



Chapter

17

Survival Guide

How to Break Into This Business—and Stay There

We designed this book as a “how to” guide to help you develop better creative work. Now we’d like to share some of our personal insights about how to break into the business. We’ve also gathered some gems from some of the top names in our business, our fellow teachers, and creative recruiters to help you survive and thrive in the creative jungle. Gary Goldsmith, a former chief creative officer at Lowe/USA, sums it up nicely: “They [students] are entering a business where the staffing is leaner and deadlines shorter than ever before. A business that has less and less time for the necessary teaching and mentoring that is required more than ever before. . . . The more those of us in teaching and in the business can do to increase their chances, the better.”¹

Talent. Persistence. Luck. Talent is the key, but you need the persistence to keep trying to get that one interview, the one that lands you your first job. And you need a lot of luck to come out ahead of all the other persistent people who are just as talented. Nancy Vonk and Janet Kestin, co-creative directors at Ogilvy in Toronto, have been committed to mentoring junior creatives for a long time. Along the way they launched a Web site dedicated to mentoring creatives—ihaveanidea.org. That led to a best-selling *Adweek* book, *Pick Me: Breaking Into Advertising and Staying There*.

This is a tough business, which you’ve probably figured out by now. But as Ellen Steinberg, vice president and group creative director at McKinney in Durham, said, quoting Tom Hanks in *A League of Their Own*, “There’s no crying in baseball!” There’s no crying in advertising. It’s business.²

How to Build Your Portfolio

The time to start building your portfolio is about 3 years before you need one. Like now. Then take the advice of Joyce King Thomas, chief creative officer at McCann, New York: “Show your book every 6 months and never stop working on it.”³ How many items should be in your portfolio? Every creative director may



Words of Wisdom

“Do not covet your ideas. Give away everything you know, and more will come back to you.”⁸

—Paul Arden