

# Stage 6



## OBJECTIVE

This chapter highlights clear communication as a designer's main responsibility. It reviews what is being communicated, to whom, how, and why. You will have an opportunity to explore the different venues, methods, and styles of presentation and see how a design presentation is a performance and can be prepared as such. At the end of the chapter, there are exercises that show you how to prepare a presentation.

## KEY CONCEPTS

- Communication is a key factor for the successful conclusion of a design project.
- Different audiences use different modes of communication.
- The methods, media, and presentation style you choose contribute to your message and therefore directly to your audience's understanding.
- A presentation of designs is a performance, and a designer can prepare like an actor preparing for the stage.

## THE ART OF COMMUNICATION: SPEAKING TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

Designing is, among other things, the art of communicating an idea toward a solution to a specific problem. Communication is therefore a key issue throughout the whole design process. Presentations and discussions, large and small, take place from the very beginning of your inspirational stage onward. Presenting communication as a separate stage of the process should in no way be taken to mean that it is only important at this stage. It is simply presented as the sixth stage because at this point you are ready to present the designs in their finished state. You must consider, in addition to the actual ideas and designs themselves, the best way to present them. You will have to see which media and presentation methods are most ideal for getting your message across.

Communicating a message through media has three basic phases or moments. The first is the *encoding* phase, in which the message is created using professional and medium-related conventions of language and image use. You encoded your idea when you wrote your design thesis and created a concept board. The second phase is the *message itself*, the form and content of what is shown: a product or construct that is created through skill and technical practices. Here, you fleshed out your designs with sketches, and perhaps you created a model. The third phase is the moment of reception, or *decoding* by audiences, in which the audience makes sense of the message and places it in context.<sup>1</sup> You achieve this with additional sketches, illustrations, and, ultimately, by presenting your designs before an audience who then gets your message and decodes it by placing it in a context that is relevant to them.

Your responsibility to your audience is to make certain that they *do* get the message. If there is anything unclear about your message, the reception will be likewise unclear, and your audience will be confused. You must give the audience everything they need to make sense of your designs clearly and without ambiguity.

Designers must communicate with everyone involved and therefore tend to operate outside organizational charts. The designer has issues to discuss with clients, managers, budgeting departments, public relations representatives, engineers, construction crews, other designers, and assistants. The audience is very diverse and has diverse needs and a diverse understanding of the design problem. Each audience member views the problem from a specific perspective, and each perspective is relatively correct. After all, they want to know how your decisions are going to affect them and the jobs they need to do.

For this reason, it is crucial that designers understand their audience, what their perspectives are, what they need, and how best to deliver these needs to them. Don't take this to mean that you should just simply give everybody what they want. It is often the designer's task to educate clients, to show them that what they *need* is actually different from what they *want*. Often this involves pushing the project up a step or two in the hierarchy of design needs. To do this effectively, designers must develop clear communication between their clients and themselves. Designers must be consistent about the images, materials, and words they use.

This brings us back to the development of language and meaning, whereby each element of language, whether it is spoken, written, or visual, must have a point-to-point relationship with the world being described. In other words, you and your audience must speak the same language, where it is clear that "A" refers to "this" and "B" refers to "that."

### THE AUDIENCE: THE TEAM

You will be presenting to different audiences who have different needs and expectations. Clients, corporate officers, production staff, and fellow designers will be looking for the information they need and will present different communication challenges to you. In each case you are working as a member (and sometimes as the leader) of a team.

**Figure 6.1** Designing is largely the art of communicating. Isolate your message; consider how you will encode it and how your audience will understand you correctly.



#### The Client

Never forget that clients are the people who drive the issues. Your client's needs prompted the need for your design, so you must respond to those needs. But "respond" does not necessarily mean "follow them." You may challenge, educate, and surprise your clients, but whatever you do should be a result and continuation of dialogue. Talk to your clients at length and in detail. Examine their needs, and determine the constraints these needs will place on your design. Solve the problems, and take the solutions one step up the hierarchy of needs if you can. To this end, you may need to educate your client about the reasoning behind your solutions. For example, issues of environmentalism and life cycle analysis may need to be explained to justify solutions that promote sustainability. You may have to explain basic terms. Just because you are familiar with, say, the meaning of the term *product life cycle*, you cannot assume that your client is, too.

I once worked with a software designer who was creating a customized CAD tool for sculpting and shape generation. In using the prototype of the software, I ran into problems and found that certain things could be better. Invariably, when I gave him the problem, he presented a solution that was more general than the one I needed. He solved not only the problem I brought to him, but also eliminated the *type* of problem from the program. Although as the client I was right, I was not as right as possible.

Designer/client communication is defined by the needs of the client and the methods and techniques of the designer. This is not always a balanced mix. In the example above, my needs for the software were defined by the results I wanted and the way I wanted to interface with the software. When the designer asked me what I needed, my answers were in terms of usability and situations. He developed lines of code to fix my problem, but the programming is language I don't understand. In this case, the language of our dialogue is defined by my experience. However, the frame of reference can shift. Regarding confusion about the nature of the data I was using, our conversation began to focus on mathematics because this was the best way he could understand how the data was meant to function. In this case, the designer's methods and his needs dictated the language.

Be careful that the flow of information between you and the client is not just one way. If there is an imbalance in the strength of your personalities or the intensity of your discussions,

there is a danger that one of you will override the other; this only leads to missed opportunities for both. You may need to show your clients where their ideas are not quite hitting the mark, and you may need to hear your clients' opinions and worries. Make sure you listen at least as much as you speak, and be aware that although you speak the client's design language, the client may not speak yours. Help your clients articulate their needs and desires by leading them through the project and explaining the issues and terms involved. Time spent on educating the client will be rewarded and will prevent future misunderstandings.

#### Corporations

If you design for a corporation, the complexity levels of communication increase dramatically, as does the compartmentalization. There are managers, salespeople, and public relations staff. There are shipping, financial, and marketing issues. Some years ago I was working for an exhibit design firm that, among other projects, designed for a large industrial firm. Our client meetings were quite an event, as they had to field five department heads, a project manager, and, on occasion, the head of their company. We added three to that group: the head of our company, a sales representative, and me (the designer). Ten people were sitting around a table, each coming at the project with a specific agenda. It was interesting to see the dynamics form in the first meeting: The department heads each viewed the project, a 300-square-foot exhibit space, strictly from the points of view of their own departments and how it would affect them practically and personally. The project manager tried to make sure everybody's needs were met and deftly compromised without stepping on anybody's toes. The head of the client's company seemed interested only in the aesthetics of the design; his concern was about the company's image, and he left the practical aspects to those who really needed to worry about them.

To him we spoke about design and impact. With the department heads, we talked about practicalities of space and setup. With the project manager, we discussed logistics and deadlines. I had to be able to listen to each of these needs, translate them into design constraints, and answer each person within the relevant frame of reference. Then these discussions became material for aesthetic, spatial, structural, logistic, and time-management decisions, which could then be presented and discussed at the next meeting.

Inside a corporate structure, the dynamics of the situation discussed here apply every day. You, the designer, communicate all around the organizational chart and more than likely answer to someone and may have others answering to you. Regardless of the size or organization of the firm, you will very likely be on a level somewhere between management and manufacturing, communicating with both, sometimes even mediating their demands. You will have colleagues who will need leadership, consulting, and support.

Information becomes, by necessity, very compartmentalized in a corporate situation, which increases efficiency by not overloading everyone with unnecessary information. However, it can also lead to problems if someone is left out of the loop. This someone could be you, of course, so be vigilant about the flow of information: where it is going, what it contains, and whether it is complete. If you miss a meeting, get all the information you can—from more than one source if you are not sure you are getting everything. Conversely, make sure you inform your colleagues, as necessary, in a timely, concise, and organized manner.

#### Manufacturing

On the manufacturing level, the character of the discourse becomes very specific. The language you use becomes directed mostly toward very practical matters, and the information boils down to lists of materials and diagrams. The designer's job with this group becomes one mainly of oversight, but there is also a need to be on hand to answer questions, solve problems, and guide the design back on course.

Sometimes the construction is simple, and the designer's job revolves around textures and finishes. At other times the construction is complicated and requires constant checking. Either way, it is the designer's responsibility to make sure all solutions are serving the project's needs. It is very important to respect the people who are responsible for constructing your designs, as they hold the creation in their hands. Seek them out if possible and engage them in dialogue about the project, discuss any foreseeable problems, and listen very carefully. It is very likely that you will encounter people whose experience is far beyond yours, and they may be able to teach you something new in every conversation you have. By creating personal connections, you are also making everyone's life easier for future projects. They know you and how you work and vice versa. Such cooperation leads only to good things.

I was incredibly lucky to work with very experienced and talented tailors, builders, lighting designers, and photographers immediately after graduating from art school. I learned immensely from them on technical matters as well as the hands-on approach to their jobs. I soon realized that I could present the best designs under the sun, but if I did not have their talents to work with, the product of my designing would be just a pile of pretty pictures and samples. This awareness was one of the most valuable lessons I have learned.

#### Associates

If you are in a corporate situation, it is highly likely that at least a couple of people will be working with you. Being on a team is incredibly helpful for brainstorming, sharing the workload, and moral support.

