MAKEREADY PODCAST: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FINDING AND DEFINING

SUCCESS IN THE FIELD OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

by

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DEDICATION

For Danny Ray Robertson. My dad.

things we love: especially Charles Sanders, Gram Garner, and Miguel Martinez.

Last but certainly not least, there are three people without whom I would not be here writing this today. I am forever grateful to: my mom, Donna Robertson, for her unconditional love and backing; my wife, Tedrah, for her undying belief in me and constant inspiration; and my brother, Stephen, for a lifetime of good conversation, being there and understanding. Words cannot express what you all mean to me.

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Introduction

"[T]here's something missing in [the] encyclopedic coverage of design … we rarely get the backstory; we rarely get the grubby bits that go with almost every job. Designers are quick to tell us about their sources of inspiration … but they are much less willing to reveal tiresome matters such as how they find clients, how much they charge and what they do when their client rejects three weeks of works and refuses to pay the bill. If you want to learn how to be a designer, you need to know about these and other messy matters" (Shaughnessy, 2010).

How do graphic designers develop working design practices that lead to the production of creative work they deem successful and fulfilling? The answers to this question are as numerous and diverse as the steadily growing multitudes of graphic designers (Graphic Designers: Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012). Perhaps an examination of the professional practices of today's designers will reveal common threads between designers who have developed effective practices in order to achieve their unique definition of success and fulfillment. In turn, if the knowledge collected through this investigation is shared with the design community through an easily accessible format, the increased contextual understanding will ultimately strengthen the graphic design profession. With a better understanding of how

others balance passion and occupation, designers will be better equipped to control the context of their own work (Siegel, 2004).

Sharing knowledge gained through experience is essential for the continued evolution of design, the expansion of design discourse, and increasing the quality of design criticism, all of which are necessary for the design profession to mature into a field that is respected on the same level as architecture, film, and fine art (Poynor, 1995). In his 2004 article, "Context in Critique (review of *Émigré* No. 64, Rant)," Dmitri Siegel calls for a new kind of design critique and discussion based on context in which designs are created. This informed criticism relies on understanding the backstories of designs and the designers who produced them. This project will enable this kind of criticism by focusing on designers' backgrounds and the foundations of their work, rather than finished product veneers. Long-form, informal conversations allow designers the freedom of time and space to speak about the contexts through which they create work they are proud of, as opposed to focusing on neat statements about the formal qualities of design projects. The creation of such an archive of design backstories will promote fuller comprehension of the profession and address the lack of discussion about the endeavors behind completed design work.

Questions. Questions that will guide the research on this topic include: How do designers structure their practices to create fulfilling work and still pay the bills? What does it take to become a successful and fulfilled designer? How do different designers define success, good work, and fulfillment? Where do designers learn about the practical aspects of professional design practice? How do designers learn

to attract work, manage client relationships, conduct business, develop their studio structure, produce work they are proud of, and charge reasonable rates? What activities amount to, and empower, design practice (*e.g.*, personal work, research, writing, conferences, teaching, etc.)? At what point in their careers do designers struggle most? How did successful designers handle that struggle? Why are there not more answers to this stratum of questions in the existing design discourse? Answers to these questions fill in the backstories of successful working designers and the grubby bits of daily design practice.

Objective. The aim of this project is to collect and distribute backstories from designers focusing on the business strategies, philosophies, and practical lessons, learned through experience, which have helped them achieve success and feel content with their creative output. These oral histories will be collected in audio interviews, and distributed online as a podcast through a website and the iTunes store. Discussion forums will be available on the companion website for listeners to continue the conversations started in the episodes.

The resulting compendium will hopefully be a source of wisdom and encouragement for the design community, to discover validating similarities between their careers and the paths of other designers, to understand how others deal with problems common throughout the profession, and to gain insight into leading designers' thoughts on various subjects. The goal is to identify and share important moments, connections, decisions, and strategies from designers' lives and distribute them through podcast conversations for listeners to learn from and discuss in the forums.

Importance of Research. Judging by the existence of books like Adrian Shaughnessy's *How To Be A Graphic Designer, Without Losing Your Soul* (2010), Debbie Millman's *How to Think Like A Great Graphic Designer* (2010), and Lee McCormack's *Designers Are Wankers* (2005)—all of which proffer practical advice and philosophical guidance for new designers and those interested in changing the course of their careers—along with the results from both of the surveys conducted during the research for this project, designers are hungry for information about working designers' professional practices. As designers Earl Gee and Fani Chung say in Catharine Fishel's book *Inside the Business of Graphic Design*, designers should "[n]ever be satisfied. The only way to grow creatively and administratively is to stay committed to learning. A good designer is constantly looking for new ways to do things. … There is always room for improvement" (2003). The product of this project will appeal to experienced designers, emerging designers, and design students alike as a source for continuing education and growth.

The aforementioned books have scratched the surface of these questions with insight from the established designer's point of view, but none have focused on creating a comprehensive archive documenting the backstories of professional designers' practices by interviewing a broad sample of established professionals. For example, in *How To Be A Graphic Designer, Without Losing Your Soul*, Adrian Shaughnessy brings up the demand amongst young designers for answers to numerous questions about the "grubby bits" of design. As he points out, designers frequently share their sources of inspiration but they seem to withhold routine details such as how they find clients, their rates, and how they deal with difficult

clients. For those who want to learn how to be a designer, understanding these and other messy matters is absolutely essential (Shaughnessy, 2010). His book is a good start, but the design community has more to gain from long-form audio interviews that can communicate the speaker's tone of voice, more detailed answers, and a more comprehensive sampling of working designers. Such a collection of interviews can provide the community with a more diverse exposure to the design profession's "grubby bits" and impart a better understanding of what it takes to become a successful and fulfilled designer.

   Literature Review. While existing resources touch on various aspects of professional design practice, none of them approach the "messy matters" in the way this project will. Adrian Shaughnessy laid down a foundation for the themes this project aims to expand upon in his 2005 publication *How to be a Graphic Designer, Without Losing Your Soul*. He broke the mold of traditional design business books by getting away from the dry technicalities and legalities associated with running a business, raising questions that are not asked elsewhere in the literature. In a review of the book, *Eye* magazine's Christopher Wilson pointed out, "For new designers, or those wanting to change their working arrangement, there are valuable words from an experienced professional here, but they must be hunted for. A survival manual for graphic designers—to keep both shirt and soul—is indeed sorely needed, but this isn't quite it" (Wilson, 2005). Shaughnessy discusses important, real-life aspects of designers' professional practices; however, the coverage is relatively brief in contrast to the information that can be revealed in long-form interviews as this project proposes to do.

Online, Debbie Millman interviews designers in her podcast, *Design Matters*, which focuses on a designer's personality and finished products. Each episode serves as an entertaining and lightly informative portrait of the designer, but the show does not exist to reveal seldom-discussed issues surrounding the everyday process of design practice that this thesis will address. Finally, Armin Vit's *SpeakUp* blog was "a pioneering example of a new medium that makes design a place to go— a conversation, rather than a finished product" (Lupton, 2007). With *SpeakUp*, Vit sought to "further the graphic design profession from within with the goal of creating a stronger and clearer sense of . . . our role . . . as professionals" (Siegel, 2004). His goals were similar to the objectives of this project: to promote honest discussions, which will provide transparent looks at the design process, and reinforce the integrity of the profession. However, where *SpeakUp* focused on design criticism this project will emphasize strategies for practicing design.

What is a Podcast? Podcasts and podcasting are less than ten years old and are still an emerging medium; therefore, their definitions are still developing. However, for the purposes of this project, the book *How to Create Podcasts for Education* provides well-crafted working definitions. A podcast (noun) is a digital media file, which contains audio (sound), or audio and video (sound and something to view). Podcasts are made available from a website; they can be opened and/or downloaded and played on a computer; and/or downloaded from a website to be played on a small portable player designed to play the sound and/or visuals (Salmon, 2008). Podcasting (verb) is the action of creating and distributing the podcast.

In more simplified terms, "a podcast is like a radio or TV show that you can download over the Internet. People who want to listen to (or watch) a podcast can download an individual podcast episode or subscribe to a podcast series" (GarageBand Help: What is a podcast? 2010). In *Wired* magazine Analee Newitz heralded podcasting as "the medium that promises a future where anyone can make radio, instead of just listen to it" (Newitz, 2005).

Podcasts are an open format free from regulation. The person producing the podcast determines his or her own constraints. There are no time limits, word counts, or time slots to fill. Most often with podcasts the host is the publisher, editor, director, interviewer, public relations team, and engineer, which leaves him or her free to create as he/she sees fit and to work directly with the audience (Hammersley, 2004).

In *The Guardian* Ben Hammersley (2004) proclaimed, "Podcasts allow the producer to combine the intimacy of voice, easily accessible interactivity of blogs, and the convenience of a quick download resulting in the best of all worlds for both the listener and the maker." This accessibility and intimacy, combined with the freedom to explore and experiment without constraints on time or physical space, make podcasts the ideal format for this project.

Summary of Research Outcome. For this project, a podcast titled *Makeready* was developed, which features interviews with a diverse sampling of designers and discussions about how they define success, how they came to a place in their careers where they feel satisfied with their work and their relationships with their clients, what their business strategies are, and what practical lessons they

have learned through experience. With a goal of exploring the need for designers to share this kind of behind-the-scenes information, each interview focuses on the preparations and milestones that helped designers define and find success.

CHAPTER 2

Design Method

The development of this project will follow Hugh Dubberly's iterative, non-linear, and recursive *A Model of the Creative Process* (2009). In his model the process is expressed as a looping process of iteration (observe → reflect → make → observe → reflect → make → etc.), which uses feedback from successive rounds of information gathering, analysis, and prototyping to converge on a goal or the answer to a research question. Specifically, the process for this project will follow these steps:

1. Observe: Begin by surveying the design community about how they currently gain insights into the practical matters of design practice, and what more they would like to learn about in this area from fellow designers.

2. Reflect: Develop the focus of the content for the interview series, based on survey responses and feedback from designers. An anonymous survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey.com (see Appendix A), in which seven questions were submitted to a range of designers and design students. Participants were directed to the online survey through an email, which included the necessary academic disclosures and a link to the online questionnaire. After they followed the link, the survey received fifty-three responses to questions about the participants' experience level, where they look for information about design and design professional practices, if they wanted to know more about how designers manage their practices, if they

were interested in discussing these practices, which aspects they were most interested in, and how important they thought it was for designers to learn about these practices from other designers.

3. Make: Record interviews with designers, distribute them to the design community, and invite audience responses.

4. Observe: Listen to recorded interviews to learn where improvements can be made. Also, release beta versions of select episodes to a small audience, and follow with a questionnaire asking for feedback about their listening experience.

5. Reflect: Process information from personal listening experience and test-audience listening experiences; look for common threads; determine the best way to address these issues.

6. Make: Record more interviews with adjusted goals/approaches and technical corrections in mind.

7. Observe: Collect feedback from the design community, conduct a brand audit, and investigate current design trends for related projects.

