continually updating my multimedia

My major in information design introduced me to the importance of innovation, problem-solving and process. I took a minor in marketing. At graduation, I committed to completing my PMP

<p>technical skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Project Management (PMP) certification via the Project Management Institute 	<p>certification in five years.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was a server in university Residence leader in university Content Developer for a small startup Project manager for a not for profit Communications coordinator in a corporation Worked as design manager for a telecommunications firm 	<p>I learned how to be flexible and thrive within ambiguity. I learned how to rely on others, and to be relied upon. I got comfortable with a fast-paced environment with high potential for the unexpected. My experience allows me to control my emotions, so don't escalate. I always practice the best ways to check in with people and how to defuse tension.</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Way event coordinator 	<p>I manage a team of volunteers. From this, I learned how to get tasks done with disparate individuals who aren't acting under traditional rewards or punishments.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was a varsity athlete in university in a team sport and was voted captain in my final year 	<p>I developed a strong work ethic and a reputation for getting things done no matter what. The discipline required in a high-performance team sport taught me the importance of coordination and leadership.</p>
<p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I seek to foster good working relationships with all the people I became dependent upon for deliverables. They need to know me well enough to understand my intentions. 	<p>I understand why people do what they do. I need to know how to read people and know who's having a bad day and how to deal with that, so I always get the best out of them.</p>



Director of Research—Usability Firm

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$64,000–\$95,000

I enjoy getting to the bottom of things and being able to discover new things through vigorous hours of in-depth research. I am in charge of researching user experience features in computer software and other applications. I investigate ways to improve the end-user interaction with computer programs to increase satisfaction, brand loyalty, and overall use. I also create reports based on market trends and user surveys, analyzing the information and reporting observations to the Director of User Experience.

The Tip: Be different and do one thing every year that causes people to ask, “So, why did you do that?”

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills

- Manage the design process
- Manage multiple workflows
- Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole

Research & Insights Skills

- Formulate focused and practical research questions
- Develop and execute qualitative research including observation, interviews and text analysis
- Develop and execute quantitative research including large data-set statistical analysis
- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability
- Systems mapping and knowledge transfer

Communication Skills

- Translate content into meaningful information
- Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences
- Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms

Design Skills

- Build prototypes out of a variety of materials
- Critique and improve design artifacts.

Core Transferable Skills

Be an expert at all core transferable skills:

- Thinking skills
- Communications skills
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical literacy

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

Education & Learning:

- Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in social innovation
- Completed [Master of Data Analytics](#) at Western University

I took a minor in social innovation. At graduation, I committed to pursuing graduate school to dig into data science. This credential was critical in the exploding world of data science.

Employment Experiences:

- Worked in retail for three years while in university
- I worked in a UX firm for my first work

Frontline experience interacting with real customers while in school offered me a lens into human behaviour and triggered my love for research. I love research and evidence, which led

<p>term. At graduation, I transitioned into a research role at this firm for two years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following graduate school, I was recruited to work for a usability designer. After four years, I was promoted to director and now lead the team. 	<p>me into a research role and graduate school. This combination of theory and practice gave me expertise in using data to drive design decisions.</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday school coordinator 	<p>I led my church’s Sunday school program for six years. Sunday’s are one of my favourite days of the week. Working with children gives me energy.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I took a year off from university to become a teacher’s assistant in an elementary school in the U.K. • I have traveled to 14 countries 	<p>My parents thought I was crazy to take a year off school and move to the U.K. for work. I worked for basically minimum wage and lived in a dorm room, but the experience was invaluable. My goal was to test drive if I wanted to become a teacher. Though I loved it, it confirmed my desire to pursue a career as a researcher.</p>
<p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I foster relationships on social media. The opportunity to connect with these people from around the world challenges my world view. 	<p>Relationships aren’t limited to people you see every week or even every year. Digital allows you to maintain and cultivate relationships over a lifetime.</p>



Communication Manager—Government Agency

SALARY RANGE (2017): \$100,200–\$127,500

I don’t market tangible goods; I market the services of my government agency. To do this well, I need to know the fundamentals of our agency’s business and translate this into value for a very select group of decision-makers in government, stakeholders and the public at large. I also need to understand the political landscape and identify opportunities to build our agency’s reputation as a trusted thought leader.

The Tip: Context is everything in communication. I recommend you start your career at a communications agency working with diverse clients. This is a fast-track to discovering what you love (and hate).

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

<p>Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the design process • Manage multiple workflows • Develop and implement program schedules • Manage budget and financial issues • Manage internal and external 	<p>Design Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply data visualization • Build prototypes out of a variety of materials • Critique and improve design artifacts <p>Additional Job-Specific Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and manage projects utilizing
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<p>stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole <p>Research & Insights Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability <p>Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translate content into meaningful information Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms Leverage social media 	<p>information design theories, practices and methods</p> <p>Core Transferable Skills</p> <p>Be an expert at all core transferable skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking skills Communications skills Organizational skills Interpersonal skills Technical literacy
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BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in finance Master of Arts (political science) Certificate in web and social media analytics 	<p>My major in information design, combined with training in finance and digital media, gave me the foundation to work in an increasingly convergent marketing communications world. I need to learn something new every day.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail sales experience while in school Worked in a communications agency after graduation Worked as a polling station information officer for Elections Canada 	<p>Working at an agency allowed me to better manage third parties. Having junior roles (including retail sales) early on gave me the ability to understand the full communications cycle.</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active in student government including as VP—Communications in my final year An executive of the Policy Studies Society at school Active in local politics as volunteer. Supported communications for two campaigns while in university. Led communications for mayoral candidate in last election. On board of food bank and chair of communications and stakeholder sub-committee 	<p>My volunteer experience has allowed me to gain exposure to a variety of perspectives and learn from others about what motivates people. It also improved my work ethic and I learned how to enjoy intrinsic motivators.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My information architecture class taught me to understand and apply processes, policies and procedures 	<p>It's important for me to be well rounded because this role is more generalist than specialist, plus I need to be able to influence others.</p>