But being a member of a team always requires you to be a team player. If you are leading, treat everyone equally and find out what each individual's strengths are. The not-so-secret ingredient is dialogue. Create and encourage an exchange of ideas, and know when to discuss things and when to work on them independently. Brainstorming will help. The language of your colleagues will be the easiest one to adapt to, as you all share the common goal of getting the job done. More likely than not, the combined talent and vision of the team makes for a more efficient and creative process. Keep the communication open so that all members share information. Allow each team member to work, contribute, and discuss things within their expertise.

**Figure 6.2** The designer must educate the audience. Help them understand the importance and relevance of the information. Help them realize the importance of the decisions. Each element in your presentation must have a point-to-point relationship between conceptual thinking and reality. Think about what your audience needs and what it understands.



Communication within a team is best when it is frequent, to the point, and relevant. Quick group meetings on a regular basis are very helpful, as everyone should be heard and recognized, and there is a level of openness and spontaneity that develops. If used correctly, e-mail is a gift to team communications. Short, clear messages with good subject lines keep everyone informed in a very efficient way.

## INFORMATION

When you are presenting a design, you are dealing with four levels of information: *statement*, *concept*, *detail*, and *planning*. These correspond to an increased level of detail you may be communicating. There is also clarity, a sense of purpose, and a pragmatism that increases as we move up from one level to the next. The line at which your information changes from one level to the next is not necessarily clear, but it is good to be aware of these distinctions.

### Statement

When you introduce a project at the statement level, you are basically stating your matter-of-fact intent: the *who*, *what*, *where*, and *why*. You created information at this level when you prepared your design thesis. (See the exercises at Stage 2.) The aim is primarily to inform. The client needs to know where you are going, the team needs to know what it will be working on, and manufacturing needs to know roughly what is coming down the road. Management will want to know how much it is going to cost and when it will be ready. There may not be many details at this point, and discussion tends to be about large issues and general definitions of the project.

### Concept

When you create concept boards and sketches during the conceptualizing and exploration stages, you investigate and flesh out your ideas. You may have done this without too many worries of manageability or even reality, and the information you were dealing with would have reflected this by being nonlinear and loosely relevant at times.

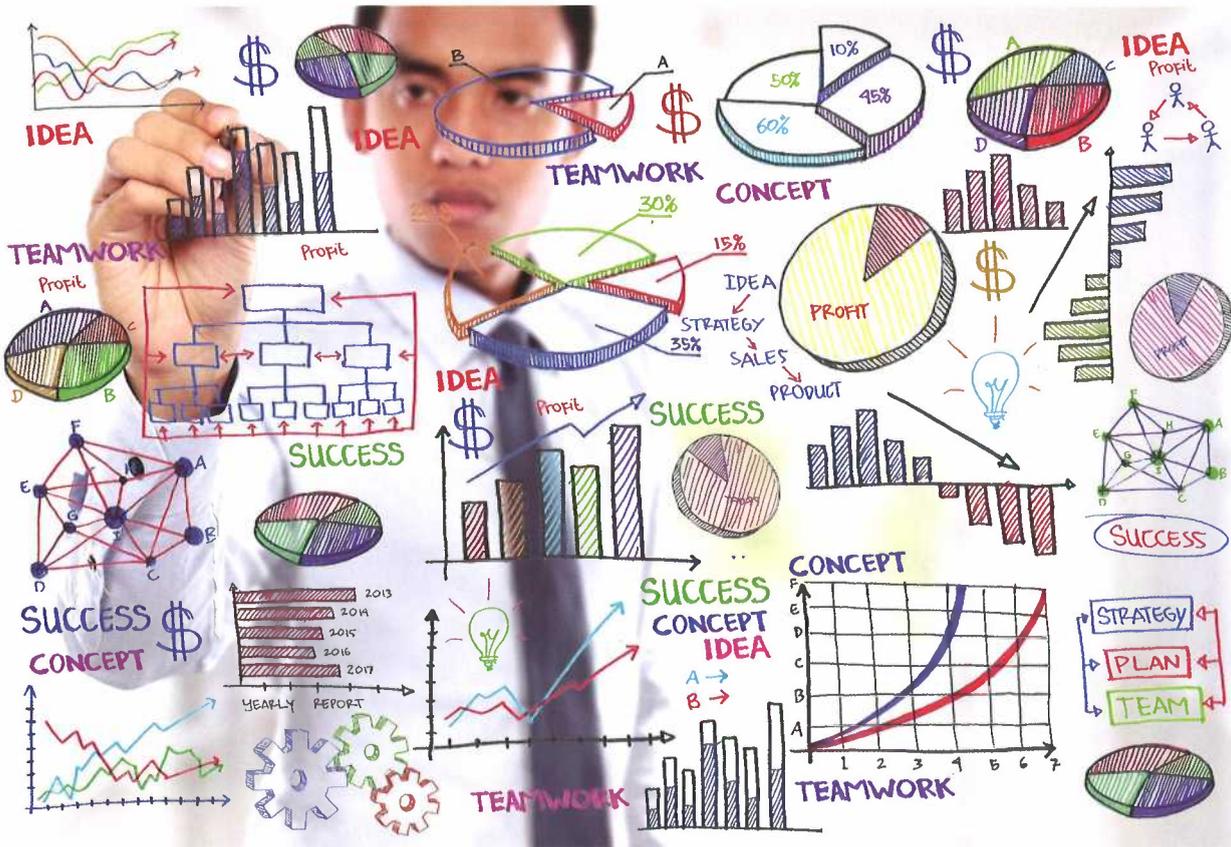
The designer must ensure that the team remains realistic about the project. In doing so, you will ensure the information you get at this level, through brainstorming and exploration, will feed back into the project rather than just dissipate in endless discussion. If the client is at all involved at this point, it is as a sounding board for the various concepts being explored. Make sure you listen very well to the client, and remember to clarify any problems of language and meaning. The most important thing is to treat the information and questions that are swirling around seriously and not dismiss anything until it has been thoroughly examined. Assume everything is valid until proven otherwise. The amount of information is often immense, and you may not be able to decipher all of it at once, so keep everything on the table. Later on, something may suddenly be very clear.

### Detail

At the detail level, the idea is turning into a physical object, perhaps through modeling, definitely through more detailed sketching and illustration. Now you are in the definition and communication stages of the process and getting ready for manufacturing. Communication is



**Figure 6.3** A concept board expands our understanding of a design by presenting different facets that can be picked up in different ways by different viewers or even by you, yourself, as the ideas develop. Throughout the project, you should come back to your board to see if anything is clearer or can be interpreted differently.



**Figure 6.4** Treat all information and questions that start swirling around seriously: Don't dismiss anything until it has been thoroughly examined. The amount of information is often immense. You may not be able to decipher all of it at once, so keep everything on the table. Later on, something may suddenly be very clear, if you give it time.

indeed the key with information at this level. All the increasingly detailed information going back and forth among you, the client, the design team, and the manufacturer needs to be coordinated and checked for accuracy. If there are any questions or problems at this point, they should be cleared up before you move on. As the number of people involved increases, the complexity of communication increases exponentially, thereby increasing the danger of misunderstanding. Make sure everything is clear to everyone. Keep the key people informed without throwing all the information at everyone. Making people wade through piles of information to find the one or two things they need to know is not helpful. Each group you are communicating with may require a different set of facts presented in a certain way.

### Planning

The planning level is when we direct information about our design toward the future. In the communication and production stages of the design process, the discourse begins to turn from the development of the design itself to what should happen next and how. Practical matters may be out of the designer's hands, and the information coming from the manufacturing side becomes the focus. The designer now keeps an eye on the project to learn what could be improved for future designs. The information in question can be very practical, such as budgetary information or procedural problems; the information can also be reactions to and opinions about the finished design. This closes a circle, bringing the information back to the conceptual level. Observe people's reactions, and get technical feedback from production for future

improvements. Document as much as you can. The cycle of design projects can be months or sometimes years. You will appreciate having kept a journal of your thoughts and impressions for the next round.

## VENUE

The venue of the presentation can affect its style and outcome, and different venues may require different preparation. Mostly, design presentations are a relatively informal affair: a meeting of people who are interested and involved in what is being designed. The atmosphere is generally calm and matter-of-fact, and time constraints are not necessarily a problem.

In formal presentations, however, things can get *very* formal. People take their positions very seriously, and there can be fairly serious questioning. In a formal presentation, such as a design competition, there are often very strict limits to the presentation in terms of time, size, and scale. The difference in preparation should really be none at all. The same rule applies as for the dress code at an interview: you should always be at least at the stage of formality of your interviewer.

In terms of venues for a presentation, you will find yourself in one of three physical situations: you go to the client, the client comes to you, or you meet at a third-party venue such as a restaurant or perhaps at a manufacturer's premises. But in addition, the presentation can be online and take place without you present. If the client comes to you, you have the home turf advantage. This can be good because you can control the level of formality, but it can also be a distraction because you not only have to prepare for a presentation but also play host, even if it's only in a small way. The home turf advantage comes in the form of you having everything you need right at hand. You don't have to pack anything up or risk leaving anything behind. However, depending on your situation, you may not be in premises suitable to receive the number of visitors you are expecting, so make sure you know how many people are coming and who they are. Make sure you have a minimum amount of space to comfortably show your designs, and if your studio is busy, make sure there will be no distractions while you are with your clients.