8. Reflect: Review collected information and consider how it pertains to the brand and visual identity of this project.

9. Make: Create initial sketches of logo ideas and taglines.

10. Observe: Review the results from early brand development stages and share with a handful of trusted project consultants.

11. Reflect: Consider notable observations, only keep the top 3 to 5 options, and think about how to best move forward with refining the options.

12. Make: Develop refined versions of the selected options.

13. Continue refining the recordings and the brand through repetition of previous steps.

Following the observation component of Dubberly's method, the development of this project included two surveys. The first asked questions in the style of market research to help determine the audience and the need for such a project (see Appendix A). The majority of respondents to this survey were design students (54.7%), followed by practicing professionals with more than ten years of experience (35.8%). The second survey accompanied a beta-release of the first five episodes of the podcast, and functioned as feedback for product development research (see Appendix B). The soft launch episodes and questionnaire were submitted to a relatively small group of graphic designers including some participants in *Makeready* interviews, trusted classmates, and confidants who have consulted on the development of this project. While the first survey helped confirm the necessity of the podcast, the second reaffirmed the project's goals and provided useful information about how to improve future episodes.

Another example of Dubberly's model of the creative process at work in the development of *Makeready* can be seen in the brand and visual identity development. The branding process began with observation and reflection in the form of assessing the client's needs—in this case the podcast was the client—and developing a proposal for the best way to meet those needs. In order to launch the podcast, it required a name, a tagline, a visual identity, and a website design. Reflection came in the form of developing a project overview, defining the project

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goals, and outlining the appropriate design process. Once the proposal is approved, the process moved into the second round of observation, reflection, and making.

This round began with research into brands with similar goals, comparison of *Makeready*'s goals to those of other podcasts, exploration of related literature, gathering samples of contemporary visual trends, and further definition of the roots and influences behind the podcast's concept. Reflecting on all of this information led to the podcast's name, *Makeready*, as well as the development of a brand audit, brand positioning, brand pillars, and a graphic atlas comprising a visual vocabulary that communicates the *Makeready* brand. In the next stage of the creative process, the information collected in round two is reflected upon to determine directions for the first round of logo sketches. The sketches are completed and presented to the client. Then, the designer reflects on feedback in consecutive rounds until the process resolves in satisfactory solution for both the client and the designer. The final design solutions and more detail on the branding process will be covered in a later section, but for now it is important to illustrate how Dubberly's process plays out over the course of a typical design project.

Finally, in the case of the podcast recording, the iterative process will continue throughout the ongoing life of the project with the goal of continuously refining all aspects of the podcast, adjusting for newly realized circumstances, and perpetually evolving as needed. Through observation and reflection upon preparation for interviews, the interview process, the information gathered through the interviews, and the discussion they generate within the design community

Makeready will grow and evolve with the surrounding circumstances and the audience's needs.

Clearly, this process is ideal for both finite design projects—such as naming and branding a product—and more open-ended projects—such as creating a podcast intended to go on for an undetermined amount of time. The cyclical repetition of these three basic steps provides a perfect balance of flexibility, reflection, and systematic progress for creative projects.

CHAPTER 3

The Podcast

The Basics. *Who will be interviewed?* In the early stages, *Makeready* will focus on interviewing experienced designers—those with widely recognizable names and work—about the tough times and important milestones in their career backstories, and their definition of success. Then, as the podcast progresses, the guest list will expand in diversity to include more "unknown" guests. Generally the audience wants to know how the designers they admire came to a place in their career where they feel satisfied with their work, their working environment, and their relationships with their clients (see Appendixes A and B). As the graphic design profession grows and spreads geographically from the traditional hubs of major global cities into places with limited exposure to like-minded thinkers, established designers, or innovative design thinkers, there is an increasing need for the designers in these new locations to learn from stories from colleagues—with their differing definitions of success, their business strategies, philosophies, and practical lessons learned through experience—through easily accessible media. The intention of *Makeready* is to host any creative professional who has valuable information to contribute to this larger discussion.

Interview Style & Podcast Format. Makeready interviews take on a conversational and informal style and the episodes will remain as unedited as possible. In *Interviewing: A Guide for Journalists and Writers*, Gail Sedorkin refers to journalistic styles ranging from "the aggressive interviewer who argues with the

interviewee at every point, to the interviewer who is overawed by the 'talent', agreeing with every word and allowing the interviewee to remain unchallenged" (2002). *Makeready* is more interested in the conversation, than in challenging or confronting interviewees, and the interviews will originate largely from my devoted curiosity with regards to the subjects and the field of design. In an article about Rudy VanderLans' *Émigré* magazine interview style, Andrew Blauvelt discussed the pros and cons of the interview's transgressions, digressions, and length.

According to Blauvelt, digression is a positive aspect of *Émigré* interviews, in which it "is manifested in the interview because the interview procedure is closer to conversation, and importantly, dialogue. The traditional question and answer exchange is itself opened up, subject to the trajectories (whims?) of the conversation itself" (1995). Where *Émigré* interviews had been criticized as too lengthy, Blauvelt claims the digression is not something to be curtailed. Rather it "is the logical outcome of an interview where the descriptive details, elaborations, allusions, anecdotes and other appendages to the text provide a certain richness and a sense of spontaneity and unpredictability to the Q & A exchange" (1995). In the *Émigré* sense, digression does not mean there are no limits on time or space, rather it means there is room for the interviewees to be descriptive and provide tangential side-notes.

Blauvelt also interprets Émigré's interviews as transgressive for their choice of interviewees, the subjects covered, and their position in design debates. Much like *Makeready*, *Émigré* had broad criteria for interview subjects ranging from design entrepreneurs, fringe graphic designers, and recent design school graduates. In

these interviews, the focus was not solely on the designers' work, but delved into contemporary debates about technology, philosophy, and the designer's role. The discussions between Rudy VanderLans and his interviewees were privileged glimpses into conversations during which he confronted makers about their work directly and cited specific examples with hope of understanding why he responded to the work the way he did. *Émigré's* compelling style had a major influence on the *Makeready* approach. Rather than seeing illustrative details divulged in interviews as excess or overload, *Makeready* sees this information as insightful hints and clues about how others go about their practice, which could inform how listeners go about theirs.

In a similar sense, *Makeready* is aimed at initiating robust internal dialogue within the design community and engaging in deeply philosophical discussions in order to understand the guests' unique motivations, similar to Debbie Millman's approach in *How to Think Like A Great Graphic Designer* (Millman, 2010). In interviews recorded thus far, conversations about philosophy and motivations are best facilitated when I (as interviewer) create a comfortable atmosphere which is conducive to compelling conversation; successful examples include my conversation with Christian Helms in a local bar, or the episode with Rick Valicenti recorded after an informal outdoor lunch. These discussions seem to happen more honestly in a friendly and conducive environment. None of the interviews recorded were completely unsuccessful, though some of the exchanges highlighted areas for potential improvement, such as recording quality and location choice (Appendix B). For example, a more recent series of interviews recorded on location in New York

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raised my awareness of the importance of preparation and control over the setting

for optimal recording circumstances. Each overall conversation is unpredictable and

contains positive moments along with mistakes or oversights. As *Makeready*

continues to develop the goal is to exhibit steady improvement in interviewing

expertise and technical audio production.

One result of the conversational and digressive style, which is also influenced

by other podcasts, is the variable length of each episode. *Podcast Solutions*

reinforces a lesson easily learned through investigating podcasts in the iTunes store:

"You're never locked into a set length for your podcast" (Geoghegan & Klass, 2007).

Podcasts can vary in length from episode to episode because they do not have to fit

into prescribed time slots. Episodes of Marc Maron's *WTF*, currently available on

iTunes, range from 1 hour 10 minutes to 1 hour 57 minutes. The length of each

episode is determined by the amount of material available (Geoghegan & Klass,

2007). Sometimes, in the course of a *Makeready* conversation, an hour can go by

quickly: in other cases, the interviewee has only a limited amount of time for the

conversation. The freedom of the podcast format means there is no right or wrong

length, and this perfectly suits the goals of *Makeready* because it allows each

conversation to happen naturally.

Interview Questions. Thus far, each *Makeready* conversation begins with the

same question: How did you become a graphic designer? The idea is to start the

conversation with the interviewee's backstory as a foundation for the rest of his/her

career. Ideally, this question leads into a digressive discussion around the

interviewees' interests in design, who their mentors are, who or what their

influences are, when they started to design, transgressive conversation about their thoughts on the current state of design, and how graphic design became the focus of their careers. Some interviewees already have previous interviews and versions of their life stories published in different formats. In these cases, *Makeready* will attempt to ask for more detail about specific parts of their lives that influence their work. However, at this point the majority of the designers on *Makeready* are not industry veterans, so for the most part their stories are new and unrehearsed.

An important piece of the preparation for each episode of *Makeready* is preparing and printing the question sheet. At the beginning of this project I developed a list of questions that included the questions I wanted to hear answered by designers, questions recommended by my thesis chair and colleagues, and questions pulled from other interviews, which seemed to address the grubby bits of professional design practice. This list is constantly evolving through experience and recommendations. It also changes for each interview based on specific material that comes up during preparatory research about the interviewee. For example, several colleagues expressed interest in one interviewed designer's ability to put so much effort into projects that appear to have limited budgets yet still charge a reasonable fee for his work, so questions about his billing and client relations were added to the list and asked during the interview. Still, the baseline for each interview is the basic collection of questions that addresses the information *Makeready* seeks to discuss; this ultimately provides continuity between each episode. However, in the best interviews the questions list is barely used; while it can be helpful as a checklist when interviewees stray off topic, or worse when they seem hesitant to dive into

conversation, it is really only a means to get the conversation going in the beginning. If the discussion flows easily and the basic questions are covered naturally, then the question sheet is unnecessary.

The Brand. For this project to succeed it was important to: develop a brand that carried forward the intent and the character of the podcast; devise a name that called this brand to mind; create an identity that embodied and symbolized this brand; and design an easily navigable website that to allow listeners to discover episodes and continue the conversation.

As Marty Neumeier says in his formative book for brand centric-designers and business people, *The Brand Gap*, a brand is the feeling people have about a product when they encounter it (Neumeier, 2006). Thus, a company cannot control a brand—they can only influence it. The process of developing a brand is an exercise in finding a favorable balance between how people feel and how the company wants them to feel. Knowing this, the process of defining the *Makeready* brand works at defining what differentiates this podcast from other sources of similar information.

Graphic designers focus primarily on visual elements that adequately express the product/company/person's unique character. The logo and identity system laid the visual foundation for *Makeready*, and the process of developing these valuable assets also helped better define the disposition of the whole project. *Makeready*'s identity establishes design credibility while communicating the overall concept, intent, and character behind the project. The flexible identity produced through this design process will allow the project to grow into new directions without a need for a future rebrand. Success in branding the podcast hinges on providing a clear

portrayal of the ideas and personality behind the podcast through foundational design decisions and a visual identity system. *Makeready* required an identity that would make a strong first impression, and an identity that would accommodate future growth.