Relationships:

- Developed effective working relationships with executives
- Sought out an internal champion within the organization who could support my initiatives via backchannels

I found that earning the respect of peers who may not always value the communications discipline was a core skill. I needed to learn how to speak their language and translate my activities into things they appreciate.



Technical Writer/Editor—Freelancer

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$49,000–\$69,000

I am a freelance designer, technical writer and editor. My currency is my reputation for quality. I like the variety and the independence my work provides. I care deeply about my work, choosing clients who share my values and solving problems that challenge me. But being “choosy” about clients and projects means that I’m in 24/7 business development and networking mode; if I’m not bringing in new writing or editing business, no one is. This is both exciting and sometimes scary. My goal is to grow my freelance business revenue to the point that I can hire a small team of collaborators.

The Tip: Aspire to start your own company someday but spend your first ten years working for other people who will teach you how to do this well.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills

- Manage the design process
- Manage budget and financial issues
- Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole

Research & Insights Skills

- Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability

Communication Skills

- Translate content into information
- Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences
- Write and design style guides, spreadsheets, tables, dashboards
- Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across platforms

Design Skills

- Build prototypes out of variety of materials
- Critique and improve design artifacts
- Use current digital design tools

Core Transferable Skills

Be an expert at all core transferable skills:

- Thinking skills
- Communications skills
- Organizational skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical literacy

BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in small-business management 	<p>I am driven by a new challenge. I am a lifelong learner and as a freelancer I cannot become complacent. I am being paid for my expertise, so I need to always be updating my skills.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For my work term I worked as a content developer for a local communications firm • Did freelance writing and editing contracts concurrent to my agency role. This enabled me to build the confidence that I could be my own boss and still pay the rent. • Today, I have a breadth of writing and editing projects and the luxury to choose work I find challenging 	<p>Working for a communications agency was critical for my career. I couldn't imagine becoming a freelancer out of school. Being in an agency taught me how to work with clients and deliver on their needs. This is the kind of stuff you cannot learn in a classroom. Once, I became confident in my skill I started planning my career as a freelancer.</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer at local community association as the newsletter copywriter • Active mentor in my alumni association 	<p>Being a mentor in our alumni association taught me key networking skills. This led to me to building confidence and having the courage to begin my own firm.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took a six-month sabbatical and travelled through Africa and Australia 	<p>As a freelancer, I can manage my own schedule and time. This creates opportunities for more freedom and “me” time.</p>
<p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had a senior mentor at an agency early in career • My spouse has taken time out from their career while our children are in preschool 	<p>A technical writer may seem like a solitary position, but I am a critical part of a diverse team of designers and engineers. My relationships have helped me learn how to become a valuable member of a team.</p>



Digital Designer—Freelancer

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$44,000–\$76,000

I am a digital designer who specializes in information that is displayed or interacted with through technology. The work I do includes screen design of various kinds, for example websites, mobile devices, tablets, and interactive appliances. It may be found at a small scale (such as mobile phones) or a large scale (such as interactive wall displays, or data trackers like flight data displays). As a self-employed digital designer, I work with individuals, small to large businesses, and public, private, and not-for-profit institutions and organizations.

The Tip: The future is not about a single medium, but about telling engaging stories across platforms. Invest today in storytelling skills of the future.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

<p>Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the design process • Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole <p>Research & Insights Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability • Systems mapping and knowledge transfer <p>Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate content into meaningful information • Apply content management strategy • Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms 	<p>Design Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design branding and visual identity systems • Apply visual design fundamentals • Apply data visualization • Build prototypes out of variety of materials • Critique and improve design artifacts • Use current digital design tools <p>Core Transferable Skills</p> <p>Be an expert at all core transferable skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking skills • Communications skills • Organizational skills • Interpersonal skills • Technical literacy
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BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in computer science • I got my Master of New Media going to school part time • I must stay current on all emerging digital technologies including design, web development and social distribution 	<p>While studying information design, I took a minor in computer science. Doing my Master of New Media was critical for me to learn how to best apply the skills I developed in the information design program. The one thing that I have learned is that being complacent in this role is not an option. Technology and audiences' media consumption habits now evolve so quickly that being behind on trends is a career-killer.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed blog focused on student life. This blog generated \$300 per month in advertising revenue when I was in university. • Work one summer as a social media coordinator for a local media organization and was tasked with recommending strategies to connect with the 18 to 24-year-old audience • Following graduation, I was hired for a new digital media start-up as part of their content development and editorial team. The start-up has expanded, and I was promoted to editor after five years. • I continue to do freelance design and writing, 	<p>Writing my blog started out as a hobby and more of a rant, but when it started building an audience, I realized I might be able to make a living with my skills.</p> <p>Joining a digital start-up out of university was a huge break because I was given a wide scope from Day 1. It was a sink or swim kind of place, so I learned how to swim VERY fast. Five years later, I am now a freelance editor and going to work isn't work.</p>