If you are going to the client's place of business, you do have to prepare for the traveling and create a transportable presentation. You may be going into a situation you are unaware of,



**Figure 6.5** A client meeting can take place in all kinds of settings. Be prepared for any eventuality and plan for changes in venue, varying number of attendees, and fickle technology.

so try to be ready for various eventualities. It is perfectly acceptable to ask your hosts what kind of meeting arrangements they will be setting up, such as what type of venue, how many people and who will be present, and so on. In this way you can gauge how easily visible your images and text need to be. If you are using presentation equipment, such as projectors, easels, and so on, try to be completely self-sufficient. Bring your own equipment if you can, even if they tell you that they have what you need. This has saved me on several occasions, where I have been told, “No need; we have all that,” only to find that the equipment is incompatible, not working, and, in one case, not even there. Check all your equipment the day before to be sure that it works, and double check that all cables, remotes, batteries, and other accessories are packed and ready. Allow for setup time in your planning, and when you get to the venue, if you have setting up to do in front of the audience, don’t be embarrassed and pretend it’s not happening while you fumble with your cables. Just announce, “I need a moment to set up, and then we’ll begin. Thank you.” Then proceed quickly, but accurately.

If the meeting is at a third-party venue, such as a restaurant, factory, or conference, it is likely that this will be the least accommodating option. You will find yourself presenting at a small, cluttered café table, on a noisy factory floor, or in a hotel room that doesn’t even have a table. In preparing for this scenario, the obvious choice is to present on a suitably large laptop computer screen or create presentation materials that are small and easily passed around. Mounting everything on small boards (for example, 9" × 12") is often a good idea, as they are then easily held and passed around and will fit in a briefcase. This is especially helpful if the number of people precludes crowding around a laptop computer screen.

Meeting in restaurants, cafés, or industrial locations holds its own set of terrors, such as spilling coffee, industrial solvents, or worse on your designs. Traveling also implies lost luggage, folders left at check-in counters, and other such issues. For these reasons make sure you have copies of your work, digital and physical, and mark all your work, folders, and portfolios with your name and address. These situations also allow for many distractions, and you assume a great degree of focus. On the flip side, they often can have an air of informality about them that is very beneficial to client relations and serves as an instant icebreaker.

Finally, there is also the possibility that you are not presenting at all. Either the presentation is being delivered to the client for them to view, perhaps online, at their leisure, or someone else is presenting it. The preparation in both cases is about the same. The exception is that if someone else from your team is presenting, then you have a chance to help them prepare. Either way, you should prepare a presentation that has all the information readily visible and logically laid out, with all the illustrations and documents numbered and captioned, so there is no danger of things being missed or misconstrued. Try to imagine any questions that may be asked and preempt them. Then test your presentation by showing it to someone, preferably with a similar level of knowledge as the future audience, and see whether everything is clear. If you are presenting on a website, test the material on different device types and different screen sizes, and ask a friend or colleague who is less computer savvy to try it out.

### ORGANIZATION AND QUALITY

Whatever the situation is that you are presenting in, the information needs to be organized. You must make sure your language and facts are directed to the audience, and for this reason, it is necessary to know the audience and what its demands and expectations are.

First, you must determine the *relevance* of your information. The audience has its needs, and those needs can be aesthetic, conceptual, physical, technical, organizational, academic, cultural, or any combination of these. You must make sure whatever information you are giving them fulfills this need for *relevance*.

Second, you must determine the *immediacy* of what they need to know. Are you addressing current concerns, are you planning for the next stage, or is the discussion going to be about a

future vision? Perhaps it is all of these. Do not confuse your audience by delivering information out of order.

Third, you must be aware of the *scope* of your information. How wide is your focus? You can be *specific*, focusing on details or singular issues, or your scope can be *broad*, ranging over the entire project. You can also be *universal* and connect your project to a wider context and relate the design's solutions to a larger concern.

## LANGUAGE

Language can be either *emotional* or *informational*. Either you are appealing to the audience's intuitive and visceral understanding or to their tangible and logical perception. There's nothing to say that you can't do both, but you should have a handle on which level of understanding you are engaging. This will give your audience a much clearer frame of reference. We tend not to shift *too* easily from emotions to logic, so help your audience by not veering too dramatically from one to the other.

Make sure your language has a *point-to-point relationship* from its frame of reference to the designs. Check your descriptive vocabulary and make sure a word or phrase is not used to describe one thing in one context and another in a second context. For example, you might leave them wondering whether "rough" was being used in a tactile, visual, or emotional sense. Your presentation probably has enough information for the audience to deal with without them having to parse every sentence. Be as specific in your word choices as you can, and be careful about descriptive words that require judgment on behalf of the audience. If, for example, you were to ask five people to describe a "cool" shape, you would probably get five different descriptions.

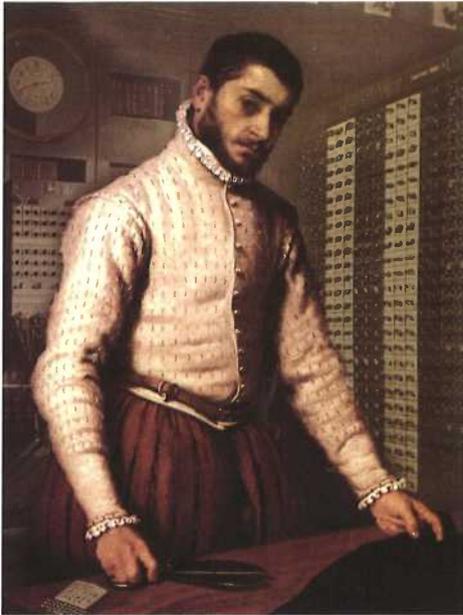
Also, when considering language, you must be aware that your presentation contains language in three different modes: visual, written, and spoken. A visual statement may not be able to stand totally on its own and may require additional written or spoken information. Conversely, the images you use can also illuminate your word choices. The rules of language differ from visual to spoken to written, but in all cases you should be clear and consistent. Make especially sure the written and spoken languages are each distinct in form. Written language has a more formal structure, and in the case of presentation boards, you are probably dealing with very factual information, bulleted lists, and "impact words."

## THE ART OF PRESENTATION

Each stage of the design process, from Identification onward, usually involves a presentation of sorts. Certain projects I worked on required large-scale presentations of posters, models, slides, and talks. Others only require an e-mailed image or two. It's tough to tell which is more difficult—or more fun. It can be just as challenging to fit an entire idea into two pictures as it is to create an hour-long slideshow.

Either way, you work for weeks or months on a project, and finally it all comes down to a presentation that is measured in minutes, megabytes, or numbers of images. Wrapping up a project often comes logically: the task is not difficult, since you have been presenting in one way or another throughout the process. At other times, a presentation will require a lot of work. There is an art to a good presentation.

Knowing how you are going to present a project ahead of time can be very helpful because you can tailor your work to the presentation. But this will vary, not only from discipline to discipline but also within industries. Even within the same company, I've experienced different members of the marketing staff requiring different presentation formats, depending on their methods and comfort levels as well as what their own clients need. Most often you will know



**Figure 6.6** The “tailor’s rule” is a reminder that everything takes time and that when planning a project, it’s not the big items that get us, it’s the small ones. Everything takes at least a bit of time, and nothing should be thought of as taking no time at all. Even if you cut your workday into 15-minute segments, you still only get 32 of those. Realize that you can’t do everything all at once and only a few things at a time.

what kind of presentation is required, and if not, odds are that you can do whatever you prefer and what you think serves the project best. But never assume anything; look before you leap.

### THE TAILOR’S RULE REVISITED

This is a good time to revisit a topic discussed at Stage 2: The Tailor’s Rule and Principle. The need for designers to plan time becomes increasingly greater as the number of details they are working on increases. Preparing a presentation is a double layer of scheduling, as you are planning for the time the presentation itself can take as well as planning to get the presentation done before the deadline.

The tailor in question, my former student and a genius in the field of tailoring, followed this mantra when planning anything: Everything takes at least 15 minutes. If everything takes at least 15 minutes, then you can plan to do only 4 things in one hour, 12 things before lunch, and around 30 things in one day. It’s like driving to a distant location on secondary roads. No matter how hard you try to sneak over the speed limit as often as possible, you find that your average traveling speed usually

comes down to about 50 miles per hour. The explanation for this is that you don’t account for the slow spells, the traffic lights, or the stops here and there. It’s the same with getting anything done. You really have to be hypereffective to get more than 30 things done in one day.

Now, you may say, “It depends on what you mean by ‘things,’” and you’re right. “Things” refers to anything that really *requires* being planned. (These are the things you would put first on a list: You don’t write “Sharpen pencils” unless you have a lot of them.) In planning anything, you must account for all the steps and do the math allowing for each step to take some time. Allow for down time, mistakes, and unexpected occurrences. You will average out to “just above the speed limit.” If you try to break the speed limit at all costs at all times, you will find that accidents do happen. In the end, it’s not really about the 15 minutes; it’s a rule that simply reminds you to realize your limits. You can’t do everything all at once and you can only do a few things at a time!