      Roots & Influences. The concept and motivation behind *Makeready* came from two primary sources: genuine curiosity and recognition of a market desire for in-depth backstories of successful designers. First, as a design autodidact and curious professional, I sought information about how successful designers' careers developed, the context behind their successes and working processes, and the adversities they overcame to define and achieve their versions of success. *Émigré* magazine was the one resource that came closest to providing the kind of information I wanted to know about design and designers—particularly through Rudy VanderLans' comprehensive interviews. However, this magazine ceased publication in 2009. When current resources did not provide in-depth answers to my questions, I realized an opportunity to fill that need by providing information designers were looking for. Second, existing podcasts for other creative fields, primarily stand-up comedy, have established a successful model for providing the kinds of narrative history designers would like to find about how other designers bring in clients, manage clients, and run their studios (Apendix A). Namely, Marc Maron's *WTF Podcast* provides entertaining information about his guests, their career development, and how their life stories influence their career paths. Each episode serves as a kind of insightful quasi-therapy during which the host probes his guests' pasts to create a portrait of their personal lives, careers, and other

circumstances that led them to where they are today. At times it sounds like listening in on someone's therapy session, and at other times it feels like therapy for the listener, as they are privy to reaffirming anecdotes and commiserative happenstances. After some contemplation, the connection between this market opportunity and the therapeutic information provided by podcasts like *WTF* was clear. I could see the need for a podcast providing similar conversations with designers.

  Market Analysis. On the subject of graphic design, Debbie Millman's *Design Matters* is the closest existing example of what this podcast aims to be, though there are several important differences. Like the books of interviews discussed above, *Design Matters* covers a broader scope than this project hopes to. Designobserver.com—the home of Millman's podcast—says: "*Design Matters* with Debbie Millman is a thought-provoking internet podcast, which profiles industry-leading graphic designers, change agents, artists, writers, and educators" (Millman, 2010). As is clear from this description, the goal of *Design Matters* is to present a broad portrait of the designers Millman interviews. Like the interview books mentioned above, *Design Matters* interviews touch on some facets of design business—as *Makeready* aims to do—however Millman does not focus as directly on the subject's backstory, or probe as deeply into their definitions of success as this podcast intends to do.

  Other existing podcasts direct their focus toward areas that do not conflict as directly with this project's subject matter. For example, *TED Talks*—presentations from TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Conferences on innovative ideas,

designs, and other practices—are released as podcasts. These talks may occasionally drift into the subject of design practice, but most often they are focused on larger design ideas, singular experiments, and noteworthy projects. The information presented at TED Conferences is not in conflict with the content I will provide.

Additionally, *The PageBreak Podcast*—a book review podcast for designers hosted by Liz Andrade and Niki Brown—is aimed at building a community of creative people who can share ideas and opinions. On *The East Wing*, Tim Smith interviews designers about design, solving technical problems, and creating products involved with web design and programming. Up-and-coming designers can get information on everything from application specific tips and tutorials to general design and business practice topics from the *Rookie Designer* podcast.

Existing podcasts contributes valuable information to specific aspects of the design discourse, and any one of these podcasts could have the occasional crossover with *Makeready*'s subject matter. However, none of these existing podcasts focuses solely on the grubby bits of professional design in the same way this project does by asking established designers questions about areas other designers struggle with.

Brand Positioning. As opposed to the previously mentioned podcasts, *Makeready* will approach the design community through sincere questions about "just how they do it" with the curiosity and hunger of an apprentice who is well informed but unpracticed. As the host of *Makeready*, I have a unique, outsider/insider perspective on the design industry via real-world experience in the field—I have been working as a designer since 2000—and a well-read design education, but I did not study design as an undergraduate and I have not worked in

studio or agency jobs alongside far more experienced practicing professionals. Leading up to graduate school, my design education was autodidactic and removed from interactive encounters with established, design-school-educated designers. This led to a hunger for knowledge about the field that does not come from books, and a desire to know what untapped resources hide in conversations beyond the limited scope of my freelance and in-house design careers.

Makeready is unique from all other design podcasts because of the perspective I bring to inside-design subjects and my unaffected conversational style. Other design podcasts either lean towards technical shoptalk, a more commercial style of interview, design criticism, or short-form interviews about the interviewee's latest hit project. *Makeready* episodes will present long-form interviews focusing on interesting aspects of creative professionals' career paths and life stories, and it will offer the audience the experience of listening in on a conversation between two designers in a relaxed setting.

Brand Pillars. The *Makeready* brand can be distilled into four pillars, which describe what the show stands for: backstories, sincere curiosity, candid conversation, and layers of connections.

As mentioned previously, each interview begins with the interviewee's career backstory in his/her own words. Even when the story may be well known, it is never told the same way twice and this information provides a contextual foundation for the rest of the conversation.

The conversations on *Makeready* are made possible by my sincere curiosity about each guest's experiences, thoughts, and philosophies. As I was conducting my

preliminary podcasting research, Tim Smith of *The East Wing* advised me not to start a podcast unless I could imagine wanting to record at least 100 episodes. Now, after recording over twenty episodes I can confirm the desire to continue recording well into the hundreds.

Candid moments in the conversations on *Makeready* are extremely important. These insights into the interviewee's humanity allow the audience to understand that these people who are sometimes idolized are actually not so different from other designers. Once the audience knows this fact, they can begin to understand these designers' work in new ways, or even see how the podcast's audience members are not so different from someone they may have put on a pedestal.

The layers of connections revealed through *Makeready* discussions help fill in gaps in previous notions about the interviewees, provide insights into their decisions, and allow the audience to better understand these designers' directions in life. Learning how one designer influenced another, how your favorite designer interprets his/her own work, or how a designer you never heard of relates to several of your favorite designers can provide a profound sense of perspective. Further connections will be seen in the interviews as previous topics are referenced in successive discussions. Time after time, conversations on *Makeready* reveal connections between designers or design philosophies, which could translate visually into layers of design history.

These four pillars provide the conceptual foundation for the *Makeready* podcast and acted as a touchstone when developing the brand.

Naming. The podcast's name, *Makeready*, came from research, reflection, and discussion during the brand excavation process. In traditional print design, make-readies are all of the test prints and preparation leading up to a final print job. *Makeready*, the podcast, is about everything done in preparation for a design career. The discussions captured in these audio interviews will include, but are not limited to, the origins of one's interest in design, decisions that led to working as a designer, education and professional chronicles, lessons learned along the way, twists and turns that led to important understandings, etc., which interviewees deem important to their success as creative professionals. Definitions of success and pathways to success will differ for each singular subject, just as preparations are unique for each distinct print job. While the milestones reached during this make-ready process may be different for each designer, the opportunity to notice similarities and recognize differences can be enlightening for other creative professionals. Sharing these individual stories could also prove useful for clarifying the ever-evolving definitions of what a designer is, what a designer does, and what designers have to offer. Ultimately, it is useful and interesting to know what steps— whether they were deliberate or happenstance—led others to their "successful" design careers.

Logo Design. After several rounds of sketching and refinement it became apparent that one of the logo concepts captured the *Makeready* brand better than any of the others. This concept encapsulates layers of subtle meaning, which provides a strong tie to the ideas behind the podcast while allowing room for further meanings to develop as the brand evolves. Originally referred to as the

"pick-up sticks" concept, this design stood out as unique and discerning in earlier rounds of visual identity development.

The crisscrossing layers of lines could be interpreted as career paths, milestones from backstories, and divergences between each story told on *Makeready*. Two important aspects of this concept are the layers of meaning behind the concept and the potential for multiple iterations via various arrangements of the lines.

Figure 1: *Makeready* logo

While refining the visual idea I recognized the possibility of various configurations of crisscrossing lines, which could further imply the differences and similarities between conversations. However, problems occurred when developing various iterations of the original concept. Some versions were too organized to represent unplanned, unique pathways, while in other versions the lines intersected the letters, making them illegible.

round 1   round 2   round 3

Figure 2: Logo structure development.

I developed a system in which the lines bounced around in a planned but seemingly irregular way and avoided collisions with the letters. I based this formula on a nine-sided shape and used nine lines to create a crisscrossing design. Eight drawings were created by extending the lines from one point to another, a certain number of spaces away from the starting point. This simple formula generated 90 unique, and seemingly random shapes by taking line one from the first shape, line two from the second shape, line three from the third shape, and so on in rotation until the composition consisted of nine lines.
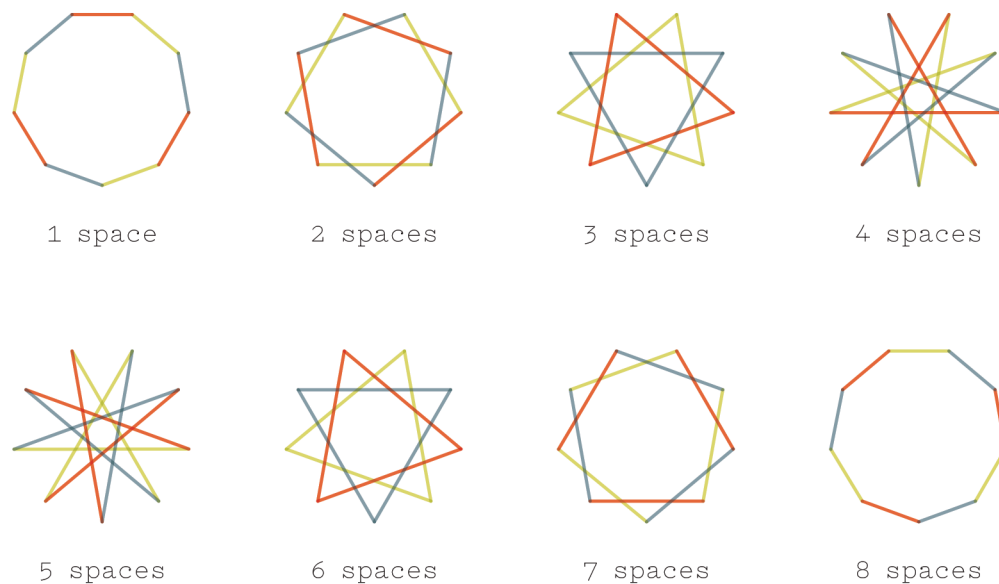
Figure 3: Generative logo formula foundation shapes.

Next, the connection between the type and the intersecting lines faded when the lines no longer ran between the letters, and the pathways seemed too finite when they terminated with round endings. Therefore, I adjusted the intersecting-line portion of the logo to help the pathways appear more open-ended and bring back to the feeling of crisscrossing.

Finally, the application of a generative design formula to the letter serifs helped tie the letters into the overall concept, and customized the font in a way that makes it unique to this logo.

