



## HOW TO GET YOUR FOOT IN THE VI DOOR

In our attempts for world domination (ahem!), we're constantly looking for new people to add to the VI team of creative gurus. As Studio Manager, I'm a central part of this process and manage all the recruitment – from writing the ads to filtering through portfolios - everyone comes through me first. Our last design vacancy had well over 200 applicants and wading through emails can be utterly monotonous, especially when people are lazy and waste my time by not reading the ad properly.

Most of these things should be obvious but it's surprising how many people pay very little attention to how they apply. This lack of care can make the difference between us wanting you in our company or leaving you hung out to dry in the breeze of unemployment.

Take note of these simple bits of advice and give yourself the best chance to be noticed.

### TOP TEN TIPS FOR JUNIOR DESIGN APPLICANTS

#### 1. PAY ATTENTION

If you can't layout a simple legible CV or put together a PDF of samples of work, then you shouldn't be applying for a design position. End of.

#### 2. APPLE C, APPLE V, APPLE LAZY

Yes we all know how to copy and paste, and yes I'm aware that you will be applying to lots of similar vacancies, but don't make it so transparent. We want you to have enthusiasm about working specifically for us so your email should be directed to us. Trust me, it's blatantly obvious when people have a general email that they send out to lots of companies. Often people forget to even change the title of the vacancy they're applying for! Some people even just send the same email to multiple recipients so we can see where else you've applied! Never ever do this. Show us some love and we'll show some back.

#### 3. READ THE AD... THEN READ IT AGAIN

Everything that's written in an ad is there for a reason so pay very close attention. If we ask for a specific subject line in your email or samples of work then we do actually mean it. For popular vacancies, I often automatically reject people who don't follow simple application instructions – if you can't write an email correctly then how can we expect you to take instruction on the job?

#### 4. MAKE OUR LIVES EASY

Don't make it hard for us to see your work. There should be a clear link to a portfolio site in the email, or a PDF attachment with some samples. Don't put a link on the third page of your CV in a Word document in a ZIP file... unsurprisingly, it's unlikely we'll get that far. In general, ZIP files are very annoying as are emails with 20 attachments. Keep it concise and simple.

#### 5. DON'T TRY AND BE SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT!

Make the best of your strengths and don't show us your weak work. If you're an illustrator, showing us your work



on a Flickr page or similar is absolutely fine. If you don't know how to make a good website, don't try and cobble something together just so you can say you have a website. In fact it has the opposite effect and can often put us off entirely, regardless of how good your work is. It's incredible how many portfolio sites look like a spread from Sugar magazine – your work will never look good if it's plastered with pointless vector butterflies and glittery gif rollovers.

## 6. “DEAR SIR/MADAM...”

Well actually I'm not either, I have a name and it's very easy to locate on our website! It's shocking how few people actually manage to do this, and let's face it, it's hugely old-fashioned. I personally find generically addressed emails quite insulting and undoubtedly lazy - it gives a horrible first impression. The same applies for “to whom it may concern” or even worse, “dear sirs” or “to the HR representative”. All it takes is a quick bit of research to find the name of the relevant member of staff or even a quick phonecall.

## 7. REDUNDANT STATEMENTS

A real example:

“I am very much a pro-active individual who can prioritise and am a believer of being optimistic and working together with all parties in achieving excellence. I feel that have relevant experience that could help me to quickly perform to the best of my ability.”

Ugh. As I skim over covering emails by the dozen, they are nearly all padded out with generic statements that essentially mean nothing. A covering email is supposed to tell me about you, not about what you think I want to hear (which trust me, I really don't). Essentially this sort of comment is obvious, boring and completely unnecessary plus distracts from any interesting content in your application. Avoid.

## 8. RESEARCH IS KEY

By the time you've carefully constructed your application to us, you should know all there is to know about us as a company. We have a website bursting with information about who we are and what we do and if you're so keen to be part of our team, you should use our site as a resource. We're always impressed by applicants who take the time to comment about our work.

## 9. MAKE ME LAUGH!

We're not a stuffy corporate company, in fact we're quite the opposite. We have a fairly casual attitude and we pride ourselves on personalities – so let us see yours! I'm not bothered by formality with applications; the ones that are chatty and entertaining stand out much more. If you can make me smile with your application then it's a big bonus.

## 10. SPEELIN N GRMAR?

Use your spell check... and make sure it's in UK English and not US English! (eg. we are an “organisation”, not an “organization”). Ok, so the written part of an application for a design position isn't as important as your work, but often people have glaringly huge typos in their work and in relation to work for clients, that's just unacceptable.

*Written by Heather Ellis, May 2009*