### PRESENTATION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

When planning a presentation, at whatever stage your project is in, you must be aware of structure, illustration techniques, and graphic design. Giving even just a little thought to these can make all the difference. Considering structure will allow you to shape the narrative of your presentation to your purpose. Being aware of multiple illustration techniques is essential, as you should like to tailor your technique to the project and not the other way around. Graphic design and layout allows you to create a presentation that not only looks good, but also influences how the audience approaches and experiences your designs.

#### Structure

A presentation most often follows one of three basic patterns, which are described using the following classical musical terms: *andante*, *crescendo* and *forte-piano*.

#### Andante

*Andante* is Italian for *moving* (literally, *going*). In terms of tempo, or rhythm, it is to go at a steady, moderate pace. This is a presentation that does just that. It has a beginning, middle, and

end. You have an introduction, where you tell us what you are going to show us. Then you have a middle where you show us. Finally, you have an end, where you tell us what you showed us and ask for questions.

This is the standard for presentations. It lets everyone observe and absorb; it is logical and not showy. It is well-suited to audiences who want just the facts and need minimal prompting to sustain their interest.

You could, for instance, begin with an overview of the project, where you outline the needs and constraints. Then you could proceed through your process, show your designs, and finish up by tying your designs back into the needs and constraints, thereby making your case for your solutions.

#### Crescendo

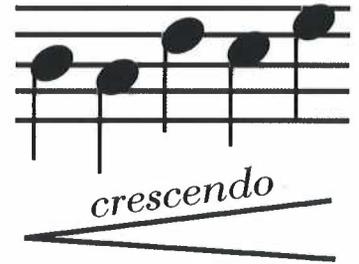
This musical directive instructs the performer to gradually increase the volume to a climax. Your presentation would start in a low register, perhaps with an introduction to the design and the process, and gradually increase the pitch with images that have more impact, saving the very best for last.

This is effective for an audience who needs to be sold on the idea. Perhaps the idea is unorthodox or has developed in a different direction from what was expected. By starting slowly and factually, spelling out what happened, you give the audience a chance to accept the underlying premise before hitting them with the novelty of your concept.

#### Forte-Piano

This musical directive, which means “strong-soft,” tells the performer to accent strongly then diminish immediately to a softer delivery. Make a grand entrance with an impressive piece of work or information. Follow up with a swift sell of what you just showed. Once you have everyone’s attention, tell the rest of the story.

A grand entrance is fun and should be used on an audience that is willing to be entertained. The ideal audience has perhaps had some indication of where the work



**Figure 6.7** You can think of a presentation as a musical performance. If you aim for *crescendo* for example, a musician would gradually increase the volume to a climax. Your presentation, however, would start in a low register, perhaps with an introduction to the design and the process, and then gradually increase the pitch with language and images that increase in impact, saving the very best until last.



**Figure 6.8** A grand entrance is fun when the audience is willing to be entertained. It is tricky with an audience that doesn't know you, so be well-prepared if you are going to start with a bang with such an audience.

is going and already has high expectations of the results. If they want a show, give them a show. However, a skeptical audience (there are plenty of them out there) will always ask, “Will it fly?” no matter how much you dazzle them.

You must also be very sure of your decision. Promising your clients an earth-shattering, world-altering experience, only to have them say, “Is that it?” is not where you want to find yourself. If you don’t feel that you can really take your audience’s breath away, play it safe and avoid the grand entrance. Better to be safe and successful than extravagant and ultimately disappointing.

### Illustration Techniques

It is very important for a designer to feel comfortable working with several different artistic media, and to choose the right media for illustration. The media you elect to work in help you to tell the story of your design and create an impression of its effect. The impression created by a pen-and-ink sketch, for example, is entirely different from that of a rendered CAD model. In addition to the choice of media, the layout and other graphic design elements of your presentation also add to its impact.

### Pencil

I used to be surprised by how many of my students did not initially realize the full potential of a pencil. Then I realized they had become accustomed to it only as a tool for writing. It is, in fact, a very effective tool. You can create very deep and detailed sketches with a small collection of pencils. Even if your main tool is computer software, a scanned sketch is often a good basis for a CAD project. (Pencils are also cheap, readily available, and easy to carry around.) The pencil sketch reveals an artist’s hand as clearly as handwriting and has a characteristic earthy charm. Pencils respond very clearly to the hand holding them, as the technique requires only what the user is willing to put in. The overall effect of pencils can be used to create a sense of immediacy to a presentation, as well as an overall look of speedy efficiency. However, because the pencil is delicate and can be worked as slowly as you wish, a very elegant and studied look can be produced. In either case, the pencil connects with a viewer on a level of familiar artistry and as a medium, therefore, tends not to get in the way.

Practice pencil sketches with the same attention you would give to practicing handwriting: Pay attention to your posture and the weight of your hand. Experiment with different types of pencils and paper and how each responds to the other. Practice speed sketching with pencils to get to the point where you can, without hesitation, drop an image onto a page at a moment’s notice. Do this by choosing a common subject, say the human figure or a teapot or anything that is close to the designs you will be working on. Sketch it repeatedly, always referring back to previous sketches to see what can be improved. Alternate a very light hand with a very heavy hand to explore the extremes of what your pencil is capable of. You’ll be surprised at how much breadth there is in a simple pencil. Practice an economy of sketching. Try to work with as few lines as you can, letting every line on the page count.

### Colored Pencils

There are colored pencils and *colored pencils*. The good ones are great and the others should be ignored. Colored pencils have been underestimated; they have been generally relegated to wax-crayon status. If this is your experience, get a good brand (Derwent, Faber-Castell, Prismacolor, or Staedtler), and your opinion will change. Experiment with the pencils both in terms of sketching and fine illustration. Use them in layers with a very light hand to mix colors, going from a light base color to darker shades. Try using a 6B graphite pencil to shade and outline (this will add a sense of depth to the color). A fine tip marker (e.g., 0.2 mm) can also be used

to good effect in outlining and “cleaning up” a colored pencil sketch. I prefer the kind of colored pencil that is water-soluble, but never use water with them. I like them because they are softer and respond better.

#### Pens and Inks

Considering inks, one must also realize that it is not only the ink but also the pen or brush that is the issue. Ink can produce very strong and clear illustrations and a wide variety and combination of textures. The range of inks is beyond the scope of this discussion, but it would suffice to say that inks range in quality (and price) from the ink in a ballpoint pen to Chinese ink sticks sold for hundreds of dollars. Inks come in many colors and can be divided into inks for painting and inks for calligraphy.

For illustrations, the most basic form would be black ink and a nib pen. Calligraphers endlessly seek and quarrel about the perfect pen, and no one seems to have found one; therefore, I would suggest you experiment and find one you like. The things to look for in a good pen are how it sits and balances in your hand, how smoothly its nib interacts with the paper, and how well-regulated the flow of ink is. All of these contribute to the quality of the sketch.

A good pen-and-ink rendering can have a classical aura about it or emulate cartoonists and comic book artists. Look at ink renderings from the Renaissance onward and examine comic books and graphic novels (high-end comic books) to find a style you like.

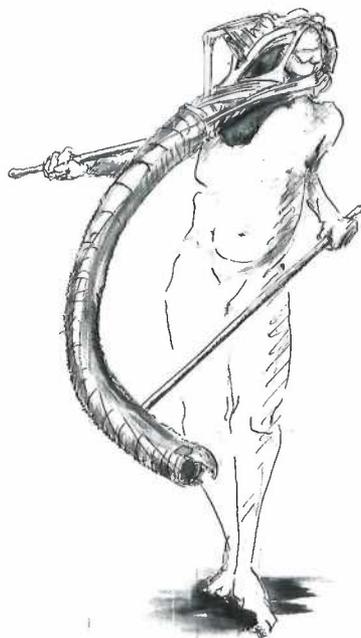
There is one danger to be aware of when using inks with brushes for creating washes and blocks of color: the pigments and dyes in different brands of ink may not work together in the way you expect. You may, for example, find that a wash that goes over another may turn into a muddy brown when you were expecting green or purple. Before you ink any of your drawings, experiment, especially if you are using inks you have not used together before.

Ballpoint pens have a unique feel to them, and quick pen-and-ink sketches illustrated with ballpoint pens on cheap paper, say newsprint or napkins, can be used to create a look and feel of effortless speed and urgency.

#### Markers

The industry standard in design illustrations used to be markers, and they are still in use, although programs such as Photoshop and Illustrator have mostly supplanted them. Markers are extremely convenient and can be bought in colors that match industry standards for prints and dyes. Markers should not be used for archival renderings, as the colorfastness of a marker’s dyes is not good. (“Permanent” on marker labels refers to their solubility in water.) To archive marker renderings, consider scanning them and having a print made using archival ink.

Markers have nibs of various shapes and thickness. They can be used as sketching tools along with pencils and inks to great effect, especially for outlining and shading. Experiment, for example, with a gray or blue marker on a pencil drawing to very quickly increase its depth and contrast.



**Figure 6.9** It is important to be comfortable with many different artistic media. The pen, brush, and ink drawing of a theatrical costume would not have the same feel if it were created with pencils and might be difficult to achieve with a CAD program.



