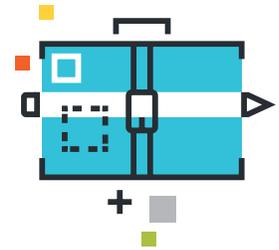


Visual Communications and the Job Market



What to expect with a degree from Farmingdale State College

A Career in Graphic Design

Deciding to be a graphic designer is a choice that often requires direction and evolution before you find yourself in a meaningful career. This brochure will explore the underlying structure of the graphic design industry and take a brief look at some different jobs and career paths that you can explore. The following descriptions represent, at best, industry norms.

The truth is, there are no real restrictions or guidelines in place for labeling a design job. Sometimes “senior” design jobs are in reality quite low-level, while some low-level jobs require a vast array of industry knowledge and skills. What this does is test your abilities and versatility to be able to function in a variety of situations

If students diligently apply themselves to the courses offered within the Visual

Communications programs, they will leave with a full array of skill sets, often as a specialist in a particular area, or as a general designer who can function in any situation.

Skill and Talent

A graphic designer must be a problem solver who can apply multiple solutions to a given task. These tasks can be specific to a designated situation, or general to a broader more complex project. The creative problem-solving skills that are obtained in the Visual Communications programs can be applied to both. Skill sets are the abilities you will learn through time and repetition – and eventually be able to use at a moments notice on the job. These would include hands-on technological expertise, conceptual skills realized as a hand-drawn sketch, or spoken at a client

meeting. The more skills a student learns, the more viable they will become as part of the creative-class work force.

The Visual Communications department is filled with instructors who are masters in the industry and are ready to mentor students through the channels of self-exploration.

Talent paired with skill is the task students face on a daily basis. Once achieved the job market can be an open community that is both spiritually fulfilling, and economically rewarding.

Specialist vs. Generalist

Graduates will often leave school with the idea that they will be specialists in one particular skill set – and find employment easily. While this is an admirable goal, it is often unobtainable for a young prospect.

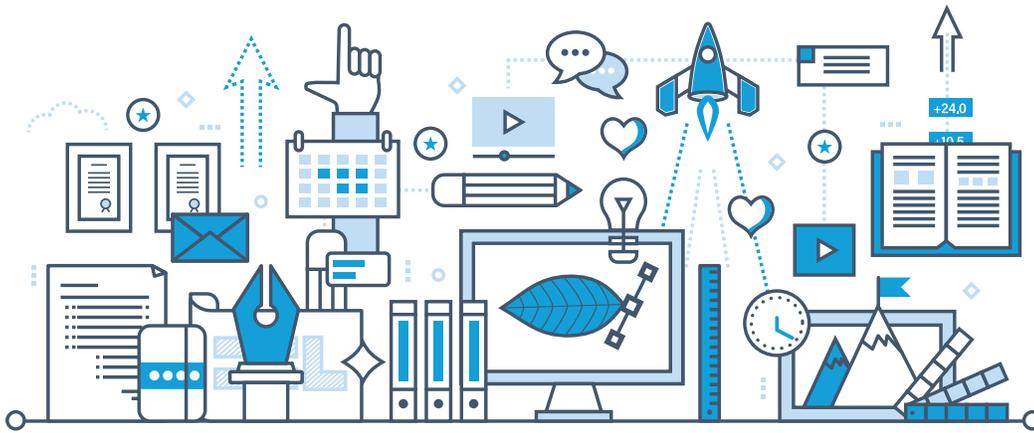
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A specialist will have to acquire an extra set of business skills that will enable an independent enterprise. These skills include self-promotion, accounting, business planning and forecasting. Specialists will often find themselves working more on the business than on their skills. For some this is the perfect path—independence, self-determination, and a chance to make your own hours.

A more practical way to approach the industry as a graduate is that of being a generalist. The skill sets that can be obtained in the Visual Communications programs can be applied to a variety of industries. A potential employer might look for generalists to start in entry level positions and have them grow with the job. Often, production artists can find themselves in senior level positions within

a few years.

Visual Communications programs at Farmingdale are wide ranging and most students embark on a life of learning and growing within the industry. The skills obtained are specific but not exclusive unto themselves. Graduates will leave school with the know-how to work in the industry and with the confidence that they can get the job done with quality and value. ■



How Much Money Can You Make?

Salaries vary based on industry and region. A good place to start would be the two resources below:

- HOW Magazine: Annual Salary Guide: howdesign.com
- The Graphic Artists Guild Handbook: Pricing & Ethical Guidelines: graphicartistsguild.org

Levels of Graphic Designers

Entry Level

Though the use of this term varies considerably, most often you'll find that an Entry Level Designer is someone who will spend time on a wide variety of tasks, mostly simple ones that are more production-oriented as well as office-oriented. Knowledge of Adobe and Microsoft products, as well as smaller boutique programs are required. Also needed will be hands-on skills for mock-up creation and prototyping—skills that require manual dexterity with razors, glue, paper, and board. It is also not unusual for an entry level designer to handle filing and archiving of material both hard and digital. Also – don't be surprised if you are asked to run out to get coffee for the crew...

