



IN-HOUSE ISSUES

IN-HOUSE INTERSECTIONS

Creative thinkers aren't limited to the design department of your company. Learn how reaching out to co-workers across departments can lead to unexpected collaborations.

They seem to be everywhere—down the hall, upstairs, around the corner, in the elevator, in the cafeteria, at the coffee stations and in the bathrooms. Who are they? They are your co-workers. And although you might not understand what they do and they might not understand what you and your team do, you may be surprised to find that productive synergies can result from either deliberate or accidental intersections with kindred spirits.

If you work for a medium- to large-sized company, you've probably noticed more opportunities to interact with a broader range of people than in a smaller com-

pany or agency. If you dig deeper, you may find that your colleagues have passions beyond the workplace and possess hidden talents that may be perfect for a collaborative effort. For example, an administrative assistant in legal affairs may be a cartoonist, a brand manager might paint watercolors, a meeting coordinator may be a theater set designer, or a human resources manager might be great with arts and crafts.

The first step to begin the process of collaborating with co-workers outside the design department is getting to know these individuals. Corridors and coffee stations are the most obvious places to col-

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This unlikely collaboration was fun and productive and got us excited again about the possibilities of visual communication.

lide with other employees, but also remember the cafeteria, company store, fitness center or onsite day care center. And don't forget meetings. Use this time to your advantage to connect with other employees. Get personal. If you're not familiar with some of the attendees, open up a dialogue about, well, anything. Creatives are often introspective characters, so it may take a little work to learn how to mix and mingle. But give it a try.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Food is a great motivator, and it also can help bring people together. Meet a colleague for breakfast or lunch. Invite a whole department to lunch. Last year, I arranged a "meet and greet" luncheon with our production packaging department to learn more about their work and hopefully enlighten them a bit about what we do. I reserved a conference room with a television and DVD player, treated everyone to lunch and had a loosely planned agenda that provided an opportunity for department members to introduce themselves and discuss their roles and responsibilities.

We watched a few short inspirational videos, and I made sure people had enough time just to talk and socialize. My plans this year include organizing a series of luncheons with other departments, ones that we already work with but would like to get to know a little better, such as marketing, public affairs, benefits, environment, health and safety, meeting planning and sales promotion, just to name a few.

TEAMING WITH EFFORT: A CASE STUDY

Isaac Greenbaum works in our IT department. Although his responsibilities have nothing to do with motion graphics or video, he has a passion for both and is pursuing a master's degree at New York University. How do I know this? The coffee station is a breeding ground for all sorts of stuff (including great hot chocolate and snacks), and that's where we started sharing experiences, information and our love for design, art, music and film.

Last year, plasma screens were installed at many of our corporate offices, which broadcast important company news, press releases and information on upcoming corporate events. My department began developing static and motion graphics for the screens, which gave my staffers the opportunity to brush up on their Flash skills. When I ran into Isaac one day, he expressed an interest in working with my department on any motion graphics or animation projects.

Months later, when Gregg Belardo, our environment, health and safety director, approached me about developing a 60-second movie for the plasma screens that would "knock people's socks off," I knew this would be the perfect fit for Isaac. Gregg wanted to use the upcoming Earth Day 2008 as a springboard to promote the company's sustainability efforts. He wanted something visually distinctive that would capture the attention of employees and motivate them to take action to make their job functions and daily activities more sustainable.

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Life and business are all about relationships.

Look for ways to bring your outside interests inside and encourage your co-workers to do the same.

Earth Day was two weeks away on April 22, and we were all up for the challenge. Designer Cathy Bepalko had already developed the visual style for the printed collateral on this campaign, and she was brought in to provide overall guidance and art direction. You could feel the excitement in my office during our initial meeting as we gradually formulated the concept for the piece.

We decided to create five 50-second movies, one for each day, that would be identical except for the featured sustainability component. Isaac quickly provided storyboards for us to review and was responsible for translating our vision to video. Not only did he have no time during the day to work on the project, but since the animation software he used only resided on his home computer, he did most of his work at night.

We also decided that music was needed, and that's where I came in because I'm also a musician and composer. Although there wasn't enough time for me to create an original score for each movie, I found original music in my archives that was appropriate and gave each movie its own character. Cathy also was responsible for the daily sustainability section and continued to work after hours to complete those modules, sending the files to Isaac at home. Because Isaac and I were both working on the project at home, the three of us met each morning to review the work.

Then it was showtime. We previewed the movies to both the director and vice president of environment,

health and safety and received a "two thumbs-up" review. We met the deadline, and the movies premiered during the week of April 21. We all put in extra time, especially Isaac, who clocked in hours and hours of production work on his own schedule.

But all that extra time didn't seem to matter. What mattered is that this unlikely collaboration was fun and productive and got us excited again about the possibilities of visual communication. Along the way, we also managed to engage in most of our company's core values: quality, integrity, respect for others, leadership and collaboration.

This is just one example of how you can intersect with your co-workers, share life experiences and hopefully create some magic together. Life and business are all about relationships. Look for ways to bring your outside interests inside and encourage your co-workers to do the same. You may find some good stuff to fuel a future collaboration. **HOW**

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