Paul Wyatt

Paul Wyatt is an award winning creative director, writer and broadcaster. Over the last two decades he's produced animated, digital, print and brand identity creative for clients such as **Virgin Media**, **Playstation**, **Adobe**, **D&AD** and **ITV**.

He's worked on corporate sites for **RSA** and the **Royal Bank of Scotland** as well as print and online campaigns for **Cadbury** and for television series "**The X Factor**" ,"**Strictly Come Dancing**", "**Tracy Beaker**" and "**The Million Pound Drop**".

He was a regular writer for **.net magazine** and wrote a monthly column of reviews as well as writing and presenting "**Web Design TV**", the **.net magazine** vlog which was regularly featured in the **iTunes** "Top 20" technology list. Paul also writes reviews, opinion pieces and features for a wide range of websites, blogs, magazines and newspapers. Paul has worked with usability guru Jacob Neilson on **ITV's** design challenge series "**Whose London**" and is one of the judges on the Moving Images brief for the **Royal Society of Arts Student Design Awards**.

He has won much recognition and a loyal following within the creative community for his no nonsense approach to teaching design and demystifying creative with his tutorial contributions to **Computer Arts** and **.Net**.

He is currently producing a series of documentary shorts and making films for broadcast.

Selected Clients

Cadbury

Virgin Media

AXA

D&AD

BBC

Studio Canal

SAMPLE CONTENT - OPINION
"Did you get my email?" Dealing with sloppy project management

I've begun to detest technology. Oh, don't get me wrong. Gadgets and gizmos? I love 'em. That's what happens when you grow up on a diet of lightsabers, teleport bracelets and Seventies faux future tech. It's when technology becomes bossy that I start to detest it. We're constantly being cued in by little electronic beeps. Time to wake up. Time to attend a meeting. Respond to that text.

Even my washing machine beeps. It screams at me when it finishes a wash cycle. Demanding immediate attention from me, it refuses to stop until the drum is emptied. The launderette may be a safer bet.

Bossy tech has been festering for a while.

My first taste of it was with a harmless-looking Tamagotchi decades ago. This gimmicky what-shall-we-buy-Paul-in-a-hurry gift ran me ragged. Feed me. Clean me. Play with me. Define me. I swear I did everything it asked of me and still it died after a week. Gadgets and tech demand our response. Our immediate response. And demanding tech takes on its most sinister form of respondez s'il vous plait – right now, damn it! – in the shape of the office email.

There are poor souls among us who spend all day hunched over inboxes. The little envelope icon appears in the corner of their screen and they're on to it.

Like nurturing the unquenchable 90s Tamagotchi, they react to the demands of the inbox. Playing email tennis, spinning a bit of politics and covering one's own derriere. All par for the course for a day in Outlook.

Oh and forwarding. Did I mention the art of forwarding? How many times have you received a project outline, feedback or work request with a cursory 'FYI' at the top of it? How much time do you then waste trailing through it trying to find the nuts and bolts of the request, how it affects you and what you have to do to resolve it? You may, quite rightly, misinterpret a lot of the information. It's possible you'll be halfway through a project before the email sender walks past and gets their giblets in an twist. "What are you doing? That's not right! Did you get my email?"

Well of course you got their email. But what you didn't get was the extra-sensory perception plug-in required to understand it. Just pressing a send button doesn't mean you're doing a good job. It's a bit like throwing a heap of Post-it notes at a wall and hoping some of them stick. This is bossy tech as its worst. People use email to send garbled, badly considered information that, by the conventions of instant communication, requires immediate attention.

Or does it? Designers and developers don't spend their lives waiting for mails. They're usually up to their necks wading through code or looking for design inspiration. It's not realistic to believe that as soon as an email is sent, the knowledge it contains is automatically digested and fully understood by the addressee.

Using tech like this is silly. It's not always the original sender's fault;
it's often the kneejerk response of the person who first receives
it. "Oh I have an email. I must forward it on/respond immediately/
bounce it on to someone else as soon as possible...
It won't self-destruct within five minutes.

There's nothing wrong with taking just a little bit longer to reply to it.
Remember that the beep of the email arriving isn't a starting pistol.
Think about it. Plan it out. Those who do this well are a pleasure to
work with. They consolidate client feedback and put together water-
tight project plans that leave little room for misinterpretation.
With such wonderful order everyone can just get on with what they
do best – designing or developing.

