From the Editor



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HOW

Recently there appeared in the hallowed halls of HOW's parent company a series of promos for a new employee-incentive program. The posters are emblazoned with some corporate clichés about change: "Change is here to stay." (Well, duh.) "You are accountable." (Gee, thanks.) While the posters have prompted a few eye-rolls among employees, they did spark an idea for this column.

After several years of producing HOW's Business Annual in the same fashion, we decided this year to make some—say it with me: changes. Managing editor Sarah Whitman recently conducted an online survey to gauge what readers want from their favorite design magazine. And the nearly 500 respondents told us they want two things predominantly: real-world advice from their peers, and lots of well-designed stuff to look at.

We think this issue delivers on both fronts.

For the past several years, the Business Annual has brought you a few profiles of successful design firms, accompanied by portfolios of their work. While that format had some appeal, we recognized that it didn't allow us to publish a larger number of stories from a broader group of design professionals at various stages of their careers.

So this year, we sought out not just five firms, but more than two dozen designers who could share their advice on what it takes to succeed in this business. Our writers talked with creatives you may not have heard of (like the guys at the up-and-coming firm One Trick Pony, who talk about starting their own shop on page 57) and with legends (like Charles S. Anderson, who talks about building a long-standing relationship with a dream client on page 76).

We admit that for designers, business is kind of an icky topic, so we've tried to make the subject a bit more palatable. Baffled by your firm's finances? We've got nine basic measurements you need to get a handle on your balance sheet (see page 70). Worried about confronting a client, vendor or colleague about a sticky issue? Starting on page 84, you'll find six strategies for effectively dealing with difficult conversations. Interested in starting your own design business? You'll learn from creatives who've done it on page 54.

And scattered among all the from-the-trenches business advice, you'll find pages of eye-catching design, from standout business cards, to must-have goodies for your desk or mobile office, to two decades' worth of amazing design for French Paper Co.

You'll forgive us if we pay little mind to the corporate schtick about change. But we did have fun shaking up the formula for this issue. And we hope you like the, um, changes.