Mid Level

A mid-level designer, is neither at the bottom or the top. You have a few years of experience, often anywhere from 3-7, that has earned you a reasonable pay bump and the freedom to actually engage in

custom design projects from the ground up whether as a team member or solo designer. Advertising agencies, marketing companies, and dedicated design firms, are filled with mid-level designers. These are the workers of the industry and tend to be designers who produce the largest volume of work, which is then passed up the line for approval and suggestions.

Senior Level

Senior designer is a pretty vague title as far as duties go. It's typically gauged more by experience than duties, with those designers who have 6+ years of experience having a much better chance at landing a senior design position. A typical example of a design team will have one or two senior designers, with a handful of low to mid level designers. The senior designers are often the voices to listen to, the experienced few whose opinions carry more weight and whose paychecks have slightly higher numbers, without necessarily being "the

boss." The senior designer is often the one who reports to the creative director and goes through status updates on various projects. Direction from the creative director is often filtered through this person to the team.

Art/Creative Director

A typical Creative Director might actually do more managing than actual full-on design work. Good Creative Directors know how to maximize the potential of their teams. All major work is filtered through them and they have the ultimate say on the direction of the creative, specific artwork used, how the tasks are split up, and more.

They also manage a good deal of the client relations. Meetings, planning, phone calls, emails, lunches, dinners, long flights and presentations fill the time of the Art/Creative Director. They get the praise when a project goes right, even if they haven't really designed a single thing. Similarly, when projects go wrong, they take the blame, even at the risk of their own jobs. ■

Career Opportunities

Publication Design

The publishing industry is a diverse one in which a graphic designer can function in a variety of ways. The traditional “ink-on-paper” industry generated revenue of twenty-nine billion dollars in 2017 alone. Graphic designers who go into the industry will need to have a wide array of experience with the tools of the trade—Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, as well as cloud-based software programs (Mailchimp, Constant Contact, Survey Monkey, etc). The skills taught in the Visual Communications programs include magazine and book production, typography, and print production. Also stressed are the interpretation skills needed to produce a graphic design based on a given text from content providers such as writers, editors, and promotion people. Jobs that can be found after graduation include: production artist, publication designer, art director, and creative director.

Branding

Branding is the process of giving meaning to a specific company, product or service by creating and shaping the consumer’s perception. Designers create the personality of the brand: its logo, characters and mascots, typography, colors, messaging, goals, drive, etc.

This is carried out through various mediums such as print, digital, television, radio, signage, and events—all aimed primarily at communicating the brand’s existence and personality. It is a career that encompasses many different aspects and is well suited for the quick thinking and energetic.

Advertising

Advertising is marketing communications that employs an openly sponsored message to promote or sell a product, service or idea. Sponsors of advertising are typically businesses wishing to promote their products or services. Advertising is communicated through various mass media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, outdoor advertising or direct mail; and new media such as, social media, websites or text.

Marketing

Marketing leverages existing brands: logos, packaging, targeting, personality, etc. in a more sales-focused arena. Marketing designers create coupons, in-store promotional materials and engage other short-term projects meant to achieve “incremental lift”, which is to say tactics such as a holiday sale where purchase is hopefully increased.

Illustration

The field of illustration is diverse, and students are encouraged to develop a portfolio that contains images that demonstrate a wide degree of ability. Illustrators with a degree in graphic design from Farmingdale State College can be expected to find work in different fields such as publishing, advertising, 4D, gaming, and more. Illustrations often support articles in various publications as an alternative to photography. This also includes book covers, which has been a mainstay of illustration for decades.

Educational materials such as textbooks, learning applications, and other forms of supplemental media are filled with illustrations to appeal to as many students as possible. Children’s toys and games also feature a tremendous amount of images designed to engage imaginations. Product designs of all kinds feature illustration as well.

Students of the Visual Communications programs are encouraged to produce work suitable for all of these fields in an effort to build a strong, sustainable client base.

Photography

A professional photographer captures digital images in exchange for the financial security, job satisfaction and independence that a visual communications career provides. The photography courses at Farmingdale State College place emphasis on advertising and marketing photography in support of our Visual Communications programs.

Our business and career oriented programs approach photography as a major

persuasive tool in the creation of powerful advertising. Emphasis is placed on the photographic techniques and concepts for design solutions and graphic problem solving. Students develop the skills required to create impact for advertising via strategic and tactical marketing techniques.