Layers, connections, crossing paths, unpredictability, a delicate balance, and frenetic energy in this mark represent the narratives and connections revealed in *Makeready* interviews.
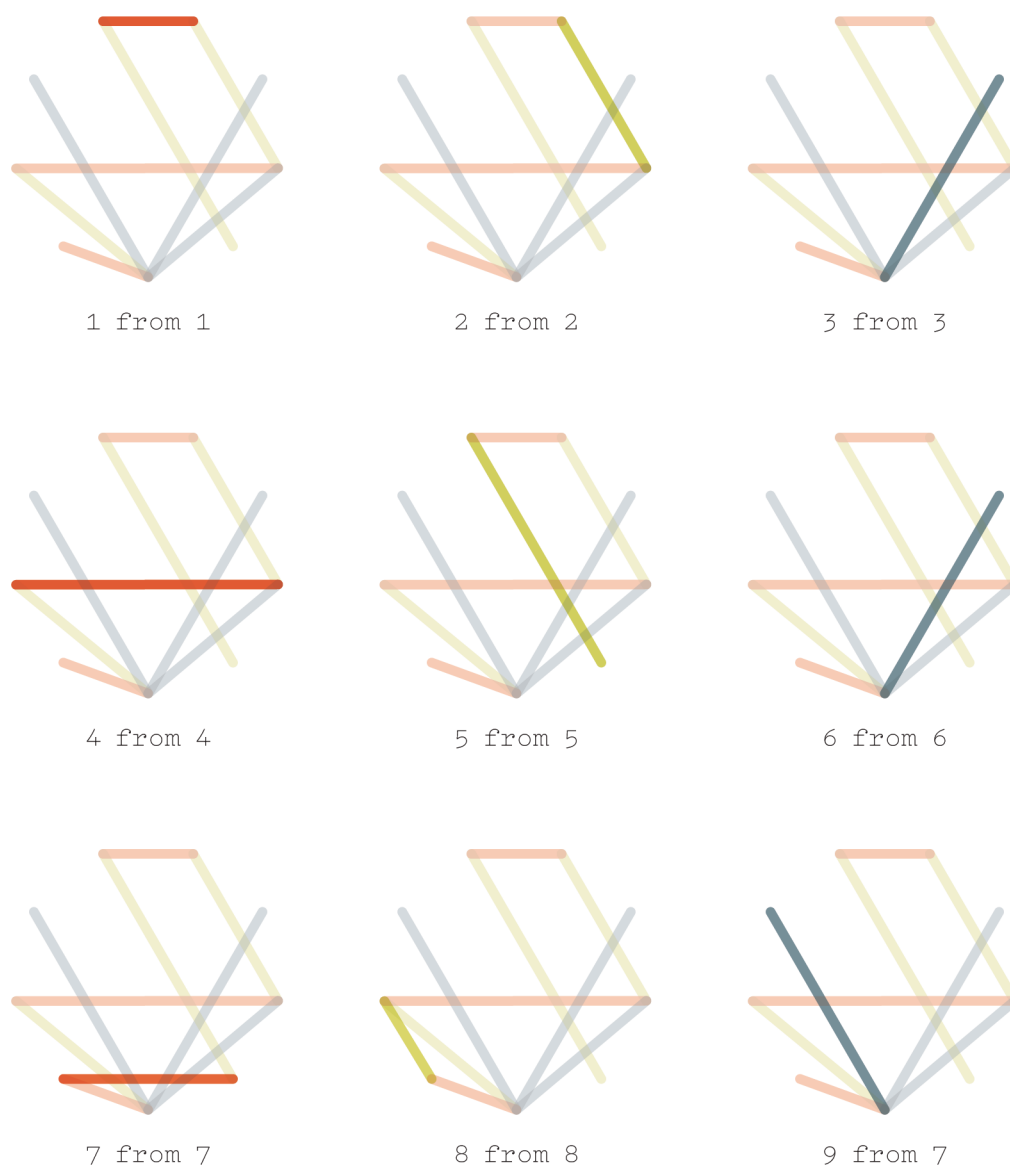
Figure 4: Generative logo formula illustrated.
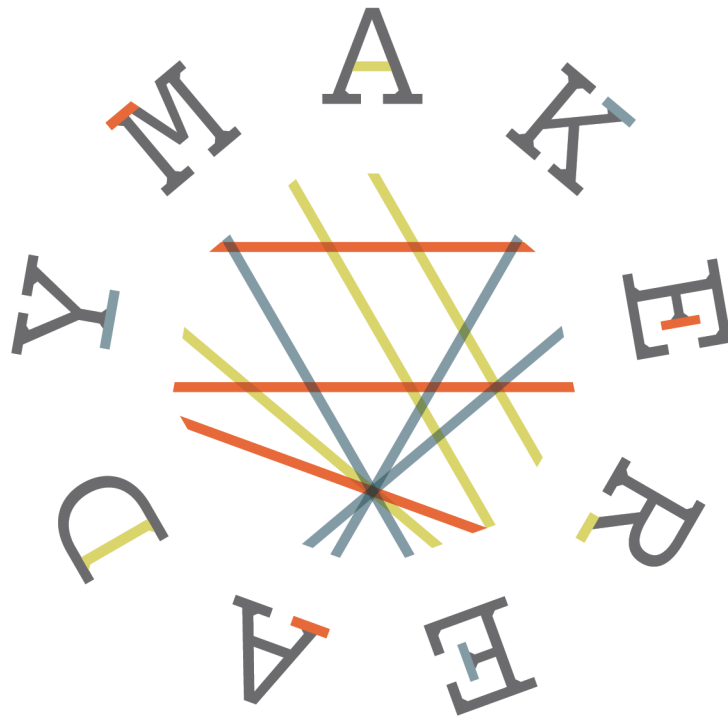
Figure 5: Final Logo

MAKEREADY

all color placement options

MAKEREADY

iteration 1

MAKEREADY

iteration 2

MAKEREADY

iteration 3

Figure 6: Logotype development.

Typography. The original logo design concept used a contemporary typeface based on classic modernist type families. However, the varying widths of each letter and slight contrasts in stroke weight made it difficult to balance the letter spacing when the name circled the logo.

The type family Pitch fits the style and technical needs of this project for a myriad of reasons. The basic design is based on classic typewriter letters. Typewriters have a legacy of functionality, romance, and literary seriousness, which

fall in line nicely with the goals of *Makeready*. Like a podcast, the letters require very little formatting, or typographic styling. Pitch is a humble, beautiful typeface, which represents the earnest motives behind *Makeready*.

As a slab-serif monospaced font, Pitch makes a strong connection between the letter shapes and the generative lines in the logo. The monospaced design helps relieve tension in the visual rhythm between letters when they are evenly spaced around the nine-sided shape.

Figure 7: Final logotype.

In certain applications, it is necessary to represent the brand in type without the logo symbol. For *Makeready* the logotype integrates a similar generative concept to the formula behind the logo. This is a purely typographic representation of the brand for use when the main logo format does not work as well in application.

Color Palette. The *Makeready* color palette ties the relatively contemporary concept back to its traditional print design origins. I chose the color palette from a letterpress make-ready image I found when researching visual expressions of the brand. These colors connect with the project's concept, and subtly reference the RGB digital color palette to also make a connection with the digital medium of the project.
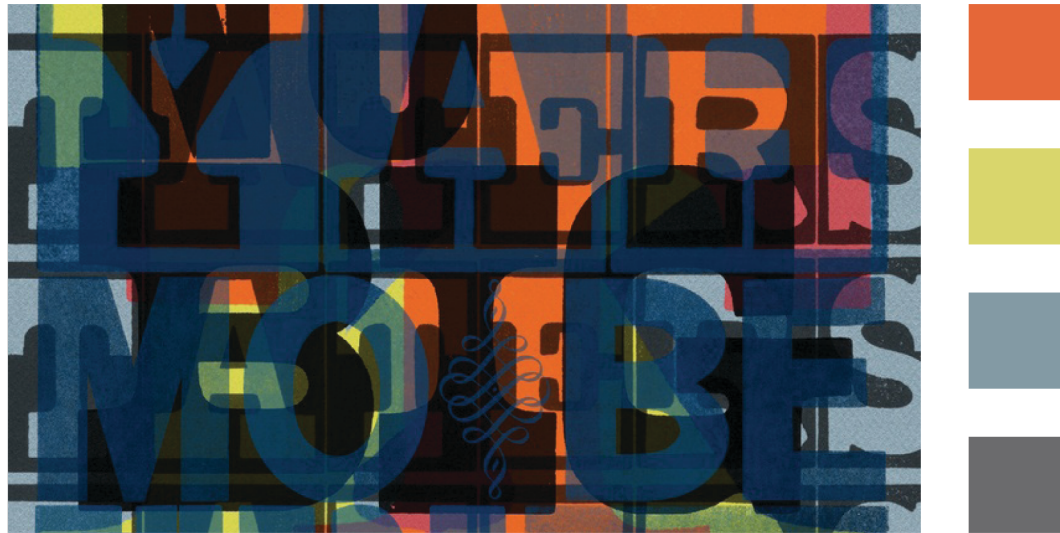
Figure 8: *Makeready* color palette.

Website. The website will provide a method for distributing the podcast, but it will also furnish a structure for tagging and cross-referencing key content from each installment. For example, a listener could search for all episodes recorded in New York, or all episodes that discuss branding, or all conversations with self-taught designers. A website in a blog format will allow for easy labeling and searching of its content through meta-tags assigned when the blog entry is created. This feature adds tremendous value to the project, as it opens the door to more effective digestion and understanding of the common threads between different interviews.

Audience members will also be able to comment and discuss information from the podcast conversations via a comment board tied to each episode. Ideally, the podcast and the website will contribute to developing design careers, and bolster the existing design discourse. By promoting greater transparency and open

discussion about the messy parts of professional design practice, the aim is to

improve the design profession.
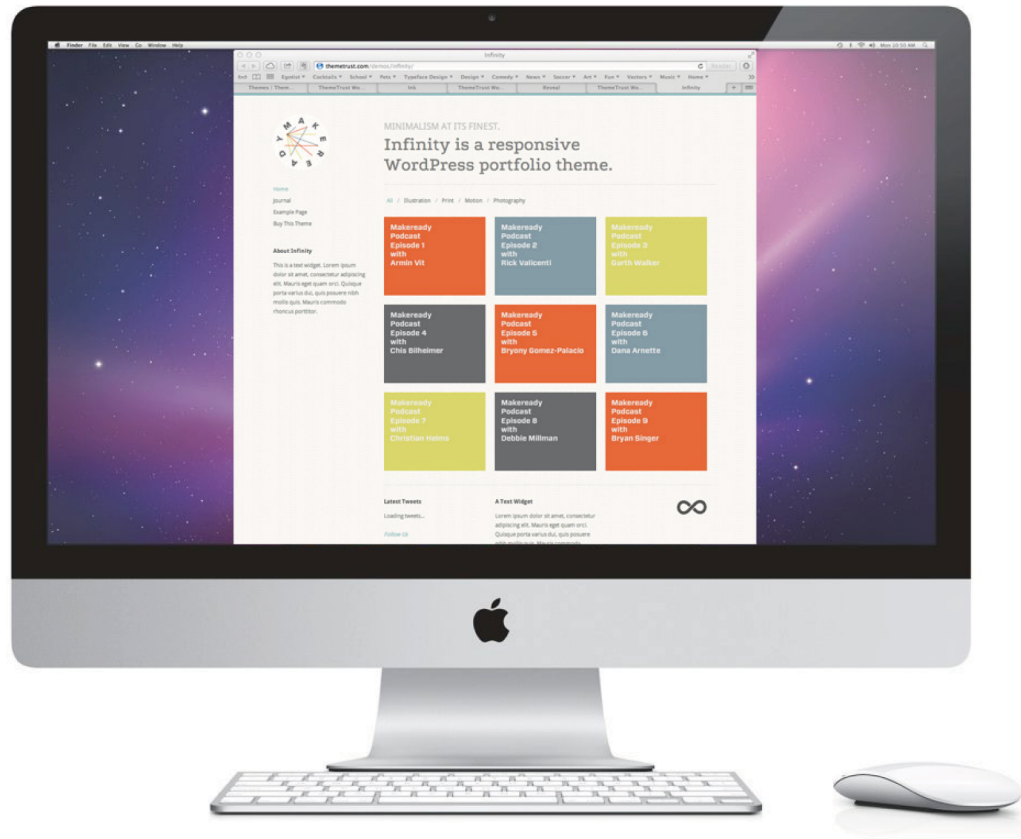
Figure 9: Website design.