That little bit of extra careful preparation can save money, false starts,
time and, most importantly, patience. If only I could control my
domestic bossy tech in a similar fashion. My washing machine is still
screaming. The manufacturer replied, claiming they'd already got
back to me with an answer on how to shut it up.

Strange, really. I'm quite sure that I didn't get their email.

Agency or client side?

If the prospect of freelancing fills you with dread, there remain two major options for earning a steady crust from a creative career - both of which are shrouded in misconceptions. The first is working for an über-cool creative agency, which has a graffiti-festooned reception, offers free beers every Friday and has creative ideas bursting out of its seams. The accounts you work on are household brands, and there's a variety of work and opportunities aplenty to show how much of a dynamo you can be.

Congratulations, you're an 'agency-side' designer.

However, if you're a quieter creative and have T-shirts that fail to scream irony, your choice seems simple: slope off to the nearest company offering a position as an in-house designer, then sit behind a PC and churn out uninspired scribbles. Welcome to life as a 'client-side' designer.

Of course these are exaggerations of the familiar misconceptions for each role. Half-truths and ill-considered opinion – most of which are exacerbated by a level of snobbery and po-faced pouting – plague each area of work. In a tug of war between agency- and client-side creatives, you would find them equally matched in talent and ability, although the common belief is that an agency career offers greater creative challenges.

"I've always perceived that working client-side is a very controlled process, where even before a project commences there is a clear design objective constricting what you can achieve," says designer Anthony Smith, who has produced work for Mobile, Toyota and Visa, and is currently at Saatchi & Saatchi Design. "Through a design agency you can question and engage with the brief from a different perspective."

This is a valid point, but one that shouldn't belittle what an in-house team can achieve. At an agency you still have to work with a client's brief, brand guidelines and bouts of pouting. Being client-side can give you the chance to create, break, update and refresh the guidelines. "Client-side designers genuinely have a lot more power and freedom," says Crab Creative's Alex Harding. This power comes from understanding how a brand functions, as designers live, breathe and are paid monthly by it. In client-side design, you'll also learn a lot about how a business and the teams within it work together.

Tom Kershaw works client-side for BBC Audio & Music Interactive. Summing up some of the benefits of supportive teamwork on a continued project, he says, "You're likely to know the people you're working with, such as account managers, technical staff and product stakeholders. Managing the relationships between these key people can be a major factor in the success or failure of a project."

Generally, an in-house team's demarcation lines are less pronounced. A junior is likely to have more involvement and responsibility on larger projects than their agency counterparts. At larger agencies in particular you'll find juniors 'paying their dues' by spending a lot of time spray-mounting and putting boards together for seniors. It's easier to move up the ranks client-side.

While agencies can vary in size from small, friendly creative power-houses to huge design factories, if you're comfortable working across multiple brands and projects, agency life is for you. "I've always found working within a design agency more diverse when it comes to the creative agenda, because you're working for multiple brands and, therefore, design diversity is required," says designer Matt Loomis.

At agency-side it's a constant challenge to come up with new ideas and stand-out designs within tight deadlines. This is excellent stuff for the CV, but the hours can be long and, much of the time, you'll find yourself putting in more than a 40-hour week. At client-side things are usually more measured, as deadlines can be renegotiated with fellow colleagues if projects are going to take longer. Doing this agency-side risks upsetting delicate agency/client relationships.

Whatever your choice, it doesn't mean you'll have painted yourself into a corner with no chance of jumping from one to the other in the future. There are transferable skills between working client-side and as an agency designer, and if you're a great creative with terrific ideas and an understanding of layout, brand and advertising, you'll be able to apply these skills wherever you work. An agency designer may want to make a name for themselves by jumping client-side so as to specialise in, build and develop one brand.

If being given an hour to think up and produce roughs for three ideas doesn't fill you with relish, look client-side; if you're hungry to fill your folio with big-name clients and are comfortable working quickly and against the ticking clock, go agency-side. Both directions hold their own challenges and prospects for growth, and each will give you an audience for your creative work.

SAMPLE CONTENT

Transferable skills & the art of a long career

For the 21st century designer it would seem that diversification is the spice of a continued working life.