**Figure 6.10** The industry standard in design illustrations used to be markers, and they are still heavily used, although CAD programs have mostly supplanted them. Markers are extremely convenient and can be bought in colors that match industry standards for prints and dyes.

### Pastels and Crayons

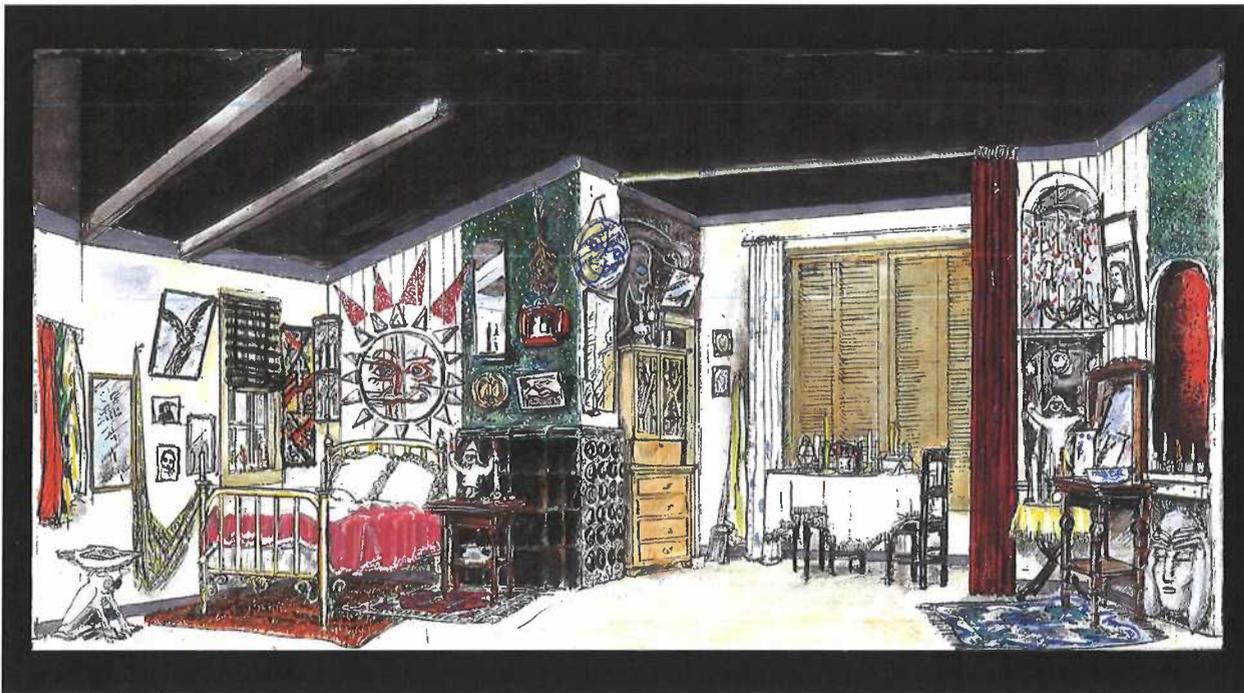
Renderings in pastels and oil-crayons have a loose impressionistic style and are a quick way to convey a sense of motion and air in a presentation rendering. They can have very vibrant colors despite the popular notion of “pastel” being synonymous with “pale.” Pastels require no drying time, and their colors are true and durable because they are made of almost pure pigment. Usually a fixative is necessary if they are to be used in a presentation as they smear easily. (Normally they would just be placed under glass.) This can be a problem because the fixative soaks the pastel and allows it to seep into the paper and other colors. Before embarking on a large project with pastels or crayons, you should experiment with the textures, paper, and fixatives.

The choice of paper or board is also important here because it has to be rough enough (called “the tooth” of the paper) to receive the pastel properly. Too smooth a surface doesn’t grip the pastel stick and doesn’t hold the pigment well. Try different types of paper and board until you are happy with the result.

### Watercolors

Watercolors are a wonderful media to work with and can be used to create very detailed and colorful images. The one drawback is the drying time necessary, and I have often found myself aiming a hair dryer at a last-minute watercolor. Another thing to bear in mind is that each company has its own formula, and brands do not always mix well.

It is important to recognize that watercolors require care and proper materials. There is no point in using cheap watercolors at all, and no point in using good watercolors unless you are also using good paper and high-quality brushes. These things tend to be pricey, but as far as paints go, watercolors are far less expensive, as a rule, than oils or acrylics, and a little watercolor goes a long way.



**Figure 6.11** This set design for theater is rendered in watercolor, a wonderful media to work with. Watercolors can be used to create very detailed and colorful images, as well as very loose and evocative work.



**Figure 6.12** This rendering of a CAD model—a sculpture proposal by Karl Aspelund and Brent Baggett—was created in AutoCAD and 3ds Max. These, and other CAD programs, have become industry standard in illustration and model-making in the past decade.

#### CAD Programs

There are a number of computer programs in use that are increasingly taking over the space held by all traditional media. For technical issues, AutoCAD is the industry standard, and deservedly so. Despite how heavy it is to steer at times, it is an enormously powerful tool. This is especially true when it is used in conjunction with a modeling program that can take over where AutoCAD leaves off in terms of rendering capabilities and creating environments. SketchUp, 3ds Max, SolidWorks, Rhino, and Form-Z are all currently popular. This means that for the most part you will be trained to use one of these on the job. I have been able to train new users to become independent, if not highly proficient, users of AutoCAD in about 36 hours (one work week).

#### Photoshop

This software from Adobe is now nearly synonymous with digital image editing and a standard requirement in most design job descriptions. In allowing us to manipulate digital images to our hearts' desires, Photoshop has completely changed how images are approached and treated for printing. Colors can be altered and matched, images edited, combined, and merged. Then there is the entire panoply of darkroom tricks and the ability to create web-ready images.

Preparing for printing can be tricky, as the resolution of the original can be too low, and print speed at high quality can be infuriatingly slow. However, printer technology gets better every year. To print entire boards or large posters, it is necessary to go to a professional print

**Figure 6.13** Photoshop has, since the early 1990s, completely changed how images are approached and treated for printing and on line display. Along with darkroom tricks and the ability to create Web-ready images, colors can be altered and matched and images edited, combined, and merged with ease.



**Figure 6.14** A presentation board becomes the focal point for the audience and speaker, and if a book is to be passed around or viewed after the main presentation, it can contain more-detailed information and imagery.



shop, where the price will be calculated by the square foot and can go up very quickly, but the resolution will be better and the quality of the ink can be archival if necessary.

Remember that the computer screen can show far greater color variations than a printer can produce. When working on an image, keep in mind that the color settings are different for on-screen viewing or printing. An image that is to be printed should be set at CMYK (four color). For on-screen viewing, three colors or RGB will suffice (see the color discussion in Appendix 1). If your print is larger than the screen you are working with by (roughly) a factor of two or more, a “scaling problem” occurs. It becomes difficult to have a sense of the impact the full-sized print will have. The perception of spatial relationships in the image can change once the print is created. This is especially true where there is a high contrast of colors. In the same instance, an image that scales largely upward from the screen to the print will magnify all inaccuracies. Create a test print for cases like this well before you are ready to print finals to try to spot any problematic areas. Mistakes tend to be time consuming and expensive.

#### Books and Boards

The most common method of physical presentation is to create a book or a portfolio-style binder containing text and images. This is extremely convenient and transportable and allows you to determine the order in which the audience views your information. Boards of text and imagery are also very commonly used, often in conjunction with books. The board becomes the focal point for the audience and speaker, and the book contains further, perhaps more detailed information and imagery to be passed around or viewed after the main presentation.

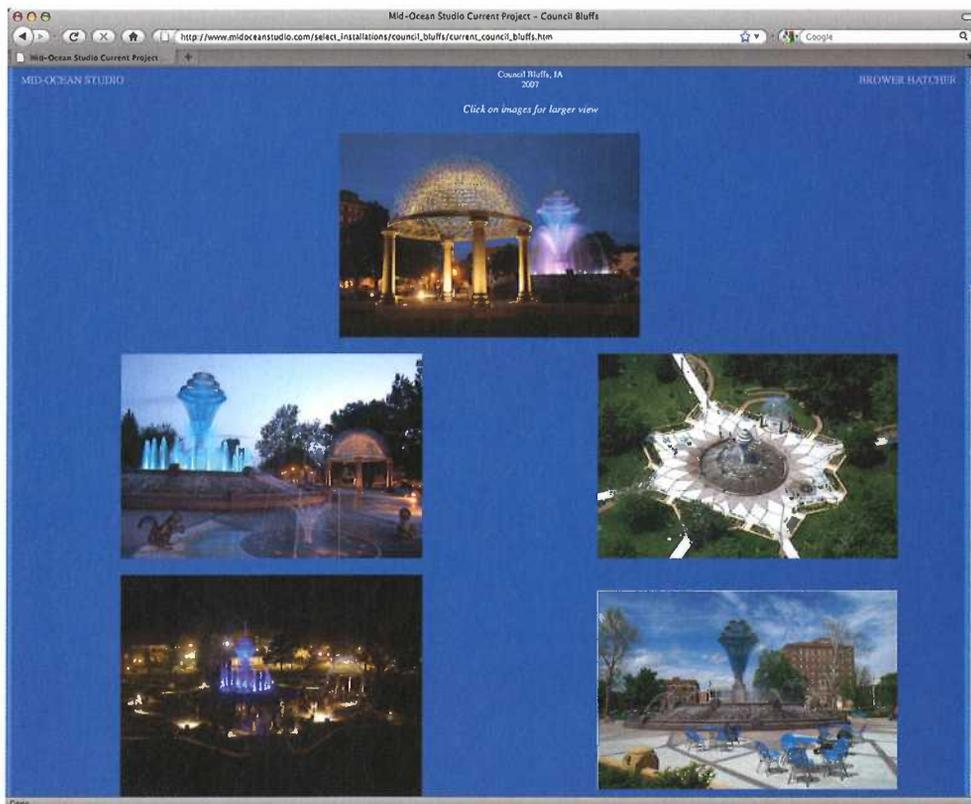
#### PowerPoint

Microsoft PowerPoint is encountered nearly everywhere presentations are being held, whether it is in the classroom, in the boardroom, or online. Extremely easy to use, it can help even the most amateurish user create a clear, effective