Production. *Locations.* The goal of this project is to conduct in-person interviews with a diverse multitude of creative professionals. Graphic designers are located all over the world, and increasingly in areas outside traditional major design hubs, and publicized travel is not a standard stipulation in a designer's job description, therefore I cannot rely on a large number of designers traveling through the area on advertised visits. Since the majority of the interview subjects do not live in the Austin/San Marcos, TX, area, it is necessary to travel to meet interviewees in person in their hometowns, at conferences, or wherever we can organize a meeting. At this early stage in the project's development, interviews already include designers from Austin, San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, Durban (South Africa), Toronto, Manhattan, and Brooklyn. *Makeready* conversations have been recorded in homes, condos, offices, bars, restaurants, and public parks. While it is challenging to record with consistent audio quality in such a variety of locales, the goal is to continuously improve on these technical aspects. Ultimately, the priority is to capture the conversation in person, rather than on the phone or through the internet.

Recording. The recording process is a series of technical and logistical challenges. These challenges begin with selecting the meeting location and determining the best possible arrangement of the equipment at that location, and carry through to managing the production during the interview. Since the majority of the interviews are recorded in different locations, the process must adapt for every interview.

The microphones are most effective when they are close to the speaker's mouth, so the primary goal is to place the microphone stands in the optimal location. Then, the audio interface and laptop should be easily within my line of sight, and all cords should be organized as far out of hand-gesturing range as possible. This set-up changes with each particular location. Some interviews take place around large tabletops with plenty of room for the recording equipment, while others happen at relatively tiny two-seat tables and thus some of the equipment must be placed on the floor or on another nearby table.

Once the best arrangement for the equipment in the interview setting is determined and the equipment is set up, ensuring a consistent and favorable recording volume is the primary challenge. If the interviewer and interviewee are too far away from the microphones or if the microphone input volume is not properly adjusted, then the quality of the podcast recording suffers greatly. After the volume, the second biggest challenge is simultaneously playing the roles of interviewer, producer, and production team. Hosting the podcast requires simultaneous execution of tasks including: participating honestly in the conversation, supervising technical aspects of the recording, and monitoring the conversation for mood, direction, and interesting content. Balancing these equally important tasks can be particularly difficult when the interviewee is on a tight schedule, because it is important that the conversation flow naturally, however equally important are the particular topics I want to cover during the timeframe. It would be greatly beneficial to have a production assistant or recording engineer

present at each interview who could handle the technical side, but for now this is unaffordable and impractical—especially when traveling.

  Dialogue. The goal is for each interview to give the impression that the audience is listening in on a conversation between people who are comfortable talking to each other and engaging in a dynamic conversation. For this reason, each meeting is approached more like an informal conversation, rather than a formal interview. It is important for the subject to be relaxed so he/she will feel comfortable talking at length about intimate career details and so the audience can get a true sense of the real person—not a groomed media character.

  The intent is to approach *Makeready* interviews with a well-balanced mix of self-assurance, and genuine excitement about the person I am talking to. My demeanor as the interviewer largely establishes the mood of these encounters so I am intent on staying relaxed, yet actively engaged. I do not want the interviewees to suspect disrespect or apathetic nonchalance. I do want them to see that I am easy to talk to, enthusiastic, and genuinely interested in what they have to say.

  As mentioned earlier, the recording starts as early as possible in the conversation. This helps in several ways: levels can be checked before the most substantial pieces of the conversation begins, the interviewee has time to get comfortable in front of the microphone, and there is one less thing for me to remember to do once the conversation is underway. It helps to have the recording running as long as possible to make sure every possible insight is captured. Therefore, on the other end of the conversation, I try to stop the recording as late as possible. Sometimes the best part of the conversation happens right after the

conversation is ostensibly finished. I missed some interesting comments that could have been easily captured in early interviews: on the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to cut the recording and start packing up to move the process along in order to respect the interviewee's other time commitments.

Postproduction. *Minimal Editing.* In keeping with the candid spirit of podcasts like *WTF* with Marc Maron and *The Nerdist Podcast*, and Rudy VanderLans' digressive lengthy interview style in *Émigré* magazine, each episode is minimally edited. Still, the recording is not presented to the audience in a completely raw format. The beginning of each recording is used for explanation of the concept and checking the microphone levels, and the end of each interview consists of questions for my own reference. These pieces, any distracting interruptions, and anything an interviewee asks to be cut are removed before the episode is published. Other than those specific instances, all other content is kept in the final episode in an effort to allow listeners to hear the complete conversation.

The goal of *Makeready* is to present the audience with a complete and candid conversation. As former journalist and current journalism educator says in his article "In praise of length and depth," in some circumstances there is strength in depth and quality in quantity, and when digging deeper what scores is length and depth (Brock, 2010). Other interviews, such as short form promotional interviews or magazine interviews, lose valuable information when they are edited down to fit a word count or a specific time length. *Makeready* keeps the entire conversation intact so the audience gets the full range of clues and hints from each original

conversation. The important moments, connections, decisions and strategies

listeners can learn from will come from this length and depth.

CHAPTER 4

Outcomes

Expected Outcomes. The end product of this project is an archive-in-progress of interviews with designers about the grubby bits of professional design practice. Originally, these biographies will be presented as audio podcast interviews, which will be available for download through an accompanying website (www.makereadypodcast.com) and the iTunes store. However, the focus of the project is on the content and not the format so it must remain open to the possibility that a better format for presenting the content of this compendium could be invented or discovered.

Ideally, in the future, this project will contribute substantially to the existing design discourse and promote dialogue within the design community. Designers need a resource that documents the backstories of practicing designers. Such a resource will improve understanding of how design happens by bridging the gaps between discussions of design process, archives of design work, and the images of finished, polished design work presented in design media.

Achieving Objectives. According to responses to the soft launch survey; the majority of listeners were extremely satisfied with the *Makeready* podcast. When asked what they enjoyed most, respondents' comments highlighted the relaxed nature of the conversations and the genuine feel of the conversations. One respondent remarked, "I felt like I was in the room listening to a new friend."

However, respondents to the survey would like to see refined sound quality in the live recordings where volume levels were inconsistent, and improvement in the introductory remarks, which seemed too stiff. These were previously recognized problem areas and will be addressed in future episodes. The introductory remarks require a more personal approach to match the content in the conversations, and while the sound quality depends tremendously on the equipment set-up and setting for each interview one of the goals of the project is to continue improving technical aspects with lessons learned from each episode. Soft launch survey feedback contained requests for more informed discussion about how designers critique and assess design. Resolution of this issue should come from further development of interview questions, and the continued evolution of overall subject of *Makeready*'s interviews.

Overall, listeners felt they gained a positive sense of design community camaraderie from the soft launch episodes—which will be further augmented by the accompanying website—as well as information about design practice management strategies, insight into seldom-discussed issues surrounding everyday design practice, and lessons on practical design issues. Almost all of the soft launch listeners commented that they would be likely to keep listening to *Makeready* after the official launch, and to recommend it to friends.

Filling in the gap. Based on the soft launch survey comments, *Makeready* listeners gained personal insights into designers who were previously idolized or put up on a pedestal. In *Makeready* conversations designers are candid and willing to talk about details regarding their business that are not discussed in other

interviews. This is evident from comments about the predominant sense of encouragement and camaraderie throughout the design community found in these preliminary episodes. The next most appreciated benefits were information about design practice management strategies and insight into seldom-discussed issues surrounding everyday design practice. Given these reviews, it is fair to say *Makeready* fills the gap in the existing design conversation it seeks to fill, although the entire process and interview questions will be improved continually to better meet this goal.

Patterns in Interviews. From the hosting and project developer point of view, some patterns were revealed over the course of the twenty-one interviews recorded pointing the course of this thesis research. It is interesting—and validating for the rationale underpinning *Makeready* logo design—to learn how designers from completely different backgrounds have made similar realizations or connections in their careers. Certain patterns in thinking and philosophy became apparent when the interviews were considered as part of a larger composition.

On the topic of getting good work, or how designers find clients whose needs align with the designer's desired way of working, the phrase, "You get what you make" came up in differing variations during many of the interviews. Rick Valicenti—a Chicago-based designer who is acknowledged for the passion and intelligence in his influential work—tied this piece of advice back to a meeting with Michael Cronan (1951-2013) early in Valicenti's career. Mr. Cronan—an award-winning and ground breaking San Francisco-based designer—told Mr. Valicenti that clients would only hire designers to do more work like the work already in their

portfolios. Therefore, if the work in a designer's portfolio is not the kind of work he/she wants to make, he/she will not get hired to make the work he/she wants to make until he/she displays that kind of work in his/her portfolio. Only then will clients hire him/her to make the kind of work he/she wants to make. This same advice and realization is reiterated throughout several of the *Makeready* conversations.

Another theme also emerged across several interviews, of taking risks and not being afraid to ask for more. In this sense, more could mean many things: more money, more work, more responsibility, more trust from a boss, more freedom on a project, more guidance from a mentor, more answers from peers, more insight into a clients' organization, etc. Several of the guests talked about going out on their own to run their own businesses, which was a risky transition, but one they felt compelled to make. For Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio—owners of UnderConsideration: a graphic design initiative that runs a network of blogs, publishes books, organizes live events and judged competitions, and designs for clients—this meant leaving some of the most treasured jobs in the industry in New York City and moving their new family to Austin, Texas. For Christian Schwartz—typeface designer, consultant, and partner in Commercial Type: a company that designs and publishes retail fonts—this meant pursuing a career in the niche market of typeface design. Again and again, throughout the interviews one of the keys to success for these designers was taking a risk, facing their fears, and persevering despite the odds or the opinions of others.

Perhaps most important, the theme of authenticity runs as a current through every conversation recorded thus far. It takes the form of authentic connections with clients, authentic passion for the goals behind projects, authentic passion for helping people through design, and simply authentic passion for the act and craft of graphic design. Each of the designers interviewed on *Makeready* exuded genuine passion for and devotion to their creative work. The sincere tone of the podcast echoes the authentic passion exhibited by the interviewees.