primarily on LGBTQ issues, for a range of media outlets, building out my professional portfolio	
Community Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Way event coordinator. 	I manage a team of volunteers. From this, I learned how to get tasks done with disparate individuals who aren't acting under traditional rewards or discipline.
Contextual Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became a parent 	Balancing life is difficult. Family gives you perspective.
Relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member and volunteer for the Calgary Chapter of Society of Graphic Designers of Canada 	My advice is to find your communities and don't be shy. This is easier said than done, but remember, every single person has been where you have been. So just make that call. Whenever a student calls me for a coffee to talk about the profession, I never say no. Some of my best friends and professional colleagues came from cold calls.



Exhibit Coordinator Designer—Science Museum

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$60,000–\$85,00

As an exhibit designer I really like making things and seeing how ideas can come to life. I am responsible for creating displays that are meant to capture attention and direct focus; for example, as an exhibit designer working for a science museum, I may create an environment that helps a person understand how something works. I must stay up to date with relevant trends and techniques, as well as have a good understanding of how people learn things. At times, I may collaborate in meetings with peers and work with colleagues to share ideas. I may also work with consultants.

The Tip: Build a portfolio of diverse credentials. Together, these will make you both unique and valuable.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Management Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the design process • Manage multiple workflows • Develop and implement program schedules • Manage budget and financial issues • Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole 	Design Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build prototypes out of variety of materials • Critique and improve design artifacts. • Use current digital design tools Additional Job-Specific Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and manage exhibit design projects utilizing information design theories, practices and methods
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<p>Research & Insights Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate focused and practical research questions • Develop and execute qualitative research including observation, interviews and text analysis • Develop and execute quantitative research including large data-set statistical analysis • Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability <p>Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate content into meaningful information • Apply content management strategy • Conduct user testing • Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms 	<p>Core Transferable Skills</p> <p>Be an expert at all core transferable skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking skills • Communications skills • Organizational skills • Interpersonal skills • Technical literacy
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BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in anthropology • Professional Project Management certification via the Project Management Institute 	<p>My love of science and engaging spaces made me think about the people who make those exhibits for a living. When I realized I could create these learning spaces, I started looking for the education I'd need to do it.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer job with tourism bureau while in university • Did my work term with TELUS Spark science museum • Recruited to lead all content curation at large science museum. 	<p>I needed to understand how stories are sourced and told, so I leveraged university to learn how to curate content to drive engagement. I then sought jobs in organizations to allow me to apply my skills in experience design, user experience and wayfinding. What I do every day is the intersection of what I'm good at, what I love to do and making a living. My test for a job is simple—would I do what I do every day for free?</p>
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm involved in the university and program alumni associations at my alma mater. I organized our 10-year reunion and post news from my graduating class on our Facebook page. 	<p>Learn by rolling up your sleeves and doing. You'll make a lot of mistakes. Value the mistakes as much as you value your successes.</p>

<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In university I took part in an exchange program in Austria. I learned loads doing display work and learning in a new cultural context. 	<p>It's rewarding to be able to do something I love and help people learn new things in an engaging environment.</p>
<p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seek mentors who are community leaders and have unique experiences; often very different than mine. 	<p>Value those who are different. The magic and learning is at the intersection of this diversity.</p>



Principal of a Design Consultancy

SALARY RANGE (2018): \$64,000–\$86,000

Running my own design consultancy has always been my dream. I like the variety and the independence it provides. I care deeply about my work, choosing clients who share my values and solving problems that challenge me. One of my early goals was to grow the business revenue to the point that I could hire a small team of collaborators; I now have 11 employees. Today, I focus less on doing and more on solving client's problems.

The Tip: Don't get a mentor. Get mentors. No single person has all the answers. I find the real learning isn't in what they agree on, it's what they disagree on. This is where you can really start to ask hard questions.

PRIORITY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

<p>Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the design process • Manage multiple workflows • Develop and implement program schedules • Manage budget and financial issues • Manage internal and external stakeholders • Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole <p>Research & Insights Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour to understand usability • Systems mapping and knowledge transfer <p>Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate content into meaningful information • Apply content management strategy • Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms • Leverage social media 	<p>Design Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design branding and visual identity systems • Apply visual design fundamentals • Apply data visualization • Build prototypes out of a variety of materials • Critique and improve design artifacts • Use current digital design tools <p>Core Transferable Skills</p> <p>Be an expert at all core transferable skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking skills • Communications skills • Organizational skills • Interpersonal skills • Technical literacy
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BUILDING BLOCK EXPERIENCES:

<p>Education & Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Communications (information design) with a minor in business administration • A commitment to be a lifelong learner. I read one book a month. • Listen to the Stanford Social Innovation Review SSIR podcasts on design thinking 	<p>I took a minor in business administration. I now consider myself a driven entrepreneur, where learning something new every day is my job.</p>
<p>Employment Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail sales during high school and university • Did a work term as a design coordinator for a small design agency • At graduation became a junior designer at a global UX agency and was promoted to the London office 	<p>After spending eight years advancing through a large global design agency in Canada and the U.K., I founded my boutique design consultancy. In three years, the firm now has eleven employees. I have the luxury of only working with people and clients I am passionate about.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became the principal of my own design consultancy 	
<p>Community Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active as mentor in alumni association • Was president of the Information Design Student Society • Since my second year of university, I have spent one week a year volunteering at a school overseas 	<p>Being in a leadership position in a university club taught me key networking skills. A passionate professor in university introduced me to an international field school program, where I continue to mentor young entrepreneurs and designers.</p>
<p>Contextual Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked in both big and small organizations • I am a passionate believer in Margaret Mead's principle that "...a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." 	<p>By starting my own design agency, I can manage my own schedule and time. Now that I have staff, I can create more opportunities for more freedom and "me" time.</p>
<p>Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had a senior mentor at an agency early in my career 	<p>My career map isn't for everyone because it can create personal and professional stress. Balance is difficult, but my spouse and mentor are my rocks. They push me back on course when I lose balance and perspective.</p>

CONSOLIDATING YOUR MISSION MAP

This is it. Now that you’ve been inspired by the sample Mission Maps, it’s time for you to connect the dots and put it all together in a concise and actionable plan. To develop your Mission Map, refer to the knowledge and skill gaps you identified in Mission Map Table 1 (p. 32) and link these to professional building blocks. In the sample below, data analytics was identified as a gap. **To close this gap, we identified four possible building block activities.** Executing these activities is your Mission Map.

You might find it useful to create a checklist based on the activities you’ve identified as key to your mission. See the appendix for a Mission Map checklist designed to be accomplished during a four-year university program.

Mission Map Table 2 – Linking to Professional Building Blocks

Knowledge or Skill Gap	Professional Building Block Activities Required
Data analytics	Education: Do my minor in statistics. Employment: Internship or summer job at info design agency. Community: Join analytics club at school. Relationship: Secure a mentor who is immersed in analytics.

Mission Map Finale

You’ve put in the work and now it’s time to write down your Mission Map in your journal. Follow the template below. This information includes the concise 10-year mission statement from earlier and the professional building block activities from Table 2 above.

What is your final 10-year mission statement?

What are the priority knowledge and skills you’ll need to achieve your mission?

Expert	Great at	Good at

What are the building block experiences you'll need to achieve your mission?

Now map out priority building block experiences you'll need to achieve your mission. In the near-term (years 1-3) these should be more refined. For example, these may include specific courses or volunteer opportunities you'd like to pursue. In the longer-term (years 7-10) your building blocks will be more aspirational.

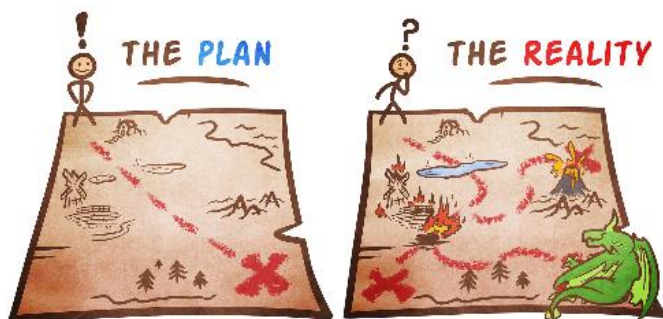
Experiences	Years 1-3	Years 4-6	Years 7-10
Education & Learning Experiences			
Employment Experiences			
Community Experiences			
Contextual Experiences			
Relationships & Mentors			

ADAPT AND CHANGE

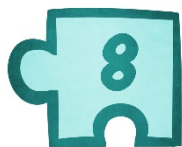
“THE MEASURE OF INTELLIGENCE IS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE.”

–Albert Einstein

During our interviews with working professionals for this series, we’d ask a common question: “What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?” The most common answers were to be proactive and develop a plan but **embrace opportunities** when they come. In other words, planning to be a VP of info design in ten years is important, but always **be prepared to adapt and change** as you grow and learn.



This principle of evolution is essential. Your 10-Year Professional Mission in your 30s will look very different from the 10-Year Professional Mission in your 20s. Regardless of where you are on your 10-year Mission Map, don’t sit back. Life inevitably will throw you a curveball. You’ll find new skills, new interests, opportunities and relationships. But that’s why this process is so important and fun.



Adapting, learning and growing are your only options. At certain times in your life, your professional mission may be most important, and at other times it may be your relationships, your health & wellness or your spirituality. How and where they each fit in depends on how you define success at any moment in time. Stepping back and reflecting on everything else important in your life gives you a solid foundation to make those big (and small) decisions in life.

Recall, you considered several “what if?” scenarios before arriving at your 10-Year Professional Mission. That same exercise is really practical throughout your life. When you’re faced with a change in life, use it as a reason to wonder “what if?” and revisit your 10-Year Professional Mission. If you have a job opportunity on the other side of the world, consider what your 10-Year Professional Mission might be if you went for it. If you lose your job in a recession, consider “what if?” scenarios around going back to school, or starting your own business, or taking time off with the kids. “What if?” is your best tool against sticking to a path simply because you’re already on it.