presentation with minimal effort. However, it has some very serious problems. PowerPoint is essentially a low-resolution format. It is good at showing images and creating the ever-present bulleted slide. It does not suit the presentation of highly detailed information, and you must fight the tendency to let the medium (PowerPoint) dictate the message (your designs).<sup>2</sup> Be very careful of editing your information to fit the slides. If you have a lot of text to convey to the audience, by all means summarize on the screen, but create handouts with the full details. PowerPoint saves easily to PDFs, allowing for an easily e-mailable cross-platform format. Recently, online applications, such as Google Presentation, and freeware, such as OpenOffice, have offered similar operations at no cost, and online services and networking sites can upload presentations. Non-slide-based formats such as Prezi can also be used very effectively.

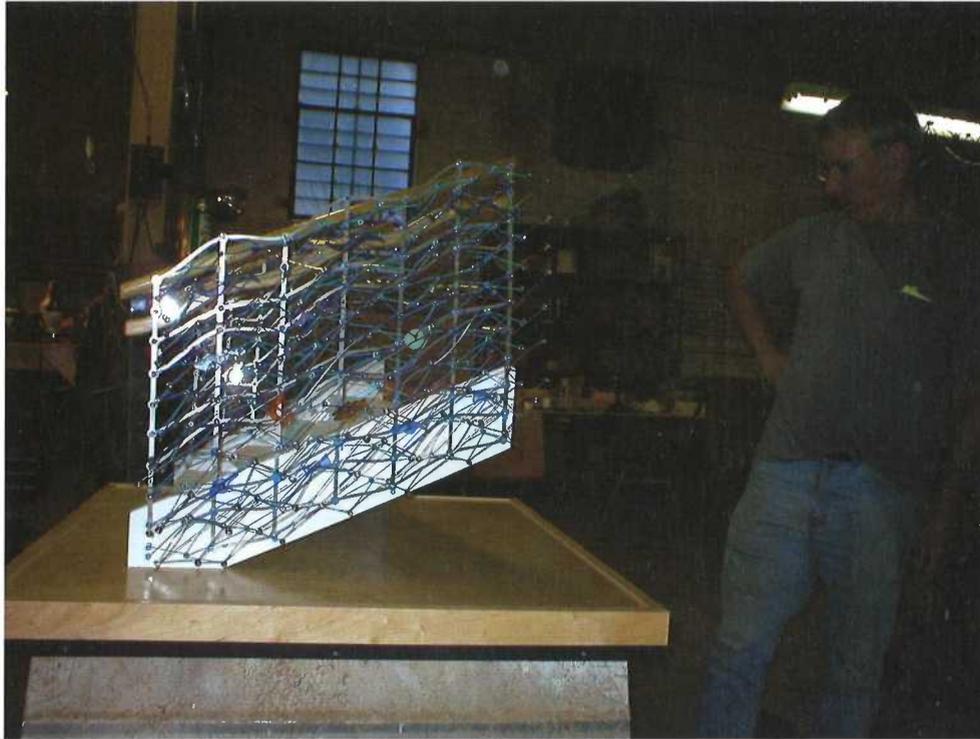
### Web Pages

The creation of web pages for presentation purposes can be very convenient for a distant client. Many sites with preconstructed templates allow a quick setup and sharing of information in a very organized way. You can post your images, text, and journals online, and the client can peruse them at will. This suffers from some of the drawbacks mentioned for PowerPoint. There is only so much information that will fit comfortably on a screen. You also have to be very aware of the navigational possibilities of your site. Make sure your viewers see everything they are meant to see, and do not get lost or distracted in the process. Also, be very aware that what looks good on your screen may wind up looking very different on someone else's: their browser defaults may be different, or they may be viewing on a different monitor with a different configuration or aspect ratio.



**Figure 6.15** The creation of web pages for presentation purposes can be very convenient and is getting easier all the time. Many sites with preconstructed templates allow a quick setup and a very organized way of sharing of information. Post your images, text, and journals online for clients to peruse at will. The ability to update consistently and quickly is invaluable.

**Figure 6.16** The presence of a tangible object connects the client with your work. It can be problematic to depict detail accurately, so consider more than one model if accurate representation of detail is required: one model can depict the entire object, and other models can depict detail at a larger scale.



#### Models

Models are steadily being supplemented, if not supplanted, by the virtual world. However, nothing beats reality, and the presence of a tangible object is a great way to connect the client with your work. It can be problematic, if creating a model to scale, to depict detail accurately, so consider more than one model if accurate representation of detail is required: one model can depict the entire object, and other models can depict detail at a larger scale.

Choose your modeling materials with care, since they will project their reality onto your design. Clay will look like clay; paper looks like paper. Unless you can use modelers' tricks to texture and disguise the materials accurately, perhaps you shouldn't even try. Just bring in what is called a "white model" such as architects often use. The model is neither textured nor colored and is meant to illustrate only the spatial qualities of the design. The textures and colors are then presented in renderings and samples.

Virtual models and animations can be very arresting in a presentation for the level of detail and simulated reality they can bring. Be careful. Don't promise a reality you cannot achieve.

Use models mainly for the information they can bring, not as pretty props. Unless there are requirements from the clients about this, choose a scale and materials that best suit your purpose, then plan enough time to create a clean, accurate model.

#### Graphic Design

In Appendix 1, there is a more detailed examination of the elements and principles of graphic design, but it's important to note the importance of layout in a presentation. By your choices of typeface and colors, size, and placement of text and images, you can control your audience's eyes and how they perceive your presentation. Your choice of paper or boards and the method of printing will speak of the quality of the presentation and, by extension, to the perceived quality of all your work, as well as of yourself as a designer.

When putting together a presentation, allow for enough time in its creation that you can use your intuition as well as learned principles. If it feels right, it is very possible that it is right.

Look for happy accidents in your presentation preparation, and keep your eye on the big picture while paying attention to the details. Both scales of perception will be important to your client.

### A DESIGNER PREPARES

A presentation is a performance. To consider how to go about its creation, it is good to take our cues from those who perform in front of an audience for a living: actors. When preparing for a performance, there are a number of things actors must consider. They must be completely familiar with the script, learning the text and the actions as written; they must work with a director to establish physical and emotional movement, and they must establish an inner connection with their roles to create three-dimensional, believable characters.

#### Know Your Lines

A script is the basis for any performance. Some performances have every word and movement spelled out; others leave much room for interpretation. In a good presentation, like a good acting performance, there is a certain balance between the scripted and the spontaneous. Certain things come from the script; the actors can then add emotional and physical aspects from their storehouse of talent. In learning the lines and actions and internalizing them, the actor understands the course the action will take and the meaning that must be delivered.

In a presentation of designs, this translates into knowing precisely what it is you are presenting and what you have to say about it. This comes back to what you can consider the outline for your script: the design thesis. What is it? What is its nature? Why is it a good idea? How did you get here? It is also good to realize at this point to whom you are delivering this. Some scripts are written for a knowing audience; some are not.

You, as a designer, do not have to know lines in the literal sense, but you do have to know the information that you are conveying to the audience. Your script is your knowledge of your work, and you can know those “lines” in the way an actor studies, learns, and internalizes a script. Look at all the information you have. It is good practice during a project to keep a journal of sketches and notes. Go through all this and revisit your process. Be able to discuss the choices you made and field any questions about options and possibilities. Know all you can about the material choices and manufacturing issues.



**Figure 6.17** A presentation is a performance. Like actors on a stage, designers must be familiar with a script, learning text and actions as written; they must establish physical and emotional movement and establish an inner connection with their roles to create three-dimensional, believable designs.

**Figure 6.18** Know your props. What are the materials you will be using in your presentation? What will you have to show and talk about? What to hand around, what to hold?



#### Know Your Props and Setting

An actor must know the lines, but as anyone who has seen a poorly acted play or film knows, the text is not everything. A good performance requires more.