Design can be a lonely profession where people live in front of computers far from contact with like-minded thinkers. Along with the stories of a wide variety of practicing designers, these themes and insights are precisely the testimony *Makeready* hopes to share with designers who are looking for reaffirmation or trying to determine their own path as creative professionals. As Armin Vit commented, "Duncan's interviews veer into the circumstances that made any one person become or stay a graphic designer: how they got into it, why they stayed on it, how do they survive and deal with it as a business, not just the 'fun' profession many other people think we have" (A. Vit, personal communication, July 29, 2013). *Makeready* aims to build community through the ability to hear conversations on the podcast and comment on them on the message boards for designers who are not fortunate enough to interact with other designers on a regular basis, therefore strengthening the community or even creating community where it was previously lacking.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

Future Development. *Opening and closing remarks.* The first and possibly the easiest aspects of the podcast to improve are the opening and closing remarks. In the soft launch survey several respondents mentioned the clunky nature of these sections. The test listeners encouraged shorter introductions with a more personal approach. For example, listeners want to know why I am interested in talking with the guest. They do not want to hear me read a list of the guest's accomplishments. Then, in the closing remarks respondents mentioned the tag, "I hope you enjoyed listening as much as I enjoyed talking with ___" seemed insincere when repeated at the end of each episode. These are relatively easy pieces of the podcast to fix, and they will be improved before the official launch in January 2014.

Preparation. In the interview with designer, podcast host, and author, Debbie Millman, on September 16, 2013, we had an "off-the-air" conversation about preparation and respecting the guest. Up to this point, attempts at thorough preparation for each interview had proven futile because there was not much written about the interview subjects. Therefore, it seemed like in-depth research into the interview subject was not necessary going into the podcast conversations. However, Debbie Millman quickly called attention to this approach as a lack of preparation, and pointed out the disrespect such an approach showed to the interview subjects. Of course, it was not my intent and it is not the goal of the *Makeready* Podcast project to disrespect anyone. To the contrary, the goal is to help

people feel respected, comfortable, and safe to say whatever they truly mean in our conversations. Through this awkward but educational encounter the approach to future conversations will absolutely change, and I will research each and every guest before our interview.

      Interviewing. The technical process of conducting the interview with the podcast guest will be continually tweaked and improved in line with Dubberly's model for the creative process as the show carries on. In *Podcast Solutions* Michael Geoghegan and Dan Klass advise, "the audience agrees to download the kind of podcast they heard the first couple of times they listened" (2007). With this advice in mind, the nature and general style of *Makeready* will not change drastically. The interviews will remain relaxed and conversational. Refinements to the questions and the general approach will be subtle and only noticeable over an extended period of time. However, improvements will naturally occur as my experience and comfort with the medium increases.

      Expansion. Finally, as *Makeready* gains an audience, the long-term goal is to expand into other arenas similar to the way Armin Vit and Bryony Gomez-Palacio began with *SpeakUp* and now have a design discourse empire encompassing four blogs, two design competitions, several books, a quarterly zine, two annual publications, and a design conference. *Makeready* not only has the potential to branch out into analogous projects such as blogs and additional podcasts, but also into further extensions of the brand such as publications, a conference, and design competitions. While *Makeready* and *SpeakUp* are different, there are lessons to be learned in terms of both the business model and structural development. In the

future *Makeready* is poised to expand into various arenas, and extend the conversation across mediums.

      Conclusion. The *Makeready* podcast meets the objectives of this project in both expected and unexpected ways. While the project set out to interview designers about their histories, business strategies, philosophies, and the lessons they learned along the way, the conversations are also revealing unexpected nuggets of insight. From the first interview to the most recent, the camaraderie within the design community, the openness to discussing the peaks and valleys of one's career, and revelations of connections between designers were refreshingly unpredictable. In this way, the project is meeting and exceeding the original goals.

      Providing further understanding of the interviewees, beyond their career achievements and into their personalities allows listeners to comprehend these design stars on a more personal level. When design students read about significant designers it can seem as if these people are untouchable, or at least too busy to take time to talk with someone they do not know. Yet this project has shown that this is simply not the case. Almost every designer contacted for an interview on *Makeready* responded quickly and positively to the initial request, and many of them made special arrangements to meet for an interview despite their busy schedules. For example, Rick Valicenti was in Austin for a weekend to judge a design competition on a Friday, and was scheduled to fly back to Chicago late Saturday afternoon. At the end of a long day of judging on Friday, when I asked him about recording an interview in exchange for a ride to the airport, he not only said yes, but suggested we have lunch beforehand. In addition to recording the interview, we had time to

discuss the project at length, brainstorm future developments, and explore post graduate school career options.

All of the designers interviewed on *Makeready* have been more willing to talk about "the secrets" behind their business than initially expected. Actually, this is true to the point of throwing me off guard in early interviews where I expected to work harder at prying information out of the interviewees. For example, asking Christian Helms to explain how he infuses such passion into his work for such apparently small clients—with assumedly low budgets—and still invoices enough to keep his studio open. When I summoned the courage to raise this question late in our conversation, his willingness to address the questions and flattery at being asked was flummoxing. In my mind I had to race to keep the conversation flowing and think of the appropriate next question. This willingness of interviewees to share in-depth stories about their career development exceeds all expectations and delivers exactly the content *Makeready* is designed to provide.

Finally, the connections that exist between the designers we study in school or read about in design annuals are surprising. It seems that most successful designers have similar important connections in common. Design can seem like an insulated field full of studio hermits and workaholics who do not have time for social interaction. However, when designers' stories start to collide, or one after another mentions a relationship with the same person or school, it becomes clear that the community is not nearly as closed off as it may seem and success is not out of reach. Bryony Gomez-Palacio is a big believer in shared information who detests hoarding knowledge. She believes *Makeready* "will inspire different people to

believe they can do it, to let themselves trust their gut instinct, to look at an obstacle

from a new point of view, and to realize that we all start somewhere near the

bottom and we all aspire to climb the ladder" (B. Gomez-Palacio, personal

communication, August 28, 2013). Sharing information reveals connections and

recurring discoveries, and begins charting a map with intersections listeners can

learn from and explore further through discussion in the online forums.

Furthermore, these unpredicted eye-openers made this project a pleasure to

work on, as they not only make each interview a joy to record but they also increase

the desire to record more and more conversations.

APPENDIX SECTION

A MODEL OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS
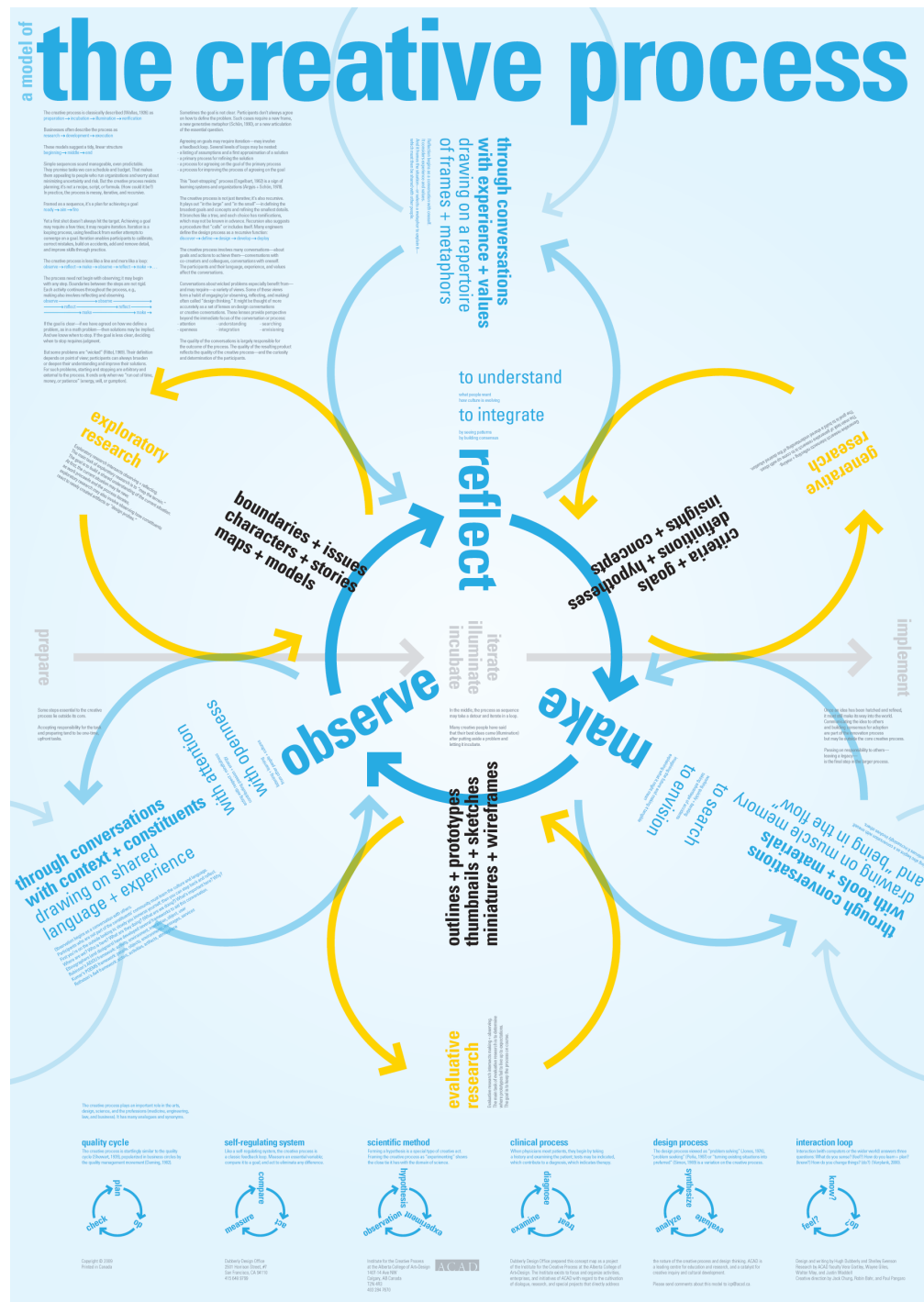
Hugh Dubberly's *A Model of the Creative Process* (Dubberly, Chung, Evenson, & Pangaro, 2009)

SURVEY OF DESIGNERS

This survey was conducted online at the outset of preliminary research, from March 2013 until August 2013.
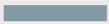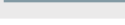
1. Which of these options best describes you?

Design student	54.7%	29	
Professional designer/creative (practicing for 1-4 years)	11.3%	6	
Professional designer/creative (practicing for 5-10 years)	9.4%	5	
Professional designer/creative (practicing for 10+ years)	35.8%	19	
Design educator	9.4%	5	
Design hobbyist	0.0%	0	
Part-time designer	7.5%	4	
Design enthusiast	3.8%	2	
Other (please specify)	1.9%	1	

Text Data for "Other"

intern / freelancer

2. Where do you look for information about design professional practices?

AIGA	50.9%	27	
magazines (print or online)	56.6%	30	
lectures	35.8%	19	
mentors	50.9%	27	
email newsletters	17.0%	9	
blogs which showcase design work(s)	35.8%	19	
blogs with design articles	50.9%	27	
blogs or websites of individual designers or firms	43.4%	23	
online discussion forums	18.9%	10	
design organizations	22.6%	12	
itunes-u	3.8%	2	
podcasts	7.5%	4	
books	49.1%	26	
museums (exhibitions, blogs, websites, publications, etc.)	18.9%	10	
Other (please specify)	9.4%	5	

Text Data for "Other"

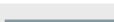google. random searches on specific topics...
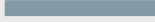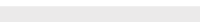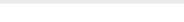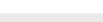
half-price books

I search the web for information, and make sure to check these websites (Pixar.com, Calarts.edu, Ringling.edu).

