

Why is this research important?

Design schools exist to create change agents that have significant impact on how we interact with our world presently and into the future. **It is the role of the design studio to convey this great responsibility and provide a method for achieving high expectations, fostering positive critiques and student inclusive, and increasing overall optimism.** Intentional or not, every educational design studio has a culture. Whether that culture is desirable on multiple factors.

The studio culture of the architecture classroom is well-documented. NAAB (National Architectural Accrediting Board) requires that architecture studios provide a written policy. **Currently, there is no such requirement for industrial design departments.** Despite the affection for particularly exceptional cohorts, few publications exist detailing how an industrial design studio should structure itself. I am confident that if we construct and implement a set of guidelines that create a superior studio culture we will have happier, more devoted students that drive each other to excel.

How I did it..

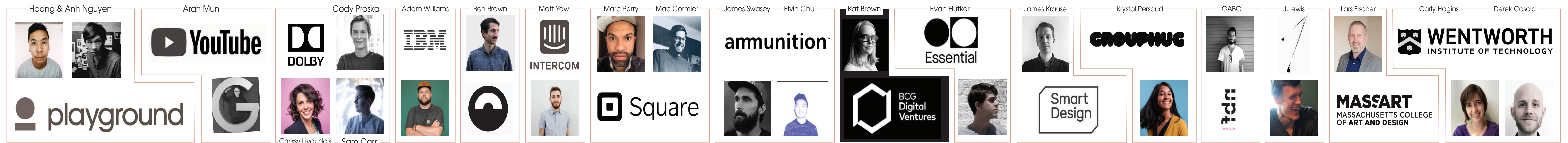
I gained access to some of the nations best design consultancies, design schools, and design companies to ask how these groups create a culture that maximizes the happiness and proficiency of its employees.

For this I created a card game that allowed me customize questions about topics such as workplace culture, the workplace environment, & company philosophies/procedures. This allowed me to customize questions to each interview and make changes on the fly.



Who did I talk with ?

I talked with **16 design entities** and **22 designers** to learn how they fostered and participated in design studio culture.



1 Process & Methodology

Every action a student engages in is a documentable experiment. Young designers will fail often. Failure is not bad; in fact, it is quite important. Fail early, fail often, and in doing so students will develop their own design process. This design process is at the core of the designer. It is of the highest importance for each student to understand, communicate (verbally and visually), and reflect upon his/her own decision making progress.

No matter what is designed, remember that every design is part of a much larger ecosystem.

Designers organize information. Design students should begin projects by understanding the context, ideating (generate a bunch of ideas) clustering (put them together in a meaningful way, and prioritizing (identify what's important).

Students can evaluate their concepts by using one of the following approaches:

How does it function (how will it be used?), is it beautiful (does it bring delight?), and does it convey meaning (how well does it communicate?).

Is the concept desirable (do people want it?). Then, is the concept feasible (can we make it and it still be desirable?). Finally, is it viable (will it help a business succeed?)

2 Design Skills

Develop a command over the core I.D. skills then develop specialty skills (UX, product semantics, digital fabrication). Students should strive to continually increase their "hard" skills. **Communicate using both verbal and visual means. Do this always and often.** The purpose of clear, multifaceted, communication is to grant the opportunity for insightful feedback. A students design process should be conveyed with clarity, conviction, and presented in an entertaining manner.

Investigations, developments, and outcomes should champion a human-centered approach. Designers have the responsibility of designing for their fellow man, accommodate them as if they are a dear friend.

3 Young Professional

Design education is a difficult and rewarding endeavor. Professional design is a challenging and rewarding occupation. Young professionals will need headphones, seriously, they will allow you to be around people and still get work done! Design students need to understand their own working style. **Young professionals will need to work where and how they provide the most benefit to their team.** They will also need to work when other people are working - students should consider adopting a "normal work schedule" while they are still in college.

The learning doesn't stop once college concludes. Young professionals, on average, will spend the next three years, increasing their speed and quality. The doing of design will change its pace but don't become lazy. **When designers stop learning they become obsolete.**

4 Research

Identify a way to learn the things not yet known. Students are to demand project constraints. They are to question and then validate those constraints. **Students need to understand context, learn about relevant systems, user culture, market trends, and product history.** Students need to seek out and value the input from users; interacting with them frequently.

Once you gather relevant information logically synthesize it into actionable insights, minimum viable products, & core guiding principles.

5 Build Experience

It's OK if you don't know what kind of design you want to do when you grow up, **just try things** until you find something you like. **Design students need to locate what makes their hearts come alive.** They also need to identify what unique attributes they bring to a design team.

They need to soak up as many experiences as possible. **Design students need to learn, not only where design is now, but also where it came from. In doing so they will create an internal reference library.** This "library" is required for making meaningful connections and leveraging metaphors. Design students cannot make connections between topics that they don't know exist.

For the Instructor

6 Values

All studio participants are to be proactive. **They are to be curious and active in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes. Students and instructor are to be engaged, eager, and teachable.** They need to be focused and forward thinking.

Students and professors are to be honest with their intent, interactions, and their anticipated outcomes. **Studio participants are to craft a space where each person can share their vulnerability. Studio participants are required to have and clearly articulate their convictions.** Designers must be human centered; designing with care and thoughtfulness for their fellow man.

Structured & Intentional

When delivering a project brief it is the role of the instructor to ensure that constraints and space for exploration are well defined and balanced. Within exceptionally crafted projects instructors are to demonstrate industry relevant skills.

Instructors are to champion the values of the design studio. They need to exhibit the very values they want to develop within their design students. Instructors are to set and maintain high standards for each design student.

Instructors are to demonstrate flexibility; showing healthy practices for handling stress and managing multiple projects simultaneously. They are to be optimistic and patient. **Instructors are to grant space for exploration and communicate opportunities for student development.**

If design is human centered, so should the instruction of design. Instructors need to know the names and stories of their students so they can give a personalized approach within the studio setting.

7 Expectations

We expect a space where project constraints and boundaries are clearly defined. We expect a transparent design process - where students generate volumes of ideas/ concepts to maximize the amount of feedback they can gain from critique. **Studio critique is for the benefit and development of the presenter and other designers that are in attendance. Critiques will evaluate the work presented using design vocabulary, design principals, design research, and user experiences.**

The studio culture is a combination of both the cohort and the instructor. This combination will change every year and both parties will need to be committed to the development of camaraderie and mutual trust within the studio space.

Students and instructor are responsible for creating a space where all persons can perform at their highest level. If a studio member cannot perform at their highest level there is no shame in identifying another space where he/she can maximize his/her potential. Studio members must choose for themselves to give their best in the pursuit of design education.

There are no design formulas, no shortcuts, no silver bullets. Participants will receive from this experience the amount of effort that is put forth.

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Shared Responsibilities