AT A GLANCE

1. *Info Design YOU* is based on three steps: (1) Explore; (2) Define your professional mission; (3) Develop your Mission Map.
2. To design you, you need to be intentionally curious.
3. Start a journal so you can reflect every day on the process of designing your life in info design.
4. A career in info design is influenced by three big questions:
 - What functional info design job do I want to do?
 - What industry do I want to work in?
 - What type of organization do I want to work for?
5. It is critical for you to get a team of professional mentors.
6. When plotting your 10-Year Professional Mission, you must focus on the development of info design knowledge and transferable skills.
7. Info Design is influenced by prevailing trends—from technology to the gig economy—that are redefining that it means to be an info design professional. Reflect on how these trends may influence your mission and the knowledge and skills that'll be valued in the future.
8. Commit to doing rigorous research when defining your 10-Year Professional Mission. Be patient and remember to triangulate your research from credible sources.
9. When you think you've defined your 10-Year Professional Mission, reflect on everything else in life and how you define success. Don't be afraid to stop and change if your professional mission doesn't align with all these other important factors in your life.
10. Designing your Mission Map is based on connecting three questions:
 - What's your 10-Year Professional Mission?
 - What skills are critical to your 10-Year Professional Mission?
 - What professional choices and experiences (building blocks) create the critical knowledge and skills demanded by your professional mission?
11. Once you've answered these questions, build a map to deliver on your professional mission, and then prepare to update it:
 - Evaluate your 10-Year Professional Mission scenarios and be ready to change directions if the evidence tells you it's time.
 - Borrow from the sample Mission Maps included in *Info Design YOU*.
 - Engage your mentor(s) for feedback. They are the experts.

APPENDIX

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS GLOSSARY

Core Transferable Skills

Core Thinking Skills

Analytical thinking: The ability to deconstruct issues (and data) into smaller, more manageable pieces, use evidence and reasoning to identify unique relationships and weigh the costs and benefits of the alternative actions discovered.¹

Transdisciplinary systems thinking: In the future, it won't be good enough to be an expert in just one specific area. The ability to understand and apply knowledge from across disciplines and can think like the experts in those disciplines will be essential. Transdisciplinary systems thinking is highly dependent on being intentionally curious beyond one's natural area of expertise.

Problem solving: Problem solving often leverages analytical thinking. Effective problem solving is made up of four inter-related skills:

- The ability to identify vital questions and problems and communicate them clearly.
- The ability to gather and evaluate relevant information.
- The ability to think open-mindedly, recognizing and assessing assumptions, implications and practical consequences.
- The ability to come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards.

Adaptive thinking: The ability to successfully adjust to changes in circumstance or environment. Adaptability includes learning and growing from experience.

Intentional curiosity: The ability to be curious with a purpose and identify and explore a deeper meaning than what is being overtly expressed. Intentionally curious people look at the world (and their place in it), see big questions, are humble enough to acknowledge they don't know it all and seek to understand the unknowns.

Thoughtful creativity: Bringing a fresh voice or approach that helps projects stand out in a noisy info design environment, yet in a way that is appropriate for the corporate culture of an organization, client and brand.

Core Communication Skills

Written communication: The ability to share information and explanations with a target audience in writing in a persuasive, engaging and influential way. This includes grammar, tone, vocabulary and style.

Verbal communication: The ability to share information and explanations with a target audience by speaking in a persuasive and influential way. This includes vocabulary, tone, pace, volume and articulation.

Non-verbal communication: The ability to indirectly imply meaning through non-verbal cues that subtly influence a target audience. This includes body language, such as gestures, expressions, stance, eye contact, proximity and appearance.

Effective listening: The ability to commit full attention to what other people are saying, taking the time to understand points being made and ask questions when appropriate, without interrupting at improper times.

Persuasive storytelling: The ability to leverage a story, supported by evidence and delivered with conviction, to influence the attitudes or behaviour of a specific audience. The persuasiveness of a story may be influenced by the media used to tell it (speech, video, visual, text). For example, an accountant may be influenced by a logical argument supported by statistics; whereas a graphic designer may be influenced by a story that possesses depth and emotional appeal.

Conflict resolution and negotiation: The ability to resolve conflict or create common ground and reach an agreement to settle a topic that creates friction between individuals.

Core Interpersonal Skills

Cross-contextual competency: The ability to work well no matter the context. The contextual setting can include the culture, socio-economic conditions, organization size, industry type and team composition in which one is working. Having cross-contextual competency requires adaptive thinking and communication skills to operate effectively across contexts and with diverse people.

Effective leadership: The ability to guide others to complete a task through charisma, rank, intellect, will or experience. A leader's influence may be formal (e.g. a boss) or informal (e.g. social influence). Effective leadership includes three elements: the ability to establish a clear goal; the ability to communicate this goal to others; and the ability to balance the interests of others to engage them to deliver on this goal.

Self-confidence: To trust in oneself and in one's skills, abilities and knowledge.

Work ethic: To find value in a job well done and understand the importance of doing high-quality work with the discipline and determination to complete any assigned task.

Effective team player: The ability to cooperate with others to work towards a common goal.

Emotional intelligence: The ability to identify, assess and influence one's own feelings and the feelings of others. Emotional intelligence requires a mix of self-awareness and empathy towards others. There are six recognized dimensions to emotional intelligence: emotional management, self-awareness, optimism, motivation, empathy and social skills.²

Core Organizational Skills

Self-starter: The discipline and ambition to start a task, regardless of difficulty, with limited guidance from others and be self-reliant under pressure.