Some of the numerous career arenas that can be pursued with photographic skills include advertising photographer, product photographer, editorial photographer, special events photographer, forensics photographer, magazine photographer, photojournalist, photo editor, digital computer enhancement expert, art director, graphic designer, advertising account manager, photography editor and product photographer.



4D Design

4D (Motion) design is the use of time, space and motion to communicate an idea. 4D design plays an increasingly important role in the world of advertising, interaction and graphic design including its application in current and emerging technologies. Storytelling techniques and 4D applications are used to provide a viewer with an informational and immersive experience. Applications include video, sound, animation, storyboarding and sequential narratives. Jobs include motion graphics designer, video effects artist, 2D and/or 3D animator, video editor, storyboard artist, etc. Graphic, web and interaction designers are increasingly expected to use 4D applications in their practice as well. ■

Career Opportunities: Digital

Web Site Design

Web design is an ever-growing industry that changes on a daily basis, incorporating the newest digital technologies. It often functions in the publishing format, independent of the print industry, presenting news and lifestyle reporting that is updated daily, often hourly. The industry also functions within the entertainment and gaming industry with emphasis on 4D and animation graphics.

The non-stop pace of web site design is perfect for our fast-paced, information hungry age. The skills taught in the Visual Communications programs include proficiency in programs like Dreamweaver and Webflow, but also include understanding of basic and hardcore coding.

Application (App) Design

A relatively new industry, App Design incorporates all aspects of graphic design, coding, web design, as well as illustration and photography. With a strong focus on conceptual ideas mixed with graphic interface, the skills taught at the Visual Communications programs can give a student the skills needed to develop apps that are focused towards specific demographic audiences.

App design careers are wide-ranging—with strong ties to social media, entertainment, news & information, gaming, publishing, and comics, to name a few.

General Web Designer

A Web Designer is someone who is both creative and technically inclined, and uses both of these attributes to build or redesign websites. The Web Designer has the ability to understand what is needed to make a website functional and easy to use, but at the same time make it aesthetically appealing to the user. The role is responsible for designing, coding and modifying websites, from layout to function and according to a

client's specifications. Strive to create visually appealing sites that feature user-friendly design and clear navigation.

Front End Designer

Front-end Web Designers create the web as you see and experience it. Front end design is often more focused on development and coding so this is where most of the actual design emphasis is placed. Developers make the websites work while front-end designers make them pretty. Front-end designers can be expected to have a range of different skills.

At the most basic level, these designers spend their time creating comps in specific web based programs like Dreamweaver or Webflow. These comps are then passed on to developers and turned into live, working web sites. Employers require knowledge of HTML and CSS, JavaScript, PHP, Python, Ruby and other prominent web technologies. before considering you as a candidate.

Even if they won't actually be engaging in those activities, designers who understand the underlying structure and capabilities of the web are valuable assets.

Interaction Design

Interaction Design (IXD) uses hands-on creative thinking, research methods, innovation and game play to solve human needs, wants and aspirations with technology. Interaction Designers are problem-solvers and can use software tools to visualize research data, product designs, build prototypes, test new technologies, and deliver a solution that is both functional and beautiful.

Although the end result of IXD can take the form of mobile apps, web sites, streaming TV entertainment, automotive technologies, wearable technologies, wifi-enabled connected home devices e.g., crock pots, dishwashers, thermostats, etc., the discipline of IXD is process of testing and designing human

solutions with technology. To produce these products, interaction designers are needed in two key phases of production, pre-commercialization and commercialization. During the pre-commercialization phase, interaction designers could be responsible for producing user studies, personas, journey maps, data-visualization, storyboarding etc. During the commercialization phase, interaction designers could be responsible for producing deliverables such as, interaction modeling, information architecture, wireframes, user interfaces, low and high-fidelity prototypes and the testing of products.

To be successful, interaction designers work in close-knit teams. They often collaborate within their team of visual designers, but increasingly, across business units, e.g., marketing, new business, development, quality assurance, etc. Within the interaction design team, designers are charged with using research to inform their design decisions. This could result in using customer feedback to improve the typographical layout and readability of a mobile app, or a more efficient sequence of page layouts and workflows to increase sales, or the utilization of new user requirements that enables a coffee pot to talk to an alarm clock.

Interaction designers are often charged with the workflow production of new interface solutions. However, there are affiliated job titles. User experience designers are tasked with the overall strategy of new products and services. User interface designers are tasked with visual communication of front-end design requirements to back-end development teams. Interactive designers are tasked with the animation of individual icons, pages and graphics. Depending on the company, interaction designers might be tasked with all or just some of these responsibilities. Since IXD is about solving human problems with technologies, employers are always looking for talent. ■