

Trades & Services

MENTOR MARCELLA BIDINOST

Putting a brand on your future

David Popov is the new boy at brand design consultancy R-Co. Its director, Richard Henderson, talks about devising big-name logos.

DAVID: I started enjoying design from an early age. I would draw comics with friends; we thought we'd have careers being comic illustrators. Out of high school, I didn't get any interviews for university, so I went to Box Hill TAFE and did year 13, which was excellent. Starting the three-year graphic design degree at Monash University was a big step up: the deadlines soon got tighter. I applied and started working here last year because I respected your work and knew this would be a great place for my career.

RICHARD: I did a three-year graphic design diploma at Caulfield Institute of Technology (now Monash). My first job was with a leading designer who taught me plenty of skills. Then two mates and I formed our own business. My career has been at FHA Image Design, then FutureBrand FHA and, since 2003, I've run my business, R-Co. (Richard Henderson and Company). As a design director, I've been responsible for the branding and rebranding of companies such as Telstra, Crown, Orica, BHP Billiton, Origin Energy, ANZ, OPSM, AFL, Hyatt Hotels and Ansett. I also creatively led the design of identities for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, Victoria Police, City of Melbourne and Cricket Australia. Each time I worked on those corporate change projects, I became more interested in the process of change, using creativity and innovation to take design into the boardroom.

DAVID: Most people see a logo and think it can be done in no

time. How much of a process is there in coming up with a logo?

RICHARD: On average and depending on its complexity, completing an identity project takes three to six months. It involves a sequence of stages, from winning the project and understanding it to working with thumbnails, ideas and scribbles until the options are narrowed down to the final design.

DAVID: The impression a lot of design students have is that corporate ID is boring, that all you do is letterheads and logos.

RICHARD: In my view, designing a corporate ID is the most difficult of the design professions: you're encapsulating what a company's about and encompassing the broadest to the smallest agenda in a singular mark. You need to understand how design influences and reflects change. You become quite responsible for articulating a market in a way that's unique, eye-catching, memorable and connects an organisation to the marketplace. The challenge is making positive connections with the market and blending commercial solutions with imagination.

DAVID: How much emphasis does a potential employer place on a folio versus the person?

RICHARD: It's a hand-in-glove relationship. Your folio and how well you did in your studies are the summary of what you've been doing; they demonstrate how hard you've worked and your potential. As the person carrying that folio, it's important you can articulate yourself. Being a wild creative isn't enough any



Richard Henderson (left) and new graphic designer David Popov in the R-Co offices.

PICTURE: ROOGER CUMMINS

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DAVID: Do you consider more highly graduates particular institutions, such as Monash, Swinburne and RMIT?

RICHARD: The industry is so competitive and there are so many students. I do look at the university and the standard of that university and tend to choose those from universities based in the capital cities.

DAVID: A lot of my friends want to start their own design business, either straight out of uni or in, say, five years. What advice would you give them?

RICHARD: While I celebrate initiative, you do need a lot of training and mentoring first. When you're working for someone else, you can completely focus on the projects at hand. Allowing that time to explore, without the added pressures of running a business, is very important.

DAVID: How much do corporate designers make in their first few years and how long are they classified as junior designers in training?

RICHARD: Every firm has a different approach. I look at the market rates and weigh it up in terms of opportunity. In my experience, starting out you earn

between \$30,000 and \$35,000 with yearly reviews after that. A designer can expect to move from being a junior designer to a designer within about 12 months.

DAVID: In this area, what are the expectations of a graphic designer when they start out?

RICHARD: I make the expectations relatively low. Coming into a workplace for the first time often makes you feel like you're under the microscope. It's important to make sure you're comfortable in your new workplace so you can start expressing yourself. Creativity is about flow but in the workplace it's also about time; necessity is the mother of invention.

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RICHARD HENDERSON