Time management: Efficiently and effectively managing one's own time, the time of others and deliverables for projects. Time management also includes the ability to manage and filter vast levels of information to make timely decisions.

Follow-through: The discipline to stay effective and committed to complete a task or project.

Perseverance: The ability to remain persistent in overcoming all obstacles to achieve a goal. Obstacles are broad and may include previous failure, criticism, physical pain or injury. Perseverance is not, however, blindly sticking to a goal when all credible evidence says it is unachievable.

Core Technical Literacy

Confident use of digital technology: The ability to effectively use digital technology to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information. Most career pathways require using technology to communicate, collaborate, solve problems and conduct research, so understanding how to navigate an increasingly automated world is vital. Note that this broad technical literacy is different from task-specific technical literacy.

Information Design Knowledge & Skills

Management Skills

Manage the design process: The ability to apply knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to deliver on a project's goals within defined resources and scope. Influencing others to meet deadlines and goals is essential.

Manage multiple workflows: The ability to manage and work on multiple projects and/or clients simultaneously.

Develop and implement program schedules: The organizational skills required to build a detailed plan including the steps needed to produce a specific design project.

Manage budget and financial issues: The ability to develop and stick to a comprehensive forecast of costs and income for a project or department.

Manage internal and external stakeholders: The ability to engage, monitor and maintain relationships with a range of different groups inside and outside your organization. Internally, this may include employees, management, the board of directors or investors. Externally, it may include customers, suppliers, competitors, governments and partners.

Act in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of people, their communities, and society as a whole: A keen interest in learning and ethically, sensitively and accurately communicating how diverse people think and feel about themselves and the world around them.

Research & Insight Skills

Ability to formulate research questions: The ability to identify concise and focused research questions to explore ideas and test hypotheses.

Ability to conduct secondary research: This includes the ability to evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of secondary sources (i.e. journal articles). It also includes using analytical and logical reasoning to support decision-making.

Ability to conduct qualitative research: Ability to develop and execute primary research including observation, interviews and text analysis. This includes the ability to identify and interview appropriate sources.

Ability to conduct quantitative research: A familiarity with research and analytics software to be able to collaborate with data analysts on research design and interpretation. For example, a general understanding in statistical software tools such as SPSS, R, Tableau or SAS. A deeper fluency and confidence with survey tools such as SurveyMonkey, Google Surveys or Qualtrics will also be essential. Understanding different quantitative and qualitative data collection methods including social media scraping, questionnaires, mobile surveys, interviews, e-commerce trends and platform-use analytics will be required.

Apply a deep knowledge of human behaviour including personality, interests, learning and motivation. Understanding the fundamentals of human psychology to enable

the development of effective information design solutions that meet the needs of an end user.

Systems mapping, systems thinking and knowledge transfer: The ability to think innovatively and systematically. Be capable of becoming well-informed about diverse subject matter and understand and communicate complex content clearly. Ability to think about the big picture, consider details, and spot connections and interrelationships.

Communication Skills

Translate raw data into meaningful information: The ability to translate research and raw data into an informative, credible, evidence-based design. The ability to choose the best methods and tools to develop clear information.

Write clearly, including technical, descriptive and narrative language, to suit a wide variety of audiences: The ability to subdivide the population into unique audience segments who have similar needs, wants, or demands, and design information for these different audiences.

Write and design style guides, spreadsheets, tables and dashboards: The ability to transform raw data into meaningful information for an identified audience. The ability to choose the most effective methods and tools to develop clear and understandable information.

Apply content management strategy: The ability to plan, develop and curate content. The ability to apply concepts from the fields of user experience design, information architecture and content management to a given design project.

Conduct user testing: The ability to develop and implement a user test for a specific audience. The ability to select and create the best testing methods and conditions in order to gather the appropriate data. The ability to develop useful reports from the data collected.

Use specialized software to prepare, edit and distribute content across multiple platforms. This includes the ability to write clearly and create information design for an online audience. It also includes the ability to use current software relevant to a role. Examples of design and content development software currently include: Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign and Microsoft Word. Website platforms include: Squarespace, WordPress, Wix and Weebly. GarageBand can be used for video and audio editing, including podcasts. It includes fluency in all major social media platforms.

Leverage social media: Be fluent with all social media platform tools and be able to use Google AdWords and/or Facebook Advertising processes and technology in programs and campaigns.

Design Skills

Design branding and visual identity systems: Ability to understand and translate the goals of an organization into an effective visual identity system. The ability to apply typographic and graphic systems to a given design branding problem.

Apply visual design fundamentals: Knowledge of visual design fundamentals including (a) design elements: colour, line, shape, texture, space and form; and (b) design principles:

unity, balance, hierarchy, scale, dominance and similarity/contrast.³ Also includes balancing aesthetics with the need to achieve communication goals.

Apply data visualization: The ability to take raw data and design and display it to meet the needs of an end user. The ability to organize content over multiple platforms.

Build prototypes out of a variety of materials: The ability to construct meaningful prototypes that help explain ideas and concepts.

Apply information architecture principles to various online and print mediums: The ability to take unstructured content in order to design and organize it to help the end user understand or locate information.

Critique and improve design artifacts: The ability to analyze and deconstruct existing artifacts with the goal of improving the experience of the artifact for the end-user.