Some years ago, I was working on a production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* At the beginning of the technical rehearsal, something needed fixing, leaving the actors with little to do for a while. I was at loose ends myself, and as I sat in the auditorium, I saw the actor playing the lead male role of George walk onto the stage. Alone there, he proceeded to go through his first moments of the play repeatedly. He would enter through a door, flip a light switch, and go directly to a bar-cupboard on stage right. There he would, without really looking, pick up a bottle and glass and make as if to pour a drink. He would then put back his props, reset the light switch, go out, and repeat his actions. He did this oblivious to the machinations going on around him. Later that evening, when he gave the stage manager extremely specific instructions on where the bottle and glass should be placed for the top of the show, it occurred to me that I had been watching a masterful act of preparation where the actor was habituating himself to the environment and props to a completely internalized state.

In the play, the character George has been living in the house the set represents for more than 20 years and drinking quite a bit, it would seem. The actor, putting those first moments into physical memory, could be completely on autopilot. He could make it look as if numerous times over the course of many years, he had done exactly this: He enters and automatically flips the switch as he heads for the bar. His hands find the glass and bottle simultaneously; then, breaking out of automatic mode with a quick quizzical glance at the level of whiskey, he pours. The actor has told us an entire story without uttering a word. He sets the stage for his character's existence and informs us of his relationship to the surroundings. The audience is pulled into his situation as they unconsciously register his familiarity with the surroundings and his surprise at the level of whiskey. "Okay, he lives there; there's less whiskey than he expected." Then the question forms: "What's going on here? Did he drink it earlier? Did someone else?" One minute into the performance and already the audience is intimately involved.

Now, this level of sophistication may not be required for your average design presentation, but an approximation may be worth the effort. It is very important that you know exactly where you are going and to what end. The purpose of your presentation is to show

and convince your audience of the viability of your ideas and to draw them into your sense of excitement about them.

You can prepare for this by repeatedly going over your idea until you are completely familiar with its nooks and crannies. Know the materials, techniques, methods, and finishes involved in the construction. Know exactly how it works, what it does, and how you feel about it. Be clear on where there are gaps in your knowledge and how you will approach filling them.

Do the same with your presentation materials. Be completely familiar with every element of your presentation, and know how you are going to use these and in what order. If there are technical procedures to display, make sure you have complete mastery of the tasks involved.

#### Know Your Direction

An actor is not alone in making decisions. A play will have a director making suggestions and decisions on approaches to characters and their actions. In a performance a story is told, or at least a point is made. The story is outlined in the script, but it is not fully told until it is put into action; the text is not everything. The actions and how they are carried out will tell the rest of the story and at the same time fill it out and give it life. How the arc of this story develops is a result of the collaboration between the director and the cast. The instructions given can range from simple movement, such as “Enter. Go stage right,” to timing, such as, “Don’t say that until you are halfway out the door,” to more subtle motivational instructions: “How do you feel when you see her?” A director will also monitor the progress of the actors’ interactions and the arc of their emotions, either heating them up or cooling them down, depending on how the story should unfold. It is also important to read between the lines of the script and uncover subtext; the director works with the actor to uncover this and bring it to the stage without words. In your presentation, you are both actor and director. You must decide where you are going and what you will do when you get there. You must also decide what to emphasize and what you can speed through. Furthermore, your inner director must know your inner actor well enough to know when the actor can wing it and when it’s best to stick to the script.

Again, the method is for you to be thoroughly aware of the story you are telling. What is the information you are trying to get across? What is in the words? What is in the objects? What is in the actions? Know where to go quickly, where to pause, and where to be absolutely sure your audience is getting the message. For this reason, it is always a good idea to practice a presentation out loud and have a dress rehearsal. And if at all possible, practice with someone who can tell you if you are making sense and help you find the points that are not as clear as they should be.

Finally, the end result is to tell a story. It is the story of your idea: what it is, how did you come about it, and how it will develop from here. Tell the story in order; don’t skip to the end until you have told the beginning and the middle.

#### Know Your Motivation

An actor will prepare for a role by creating an inner version of the character with a backstory. The actor will create a past and inner life, motivating the actions, making them truer to life by adding *why* to the *what*, *how*, and *when*. The actor can thereby “live” the character, creating a much more identifiable person on the stage or screen. These backstories can be indicated in the script or totally made up by the actor. As long as the actor believes, so will the audience. Just as a salesman who doesn’t believe in the product will not sell very much, a performer who doesn’t approach the performance with motivation and energy will fail to hook the audience. When presenting a design, you will be both selling and performing. You must be inspired or you will not be inspiring.

Just as the actor may need to spend an inordinate amount of time on the hidden work of motivation, you must find the time to connect with your idea on an emotional level. Revisit the backstory of your design and remind yourself once again of why this is a good idea, what its benefits are, and why you are happy about it. Connect your design with the world of the audience and let them feel how interested you are.

Do this by truly believing in what you have done. Now, it may just happen that you see “every compromise [and] every flaw” in your design. As you can well imagine, it will not be helpful to your audience’s appreciation of your work if you spend your entire presentation pointing these out. Don’t hide anything, but use these as a basis for constructive dialogue and perhaps your audience will brainstorm with you about a solution. Emphasize what is good and what works; be solution oriented toward the rest. In this way you will create an atmosphere in your presentation where everyone is ready and willing to believe in the viability of your design.

## MARK ZEFF, DESIGNER/ARCHITECT

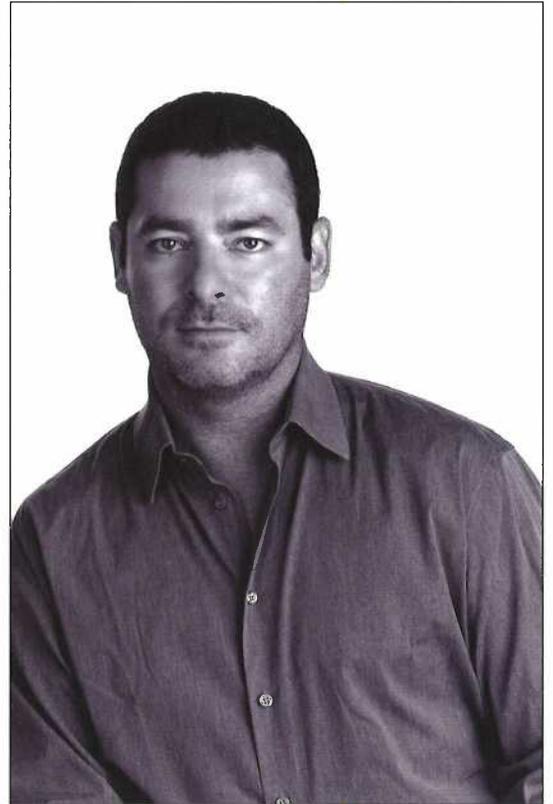
Mark Zeff is the president of Zeff Design, a multifaceted New York-based company working in architecture, interior design, furniture, graphics, product design, and marketing. Mark comes from South Africa via England, where he studied architecture and furniture design.

I think probably the most important component in the design world is the ability to communicate with your client and hear what the client wants. Then you must be able to translate that into an understanding between the client and yourself—of what the client is expecting and of what you can deliver. You must show that when a client gives you a budget or style parameter, you are able to move with it. The most important part of listening is being able to accurately turn what you hear into a working process. We've developed a series of processes that we take our clients through, and there are always checks and balances along the way: to weed out all problems, keep the project within budget, and deliver the expectation in terms of service and quality.

Sometimes, based on education or background, a designer or design firm becomes stuck in a certain style or genre or in a style of working. What happens then is that the communication with the client is manipulated into something different—not what the client wants, but what the design company can actually offer. What we try to do is to listen very carefully, so that after, or at, the first meeting, a design brief is set up. Here we say things like, “It’s my understanding in this first encounter that this is what you want, this is what you don’t want, this is how big it is, this is how much it is, and is this true?” “Have we forgotten that?” and “I have been reading your letter, and there were some other things you brought up,” and so on. We always get this done first. Then, in my company, I have a weekly session at which my project managers talk to me about every single project we are working on. We go through them alphabetically, item by item, problem by problem, solution by solution, per job for the entire job. We’ll identify what the problems are this week, and everybody in the room hears the same thing. This is neither one on one, nor is it a team thing. This is a company meeting, so someone who is not involved with the job in question still hears what the problem is and also hears the solution from me. The hope is that they will take that lesson and apply it to similar problems that come up in the jobs they are working on.

This takes three-quarters of the day, and by that time, we are up to speed with where we are with our projects and where we’re going for that week. After that, we move into an inspirational discussion about new jobs, new ideas, or new things that are coming up, so everybody gets a sense of what I’m thinking, and we get a sense of what they’re thinking. This builds strength in terms of communication.

Externally, what comes out of that meeting is a white paper that’s sent to the client, giving the status of the job at that particular moment. We also have online development sites that a client can enter using a password to look at something that we want them to see. We have on our website a section called “Client Love,” and it’s really about communication and interacting with our clients. We have used the Internet not as a gizmo or as bells and whistles, but we’ve really used it to keep the communication channels up. People are sometimes fearful to communicate if there is a problem; that’s the worst thing.



