



This month we focus on the integration of web and mobile applications: Tom Eslinger, Interactive Creative Director for Saatchi & Saatchi New Zealand offers his take on the interactive way forward, as well as views on mobile marketing and what he looks for in the perfect interactive designer.

Where did your career start – was it in web or did you gravitate to this area?

Tom: I have been involved in interactive work since 1988 when I did work in Hypercard for my advertising and design work in college (Minneapolis College of Art and Design, the United States). We had quite an advanced programme which mixed advertising, computer graphics and design, which is why I am so passionate about it today.

What do you love about the industry?

Tom: The only thing I don't love is that project collisions of timelines and resources mean that you sometimes have to create work that is going to be brilliant and make some that are just good.

Where do you see advertising interactivity going?

Tom: More and more screens, more and more interaction and lots of customisation.

As an interactive division you are growing fast. Is this due to your current clients understanding the value of web and interactivity, therefore allowing more budget in this area?

Tom: Clients understanding is part of it, but we've been around for a long time (seven and a half years) so we've been bashing away at this for a while. Many of our clients here and overseas are waking up to integration and online advertising is going through the roof. Basically, a great idea is a great idea, and we're lucky enough to have lots of them for any screen you can think of.

So, web plus mobile equals ...?

Tom: The most exciting creative opportunity ever, and a rich part of our clients' marketing mix. Basically, the coolest toy chest I've ever been handed and we're going to make it amazing. Designing and understanding all wireless platforms from Bluetooth to WAP are going to be a huge channel for creative – starting now!

It is hard to find good "all round" web designers. What do you class as valuable commodities in a web designer?

Tom: I think it is hard to find good thinkers, period. There are good people in the market, but we need to encourage more creatives to be multi-disciplinary, because there will always be a place for a web site or a book, but if you want to seriously kick butt in advertising, you've got to think that "no screen is safe" and be prepared to work on any of them. Mobile and wireless channels are now a must for you to conquer at an early stage in your career.

For people thinking of moving into this area of design, what advice

or suggestions can you offer?

Tom: Listen carefully when you are being interviewed, because a bad fit with a creative team sets everyone back. Always be hungry, no matter how successful you are. Never say no to a client (say "I'll think that through and get back to you asap." Don't go home before the boss. And always make sure that you are learning and pushing yourself and the people on your team. If you're not, you might as well be digging a ditch.

Last word?

Tom: Believe nothing is impossible.

THE RECRUITER'S VIEW

Louise Lawton answers some of the questions she hears most often from candidates for jobs in interactive design.

What defines a great web designer?

A great web designer is one who can design and has been trained in this area. I know that sounds obvious, but there are a lot of techie web designers who are great at the back end, with action scripting, etc., but not advanced enough to create truly special interface designs. A great web designer can also create outstanding flash design/animation/gaming and integrate throughout their sites.

How can I further my web skills?

Practice, experiment and more practice! It's all about pushing boundaries – working within a style that you are comfortable with, but allowing the product always to shine through. It's

important to keep up with the new packages and keep your finger on the pulse – especially so if you are a freelancer.

How should I present my work?

First and foremost, you are a designer, so your CV portfolio should reflect this. The worst thing you can do is submit a bland CV with a few hyperlinks. Spend quality time on your portfolio; allow it to reflect your design style. If you have a web site, keep it updated with your work and state clearly what active part you had in the sites you worked on, whether it was the interface design, flash or back-end, etc.

How do I apply for potential roles?

At Portfolio we receive many applications for our interactive roles – and from a rather wide variety of potential candidates, from the fresh graduate through to the advanced. If you are looking to apply for a role through a recruitment agency it really does pay to apply for a position at your right level. For example, if you are a graduate there really is no point in applying for an intermediate/senior role.

What kind of salary can I expect?

Salaries do range from company to company, although as a general rule of thumb a graduate can expect to earn \$30,000 in their first year; intermediates \$45,000 to \$65,000, and \$65,000-plus at the senior level.

Keep an eye on our website for all our job listings: www.portfoliorecruit.co.nz

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