Learn and use current digital design tools: The ability to select and use effective content curation software and design software in order to prepare the content in the best possible way.

INFORMATION DESIGN CAREER RESOURCES

Design & Communication Job Postings

User Experience Job Postings
www.uxjobsboard.com

Association of Registered Graphic Designers Job Postings
www.rgd.ca/find-a-designer/jobs

Graphic Designers of Canada Job Postings
www.gdc.design/jobs

The Professional Association for Design (USA) Job Postings
www.designjobs.aiga.org

Journalism & Media Job Postings
www.mediajobsearchcanada.com

Freelance Writing Job Postings
www.freelancewritingjobs.ca/blog/category/canadian-freelance-writer-jobs

PR & Communication Job Postings
www.cprs.ca/careers/jobsandrfps.aspx

Professional Associations (Canada & U.S.)

International Institute for Information Design
www.iiid.net

User Experience Professionals Association
uxpa.org

International Council of Design
www.ico-d.org

Registered Graphic Designers of Canada
www.rgd.ca

Graphic Designers of Canada/Designers Graphiques du Canada
gdc.design

American Institute for Graphic Arts

www.aiga.org

Society for Technical Communicators

www.stc.org

Developing Standards for Computers and Electronics Industry

www.ieee.org

Cultural Human Resources Council

www.culturalhrc.ca

Professional Writers Association of Canada

www.pwac.ca/About

Canadian Public Relations Society

www.cprs.ca

International Association of Business Communicators

www.iabc.com

— THE DESIGNING YOU PROCESS —

The *Info Design YOU* is just one piece of the puzzle. Great products don't happen by accident. Products have a map, and more importantly, they have a champion: the product manager. The product manager is the captain of the ship without whom your product faces the risk of failure due to being poorly designed, costing too much, being late, being too much like something else in the market or just not being perceived as valuable.

There can only be one product manager in your case—only you can create your plan, be nimble enough to change it, launch it and tell the world your story.

“GREAT PRODUCTS DON'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT. PRODUCTS HAVE A MAP, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY HAVE A CHAMPION: THE PRODUCT MANAGER.”

Designing YOU follows an eight-step process. This process isn't new or revolutionary. In fact, almost every product manager follows a similar map to develop the products you use every day. We've just adapted it to design you.



Step 1 — Becoming your product manager walks you through the seven key attributes of a product manager and why you must adopt these to become the champion of your life. A great product manager:

1. Is intentionally curious.
2. Thinks about the whole.
3. Is empathetic.
4. Gets feedback early and often.
5. Relies on evidence, not simply intuition.
6. Is resilient.
7. Is accountable.



Step 2 — Exploring the Current YOU is about reflecting on the you that you are today. It involves exploring your current personality, knowledge and skills. We all live our lives in the bubble that's our home community, family and friends, so a big part of this step is getting out of that comfort zone and being inspired by the world and the people around you. This inspiration is your launching pad for the Whole YOU.



Step 3 — Building your mentor team focuses on the team effort required to design you. We explore the value of your relationships and from this you'll

form your **mentor team** of experts who will support and guide you through the *Designing YOU* process.



Step 4 — Defining the future Professional YOU explores career options. First, you'll evaluate what you love to do and what you're good at, then you'll explore how to leverage it to make a living. By the end of Step 4, you'll start to have a vision of the future Professional YOU. **This is the point where *Info Design YOU* goes deep into designing your professional mission in the fast-paced world of info design.**



Step 5 — Defining the Whole YOU is when you'll discover how your professional mission fits into your Whole YOU. The Whole YOU is about how you define success. You'll think about where you want to live, the people you want to be around, the importance of your bank account and other factors important to you. The alignment of all these factors is the Whole YOU.



Step 6 — Defining your roadmap is possible after you've identified your definition of success in Step 5. The map allows you to implement the Whole YOU. Every decision you make in pursuit of your destination now has a purpose. There are many paths to this destination, some direct, others slower and scenic. We encourage you to take some of the scenic drives and explore. In fact, taking a side route may change your destination and guide you toward a different Whole YOU. This is the value of exploring, adapting and changing.



Step 7 — Telling your story recognizes that having the best product that no one has ever heard of or cares about is called "going out of business." Your story is how you'll connect to the audience you care about and how you'll make them care about you. You'll figure out what you can offer the world and develop a strategy to communicate it. Your story must be so compelling that they can't wait to be part of what happens next.



Step 8 — The Whole YOU 2.0 and beyond is about the ever-evolving you. The book *Designing YOU* and the tools you learn within it aren't only useful in your current stage of life. To be always relevant you must constantly update yourself and adjust to new realities. As your mission changes and you decide to try new things and develop new skills, the guidance contained in *Designing YOU* can be there for you.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Ben Kunz is the Chair of the Information Design Program in Mount Royal University's Faculty of Communication Studies. He has over 25 years of industry-based experience in visual identity design, information design and editorial design. He is the Founder and Design Director of Kunz + Associates Limited. His passion for books has resulted in the design of forty titles over the past two decades. As a design consultant he has been involved in launching numerous start-up ventures in the Calgary marketplace.

He has also taught at the Alberta College of Art and Design, University of Alberta, York University and The University of Cincinnati. He is passionate about teaching design-thinking as well as teaching the craft of typography. Ben has also been nominated by his peers for the Excellence Award, recognizing consistent outstanding achievement in the practice, education and promotion of design in Canada.