The creative industry is changing. The business is becoming savvy enough to realise that creatives offering a broader range of skills are more financially viable for their businesses. A convergence of skills is happening. What design convergence isn't about is simply being skilled in the complete Adobe Creative suite. It's having an understanding of how another side of the creative process works. How pace and rhythm play such an important part in animation, how typography can make or break a design, why the user journey is so important to a piece of interaction design. Understanding these principles and being able to apply them is what being a generalist or multi skilled designer is all about.

"A specialist generalist. " is what Marketing Consultant, Julie Lane, calls this new breed of designer. "Crunch or no crunch, everyone loves a true Renaissance creative" To me, that means a specialist who can diversify."

Executive creative Director of Syzygy London Aaron Martin knows the impact the all round designer can make to a business " Not only are they more flexible at a time when flexibility is key for digital agencies, their greater breadth of experience also tends to help them think in a broader fashion about their work: so their work is often better."

As design skills converge is it time to readdress how designers are educated? Are University courses giving adequate real world training?

Illustrator and animator Paul Davis found his College course left him ill prepared for the real creative industry.
"The syllabus was focused on conceptual idea generation rather than the practicalities of actually producing animation" Davis's complaint is not an uncommon one. He found the problem exacerbated by having limited use to industry standard software.

"Due to this i left university and discovered a big gap in my skills and felt totally unemployable"

Like many design students Davis retrained "on the job" to bridge the gap between specialist learning and a more multi disciplined skill set.

"I remember being given a few real-world projects at university" Digital designer Tom Harding remembers "They helped but in my first job, I learnt so much in a short space of time and that experience was priceless to me"

"I think in the long run it stands you in better stead to have done a taster of everything" advises packaging designer and graphic artist Sam Garrard "As I later found out two years after graduating I went into Packaging. An area of design I shied away from at University"

Alex West founder of The Future department believes that advertising teaching techniques have changed very little since the 1980s. We're churning out designers with cookie cutter thinking processes, ill equipped to tackle the challenges of the current industry"

West believes that the generalists of the design world, those with multi skills, will emerge as winners in the competitive job market. "Those driving innovation will always be the generalists" he enthuses.

At the Arts Institute in Bournemouth practical experience is given precedence as course leaders and lecturers keep one foot in the "real world" industry and constantly use this experience to shape Students teaching.

Becoming a successful Digital designer, print and brand specialist was a two fold process for Luke Woodhouse. First there was the BA in Graphic design at the Arts institute. A multi disciplined course which involved print, animation and web based project briefs. In Woodhouse's second year briefs became more self initiated and dependant on the Students interpretation as to what medium best suited the project to meet the brief.

"This meant we were able to draw on our skills acquired in the first two years and the final format of the solution was dictated by the ideas" explains Woodhouse.

The second stage of Woodhouse's immersion into the digital world was using a philosophy instilled in him during his course - that of autonomous learning. In a nutshell this means always saying yes to a task and if you feel out of your depth "ask peers, refer to books or just use Google!" advises Woodhouse. This "Can do" approach has enabled Woodhouse to work on a diverse range of projects from web page designs for Figleaves through to marquee work for Wilbert Das Industrial design.

Ravensbourne College of Art and Communication is one of the most forward thinking Colleges when it comes to future proofing student skills and being progressive in their approach to teaching. Students are given regular insights and views from industry figures to give a cross discipline take on what's happening in the current and future world of design, art and communication. A recent initiative was the multi disciplined T shaped Futures Industry leaders day.

Chris Thompson, Head of Enterprise and innovation at Ravensbourne explains "I'm a big champion of diversification especially in these times of converging technologies and the opportunities they offer. Don't get me wrong there is a place for specialism but future professionals need to be both specialist and multiple skilled at the same time. T shaped!"

Source Personnel's Marc Shelkin believes that digital designers will have to wear many more hats when entering agencies "This could mean conceptualizing , storyboarding designing, and coding" he explains. "In the past couple of years there was a need for more specialist skilled creatives but things are changing and agencies require all-round designers."

Future proofing skills and dipping into the many worlds of the creative business are essential undertakings for the 21st Century creative. Design convergence brings these elements together across a number of disciplines and makes the designer a powerful player in the market place. Specialism will never completely die but as Luke Woodhouse aptly says "There will always be a need for specialists, but by the very nature of specialism you're placing yourself in a niche. If you're going to specialize make sure you're the best"