When interviewing new hires, I always look for somebody who really understands these communication skills. Can they listen to what is being asked of them and hear what the nuances are? That's really important when you have an office and you have several jobs going on. When you're explaining something to junior designers or to intermediates, they must get it—and get it immediately. You don't have time to go back and forth. Going through that learning curve is not always easy for us.

Another thing I look at is obviously the ability to communicate through drawing by hand, rather than computerized technology. I think that if you can draw, that's the most important thing to being a designer. If you can draw, then you have the spirit in your head to be able to take an idea and put it on paper in 10 seconds. I had a teacher once who said that if you could draw upside down for a client, then you'd get 99 percent of the jobs that come your way. I believe that to be true. It certainly works for me.

With new hires, I'll also look for someone who's tenacious and brave. Being brave is really about having confidence and being able to overcome all the things that go against a young person, like being intimidated by your boss or being intimidated by a whole new environment—from school to an office in New York and all the things that come along with that. I look for people who are able to stand up for themselves and be brave in terms of pushing forward a design or an idea. Out of that comes a tremendous amount of interaction with a client. Sometimes a client can be very powerful and intimidating, and you can end up listening only to the client and just following the client's direction, which is sometimes not good for the client. Being brave is about being able to say, "You know what? Try this" or "I don't agree with what you said because of this and that." I say it the way it is, and that's good and bad. But, in the end it's worked very well for me. I think you can lose all of that in school, depending on the environment. I think when somebody comes out of school, they've either been good, so they are brave and they have confidence, or they haven't done well, but will still come to the interview. They're talented, but they're not brave because they've been consistently put down. They've been critiqued constantly, and they come into the workforce timid and fearful.

There are two things that make a job attractive to me. First, I'll consider the people I'll be working with or for. That is extremely important, since it's a minimum of a year that we'll spend together and we have to connect in a lot of different ways. Secondly, it's important that the project has a sense of newness for me, which is why, if you look at my body of work, you get a sense that it's quite different from one project to the next. That's why I like doing what I do, because I can do somebody's home or somebody's restaurant or design a piece of



furniture—and we do a lot of that—it’s like going from one personality to another; it’s almost like each job has its own brand. That’s what I look for. If I went to 14 interviews and they all wanted a striped sofa . . . I don’t know if I would do that.

The good thing is that being the creative director, I don’t have to be immersed in every part of a project all the way through. I have people [who] help me with that. So I’m lucky in that I can move from one creative process to the other. In between, I strongly believe in taking time off, going places that are totally different from where I live or what I have experienced. I like to travel to places that are both brave and challenging in terms of what they offer. I also get away from my work in other ways; for instance, I do different kinds of work—I’ll do a book project, or I’ll design somebody’s brand or build somebody’s home. I like a change of geography and scale; it gives me a sense of being able to breathe between projects. If I have four meetings in a row—which often happens—and I’m going from one architectural project to the next, by the end of the day, I am finished. But if I have the four meetings, and one is a branding meeting and one is a creative meeting for a piece of art for an installation in a restaurant and so on, then it’s no problem; I could do that for days.

Someone said of me—this was a client speaking to another potential client in front of me—“Listen, if you want to hire Mark, the best thing you can do is to visit his home. If you like the home, you have an insight into his world. If you like that world, he’s the man for you. But if you go to the home and you don’t like it, he’s not your guy.”

I have two homes; one of them is in the country and one is in the city, and they are very, very different. In each house I have these bowls, about 24 inches in diameter; sometimes I have two or three of them going at the same time, but generally I have one in each home. I have a bowl of ocean stuff, and I have a bowl of earthbound stuff. It’s just a collection of things: seeds and pods and bits of bark and rocks and stones. The ocean one obviously has seashells and coral and bits of anemone . . . whatever I have found that visually intrigues me.

I do look at little things as well as big things, and I like to put little things inside big things so that you can get a sense of their scale and of their importance, even though they’re small. I just found a beautifully articulated Japanese silver beetle, and I made a stand for it, so it stands in the middle of the room—it floats. The sun catches it and it glitters and it’s all about that detail . . . and then you’ve got the inside of a building and how that articulates itself.

What’s great about collecting this natural bric-a-brac is that it comes in wonderful shapes and sizes, and there’s even the way things are positioned in the bowl. They start to get a textural tapestry going on, and it’s always changing. And not only that, but then you also decide, “No, I’m tired of having it on this table; I’m going to move it to this room,” and then you change its position and the whole room has changed. So this bowl is probably my favorite thing in the whole house. I’ll always walk by and look at it: it gives me a sense of where I come from.

Also, I guess I always return to my roots: the wonderful country of South Africa. Every time I go back, I take a deep breath and walk away from the experience thinking, “This is really what has inspired me.” The colors, the texture, and the lifestyle of that country and that beautiful space are inside of me; I don’t have to dig deep for it. I love innovation, so my real theory is to take the beauty of nature, meld that with the latest, greatest technology or innovative material or invention, bring them together, and mix them with the past. It’s the colors and the textures and all the influences from South Africa melded with all this new stuff—that’s really how I create my palette: there’s beauty in the past, and there’s beauty in the future.

## STAGE 6: COMMUNICATION

### APPAREL: COMMUNICATION

Communicating apparel designs involves figuring out what needs to be clear to the wearer, the seller, and the manufacturer of the garment. For this design, in all cases, the concerns revolve around the combination of style and adherence to ecological principles. In each case, however, the interest level is different, and the actual information varies as well. The wearer of the garment should realize the importance of the choice of ecologically sound materials and methods, but should also be made aware of the careful construction and classic fit of the garment. The retailer would need to be aware of these selling points and also be educated on the relationship of the choice of materials to the price of the garment in order that this may be clear all the way to the end user as well. Finally, the construction methods and any specific concerns about the individual materials need to be outlined to the production team. Production practices will also need to be scrutinized and discussed, as the ecologically sound practices will have to include efficient use of materials and resources. All this should be listed, detailed, and put into writing before any of the concerned parties become involved.

### FURNITURE: COMMUNICATION

The whimsical nature of the chair is, in itself, communicating the statement of its design, but what will be especially interesting to a buyer will be the history of its construction, the nature of the found objects that went into it, and the reasoning behind their use. Including diagrams of the objects and the chair's construction will be an interesting way of bringing this thinking into the experience of the furniture. On the other hand, the maker of the chair must be very well informed about the nature of the found objects, how they are to be used, and what the construction methods may or may not entail. This may well involve extensive communication and collaboration, and it will be very important to devote time to the necessary dialogue. Mapping out as much as possible beforehand will be crucial.

### GUI: COMMUNICATION

Discussing the GUI with the client will be very different in many ways from discussing it with the programmers. Communicating the design will involve showing the client the model screens and having plenty of maps and diagrams to describe the interactions that will take place. These same diagrams and maps will serve as construction diagrams for the coders, but the information content involved is on a different level. They should appear in two different versions, as it is unlikely that the client will be fluent in coding. In order to keep things clear and simple, speak the language of each side to each side, layering information as needed. Dummy screens should be created to simulate navigation when discussing options and experiences.

**1: DESIGNING A PRESENTATION: LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Before you put your presentation together, sketch a layout for the presentation as a whole, as well as for individual boards, slides, or pages, assuming there are more than one. (See Appendix 1 for guidelines.)

Consider how many illustrations you will need, what they will show, and how large they need to be. Then think of what needs to be explained in printed text. Finally, how will you apply the text and in what kind of typeface(s)?

**2: A STYLISTIC EXPERIMENT**

Now experiment with your presentation style by sketching a new layout in which you apply different styles and graphic languages.

Play with the balance of text and imagery. Depending on how your sketches look from the exercise above, turn the emphasis around. Make one much larger than the other, then reverse them or try to balance them. As you go, consider the background color of your pages or boards and try two or three possibilities. Now review and decide which layout to use.

**3: ILLUSTRATING THE DESIGNS**

Create finished, annotated illustrations for your presentation. Using the medium of your choice, create a series of illustrations to depict your design. Make sure you describe everything that your audience needs to see to understand. Create as many views, sections, and diagrams as are needed, but assume a presentation where you will be present and speaking. In choosing your size, format, and color usage, make sure you keep an eye on the design and layout of the presentation as a whole. These should be consistent and have a unifying purpose.

**4: DESIGNER'S NOTES: PLANNING FOR THE AUDIENCE**

Consider the various members of your intended audience. For each of the following, write a short memo, listing the information that is particularly relevant to them:

- Client/End user
- Fellow designers/Associates
- Production staff
- Management
- Financial representatives
- Publicity and salespeople

To which of these will you actually be presenting? Where are overlapping areas? Is there any information that is missing? Is there anything that is specific to only one group? How can you engage the team in the presentation so that they are active participants and not just passive observers?

**5: DESIGNING A PRESENTER: ASSEMBLING THE PRESENTATION**

Now that you have your illustrations, notes, and layout, print the text and assemble your presentation. As you put it together, consider how you are going to speak of it, in what order, what points you will make, and what kind of presentation structure you will use. Make notes to yourself and practice as you go.

- 1 John Corner, "Textuality, Communication, and Media Power," in *Language, Image, Media*, ed. Howard Davis and Paul Walton (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1983), 266.
- 2 See Edward Tufte's essay: "The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint" (Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press LLC, 2003).