He is a member of the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC) and has served on both the local and national executives. He is currently serving on the local GDC portfolio review committee.



Before becoming a university professor **Dr. David J. Finch** spent almost two decades in product management and marketing roles primarily in the technology sector. After working away in cubicles and on airplanes for some giant companies like Bell Canada and Rogers Communications, David decided it was time to find some answers, so he pursued his PhD in management and became a university professor. It turns out being a university professor is less about finding answers and more about asking better questions. As he started asking those better

questions, it struck him that education and product management have a lot in common. Each year, universities and colleges churn out really expensive products called students; some of these products find an audience, but many don't. This led to the question, "What if students started to manage their lives as if they were product managers?" This was the inspiration for the *Designing YOU* series and *Info Design YOU* Career Guide. David can be reached at dfinch@mtroyal.ca

NOTES

(In case you want to dig deeper!)

- ¹ For a fascinating TED Talk on the power of being open and empathetic, see Ash Beckham: *We're all hiding something. Let's find the courage to open up.*
https://www.ted.com/talks/ash_beckham_we_re_all_hiding_something_let_s_find_the_courage_to_open_up
- ² For further information on the benefits of journaling, see: Slatcher, R. B., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2006). How do I love thee? Let me count the words: the social effects of expressive writing. *Psychological Science*, 17(8), 660-664.
- ³ In Step 2 of Designing YOU, we go deep into exploring your personality, emotional intelligence and inventory of your knowledge and skills. If you haven't explored these areas yet, now is a good opportunity to give you a sense of where you stand
- ⁴ Refer to article about the Data Science at [BuzzFeed](#).
- ⁵ Refer to: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/career-advice/life-at-work/freelance-work-expanding-to-more-sectors-report-finds/article31519391/>
- ⁶ Refer to: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/marketing/specialized-freelancers-shaking-up-the-traditional-advertising-business-model/article31777643/>
- ⁷ Refer to: <https://www.fastcompany.com/3066905/how-the-gig-economy-will-change-in-2017>
- ⁸ For additional information on how men and women's brains are wired differently, see: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/02/men-women-brains-wired-differently>

For additional resources on gender related issues in the workplace, please see the following:

[OECD Report on Closing the Gender Gap in Canada.](#)

[Viser Gender Equity Report.](#)

A bestselling book by Sheryl Sandberg: <http://leanin.org/>

An excellent podcast on gender issues is:

<http://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/podcasts/>

In addition, it is important to note that issues related to transgender inequality are emerging in the workplace. For additional information, see:

<https://othersociologist.com/2014/12/01/transgender-women-inequality-work/>

⁹ For more information, see Noland, M., & Moran, T. (2016, February). Study: Firms with more women in the c-suite are more profitable. *Harvard Business Review*.
<https://hbr.org/2016/02/study-firms-with-more-women-in-the-c-suite-are-more-profitable>

¹⁰ For more information, see: Berinato, S. (2010, April). Is a woman's MBA worth less? *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2010/04/the-pay-gap-and-delusions-of-p>

¹¹ For additional reading see:

Eagly, A.H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). *Through the Labyrinth: the Truth About How Women Become Leaders*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press

http://www.salon.com/2016/04/13/its_not_choices_its_pure_sexism_women_get_paid_less_for_one_reason_theyre_discriminated_against/

¹² Infographic: Yes Sex Matters! Please see: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study on Closing the Gender Gap available at:
<https://www.oecd.org/canada/Closing%20The%20Gender%20Gap%20-%20Canada%20FINAL.pdf> Also, please see the *Visier Insights* Gender equity report:
<https://www.visier.com/lp/visier-insights-gender-equity-report/>

Please see, *McKinsey Global Institute* (2015) report - the power of parity:
<http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/How-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

Finnie, Ross (2015). *Barista or Better? New Evidence on the Earnings of Post-Secondary Education Graduate*. A summary of this study is available at:
<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/07/26/higher-education-does-lead-to-higher-incomes-university-of-ottawa-study.html>

¹³ For more information and resources associated with *Lean In*, refer to <https://leanin.org/>

¹⁴ For more information, see: Elsesser, K. M., & Lever, J. (2011). Does gender bias against female leaders persist? Quantitative and qualitative data from a large-scale survey. *Human Relations*, 64(12), 1555-1578.
<http://hum.sagepub.com/content/64/12/1555.full.pdf+html>

¹⁵ McKinsey & Company has an online psychological test you can take to measure whether you have an unconscious gender bias: <https://esurveydesigns.com/wix/p46257077.aspx>

¹⁶ This section on gender is borrowed from the gender impact of designing you by Leah Hamilton and Laurie Stretch. For more detailed reading on this topic please head to *Designing YOU*. At the end of each step, Laurie and Leah provide their insights into the gender issues and how to factor them into your thinking during this step.

¹ For additional information on evidence-based management, see:
<https://www.cebma.org/>

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- ² Step 2 of Designing YOU goes deeper into EI, including an assessment. For further information, see: Goleman, D. (2004). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, 82(1), 82-91.
- ³ For further information, refer to: Lidwell, W., Holden, K., & Butler, J. (2010). *Universal principles of design, revised and updated: 125 ways to enhance usability, influence perception, increase appeal, make better design decisions, and teach through design.* Rockport Pub.