Other Design and Art students.

Professional Development Conferences and Workshops

3. Where do you look for information about design?

AIGA	49.1%	26	
magazines (print or online)	79.2%	42	
lectures	52.8%	28	
mentors	43.4%	23	
email newsletters	13.2%	7	
blogs which showcase design work(s)	79.2%	42	
blogs with design articles	67.9%	36	
blogs or websites of individual designers or firms	62.3%	33	
online discussion forums	11.3%	6	
design organizations	34.0%	18	
itunes-u	1.9%	1	
podcasts	15.1%	8	
books	58.5%	31	
museums (exhibitions, blogs, websites, publications, etc.)	37.7%	20	
Other (please specify)	11.3%	6	

Text Data for "Other"

google. random searches on specific topics...

half price books

I just keep an eye out for any form of design that catches my eye, out in the World, tv, movies, magazines, books, or on the internet.

Other Design and Art students.

social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube.

Award shows, annuals
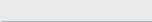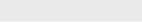
4. **Do you want to know more about how designers focus their practices towards circumstances which result in "good" work-for example how they bring in work, manage clients, and run their studios?**

Yes	94.3%	50	
No	5.7%	3	
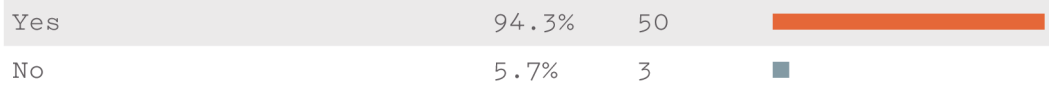
5. **Are you interested in discussing design business strategies, philosophies, and practical lessons learned through experience about being a graphic designer?**

Yes	94.3%	50	
No	5.7%	3	
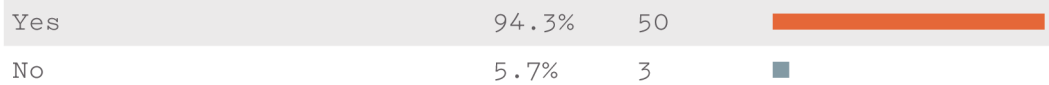
6. Which aspect of professional design practice do you wish you knew more about? Please choose your top 3.

client relations	43.4%	23	
business strategies	64.2%	34	
studio philosophies	18.9%	10	
studio structure	28.3%	15	
visual composition	15.1%	8	
developing creative concepts	35.8%	19	
finding/choosing new business	52.8%	28	
balance of passion projects and projects that pay the bills	49.1%	26	
Other (please specify)	11.3%	6	

Text Data for "Other"

All of these

How to find the right firm/business/independent clients, and tips on developing a competitive portfolio.
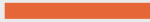
Everything and anything that has to do with making a career in Art and Design.

Collaboration/working models between disciplines, ex. designers and developers working smart for better outcomes. Presenting design concepts successfully, (better about talking about our work and all the thinking that goes into it) we do more than make things pretty or sexy! (ARRRGGGHHH)

i believe that all the above go hand in hand, are equally important, and the interest will never fade away.

Design thinking

7. How important do you think it is for designers to learn about how other designers conduct their business and prioritize personally fulfilling projects?

Not important	0.0%	(0)	
Slightly important	0.0%	(0)	
Moderately important	7.5%	(4)	▪
Very important	41.5%	(22)	▬▬
Extremely important	50.9%	(27)	▬▬▬

SOFT LAUNCH SURVEY

This survey was conducted online from September 2013 until October 2013.

The soft launch consisted of five trial episodes of *Makeready*.

1. How often do you listen to podcasts?

Daily	1	7.14%	
Weekly	4	28.57%	
Monthly	1	7.14%	
A few times a year	5	35.71%	
Never	3	21.43%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

Daily: 7.14%

Weekly: 28.57%

Monthly: 7.14%

A few times a year: 35.71%

Never: 21.43%
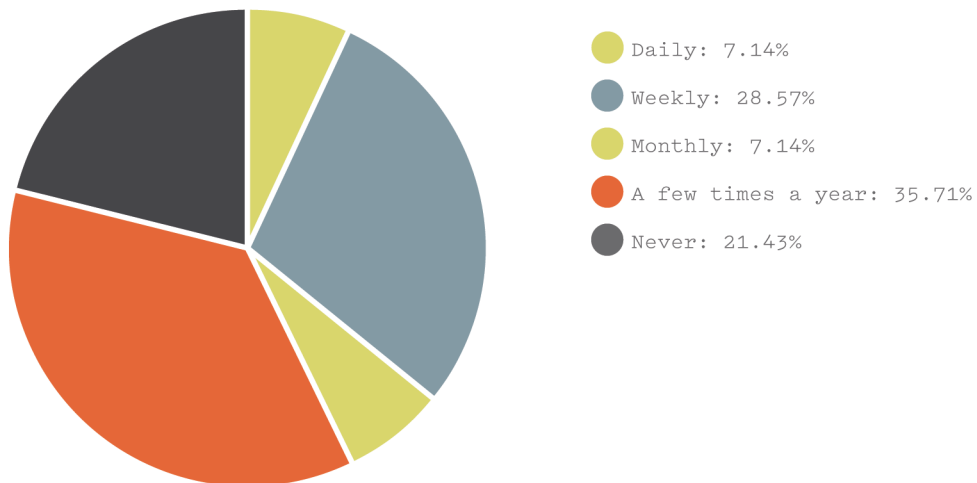
2. Which of the following podcasts have you listened to? (select all that apply)

Design Matters with Debbie Millman	7	18.92%	
WTF with Marc Maron	4	10.81%	
The Nerdist	0	0.00%	
On the Grid	3	8.11%	
99% Invisible	2	5.41%	
Typeradio	4	10.81%	
TED Talks	11	29.73%	
Other	6	16.22%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

Design Matters with Debbie Millman: 18.92%

WTF with Marc Maron: 10.81%

The Nerdist: 0.00%

On the Grid: 8.11%

99% Invisible: 5.41%

Typeradio: 10.81%

TED Talks: 29.73%

Other: 16.22%
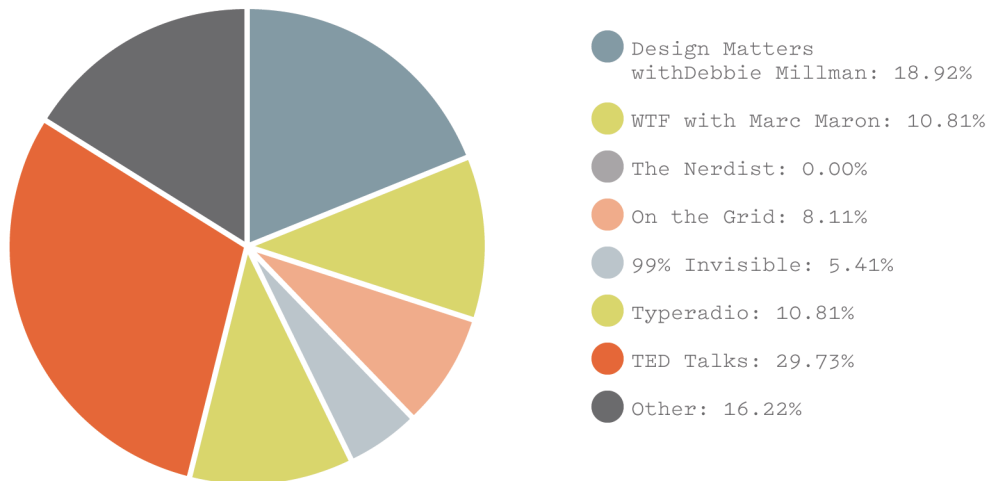
Text Data for "Other"

A local Austin one called Brainsaw Massacre (pretty sure that's the title), but it has been a really long time

After School

The Industry, Happy Monday, Radio Labs

ATX Web Show The Big Web Show The Frequency The Web Ahead NBSP

Fresh Air, This American Life, Insights Design Lecture Series (from the Walker), Savage Lovecast, Wait Wait Don't Tell Me

3. Overall, are you satisfied with your experience listening to Makeready?

Extremely satisfied	6	42.86%	
Moderately satisfied	4	28.57%	
Slightly satisfied	3	21.43%	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	7.14%	
Slightly dissatisfied	0	0.00%	
Moderately dissatisfied	0	0.00%	
Extremely dissatisfied	0	0.00%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

Extremely satisfied: 42.86%

Moderately satisfied: 28.57%

Slightly satisfied: 21.43%

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied: 7.14%
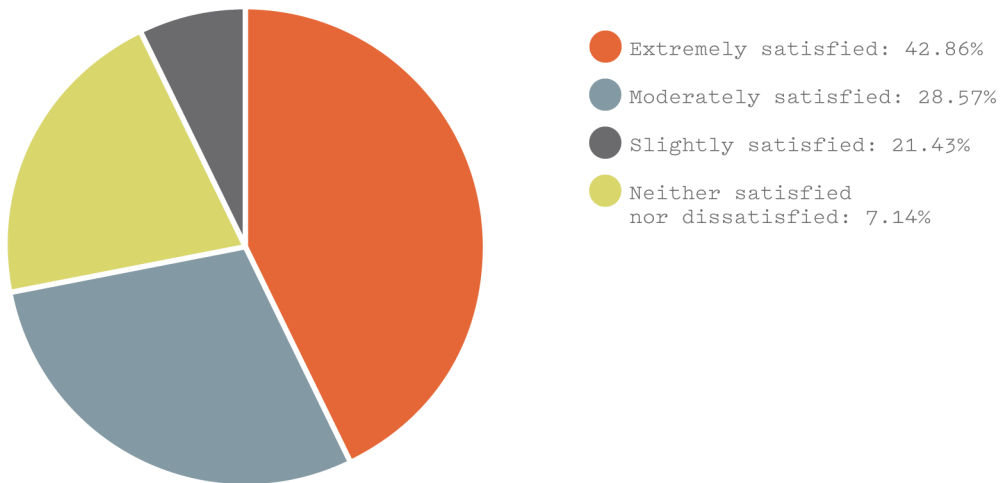
4. What do you like most about Makeready?

All of the guys interviewed were fascinating! interviews not too polished so I felt like I was in the room listening to a new friend

Makeready? sounds like any other podcast if that's what you're asking.

I listened to the Armin Vit podcast and thought the questions and the answers were honest and had a lot of substance and relevance.

The conversational style, comfortable nature, and amount of personal experiences covered (Helms). I started to picture this animated like A Scanner Darkly or something...

Refer to the next section for comments

You establish a really nice repoire with the designers in the interviews. Your questions also have a nice flow and don't feel forced or intrusive.

The podcast I listened to was inspirational, upfront, genuine and honest.

The quality of questions and flow of the conversation.

I enjoyed the selection of guests and the overall relaxed vibe of the conversations. I loved the background noise at Uncle Billy's.

The ease of conversation. Guests seemed to open up easily.

5. What changes would most improve Makeready?

Is there anyway to provide a visual bibliography of sorts of the resources talked about? (i.e. names of companies, websites, schools, etc.)

No idea.

If anything, the introduction at the beginning could have been shorter.

I'm a little on the fence with my answer here. The length is needed to get so much good info, but I wonder if each was broken into "chapters" or something would help for picking up and leaving off. Slightly related to that, is that there is so much great info/names/resources brought up, that it would be difficult to know exactly where to jump back into the interview to find this stuff without keeping notes on the timestamps while listening. That is only to say that the interview itself is incredibly insightful and I would WANT to go back and listen to certain things again. It feels as though this is creating this great catalog of information, and who wouldn't want (as a designer or not) to be able to refer back to it?

Content 1. The introduction of the podcast I listened to (the intro prior to the discussion) was extremely long and too detailed. While trying to get through this lengthy intro he interviewer tripped over quite a few words and you could tell a paper was being read. I think a shorter intro would suffice and if listeners wanted more, they could be directed to a more length summary of the interviewee on the interviewers website online. Additionally, this would allow the interviewer the opportunity to quickly introduce the interviewer at the beginning of the taping of the actual interview and not spice in the introduction after the fact—which was very noticeable and didn't flow nicely into the actual interview. 2. I found the interviewee very interesting. 3. I like how the 13:00 the interviewer provided some insight about why the podcast exists. 4. The questions were fairly standard. While I appreciate these types of questions, I would appreciate a more unique take on this designer's life and work. Style 1. The interviewer seemed to be too focused on the facilitation of the interview and the delivery of each question. *continued ...*

5. What changes would most improve Makeready?

... *continued* At times when the interviewee finished talking, the interviewer had to find place in the context of the outlined sequential list of questions and ask the next question. 2. Many of the questions were delivered in a choppy fashion. Most likely practice will fix this. 3. It is interesting, of all the podcasts I have listened to, quite a few had intro and out row music. While I didn't expect this, because it had been so long since I have listened to a podcast, iTunes faded out of the podcast at the end and faded in with the next song in queue. Maybe it was the song that played or maybe my own expectation, but this might help increase the mood or tone of the interview. Additionally, it would help create a further connection to listeners through music. Technical 1. The volume of the interview was softer / less intense than the interviewee which was richer, deeper, louder. Turning this up to hear the interview made the interviewee too loud. Additionally, the interviewer sounds distant whereas the interviewer sounds correctly miked.

Your post-recorded voice intros seem a little rehearsed and stiff. Much less confident than your ease of speech when talking to the designers.

Truthfully, I only thought that it was a little quite. I had all sound levers all the way up, and had a hard time hearing the intro. But I could also contribute it to small speakers in my laptop, headphones would've helped.

A quieter recording environment.

Maybe a fancy intro with music? This is a nit pick but the levels on all the episodes seemed a little low.

Sound quality was inconsistent. Could barely hear Interviewer (Duncan).

6. What areas would you like to see featured on Makeready? (select all that apply)

Designer backstories	12	25.53%	
Design process	9	19.15%	
Design business	8	17.02%	
Client relations	6	12.77%	
Advice for designers	9	19.15%	
Other	3	6.38%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

- Designer backstories: 25.53%
- Design process: 19.15%
- Design business: 17.02%
- Client relations: 12.77%
- Advice for designers: 19.15%
- Other: 6.38%
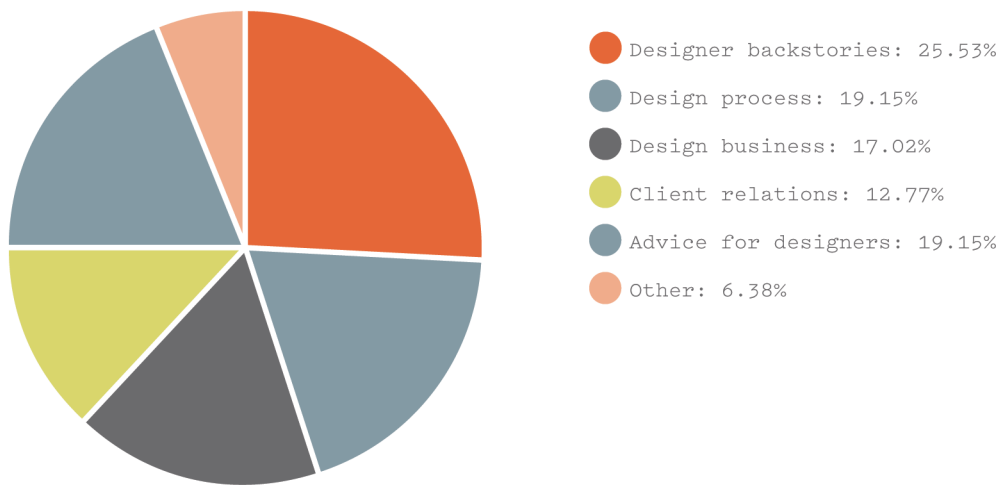
Text Data for "Other"

Designer's sources for inspiration?

I think you should also ask advice for young designers still in school (internships, etc) because there's a huge void in that area that really gets skimmed over. Also how to start up freelance connections when you're still in school/just graduated. Also-maybe other hobbies and things designers enjoy outside of design.

I'd like to know what they're passionate about, aside from design. Do they find a way to fold that into their design practice? If not, how do they make time for it? Do they see any connections between their design work and their other passion(s)?

7. What did you gain from the episode(s) you listened to? (select all that apply)

Information about design practice management strategies	6	13.95%	
Insight into seldom-discussed issues surrounding everyday design practice	7	16.28%	
Wisdom on philosophical design issues	4	9.30%	
Lessons on practical design issues	6	13.95%	
A sense of encouragement and camaraderie from the design community	11	25.58%	
New respect for the subject of the interview	5	11.63%	
Other wisdom, encouragement, or insight?	4	9.30%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

7. What did you gain from the episode(s) you listened to? (select all that apply)

- Information about design practice management strategies: 13.95%
- Insight into seldom-discussed issues surrounding everyday design practice: 16.28%
- Wisdom on philosophical design issues: 9.30%
- Lessons on practical design issues: 13.95%
- A sense of encouragement and camaraderie from the design community: 25.58%
- New respect for the subject of the interview: 11.63%
- Other wisdom, encouragement, or insight?: 9.30%
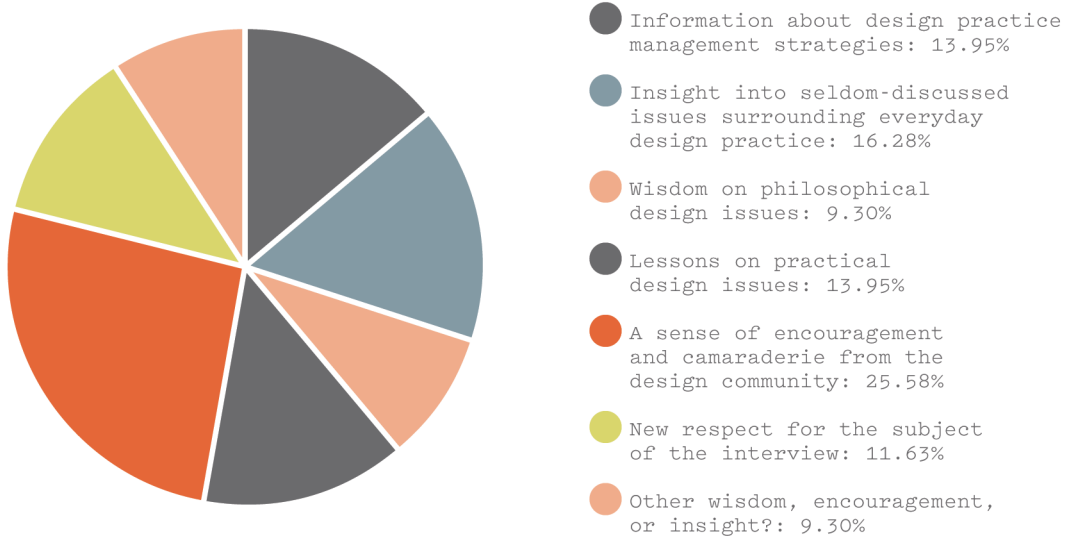
Text Data for "Other"
historical perspective of graphic design as a profession
not really, I've heard it all before.
the "fuck it" attitude of pushing for what compels you and embracing the fear...
That moment when Brian Singer discussed the Gap logo debacle was really great -- more of that, please! Smart and informed discussion about how we critique and assess design. It's such a murky area, and I would like to hear what design practitioners think (not just design academics, who seem to be the only people discussing it right now).

8. As a listener, would you be interested in the following?

A comment board for discussion of each episode	6	21.43%	
Input on who is interviewed	8	28.57%	
Input on what questions are asked	5	17.86%	
Attending a live taping of an interview	6	21.43%	
Other	3	10.71%	
Total	**28**	**100%**	

A comment board for discussion of each episode: 21.43%

Input on who is interviewed: 28.57%

Input on what questions are asked: 17.86%

Attending a live taping of an interview: 21.43%

Other: 10.71%
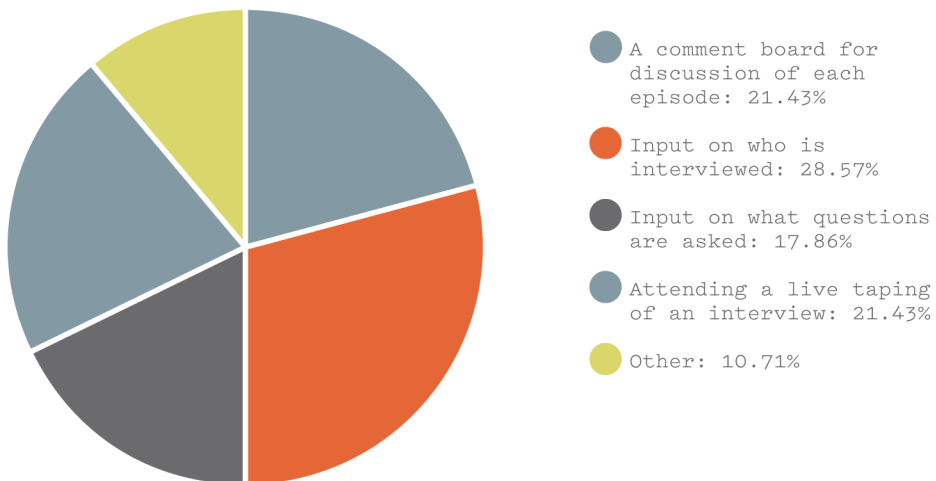
Text Data for Other

I guess it kind of relates to a couple of the items listed here, but Sound Cloud has that feature of letting the listener leave a type of "tag" at certain marks in the timeline.

giveaways! Could be something as simple as a Giff to share on social media (like J. Victore does). You could even brand it and gain some more followers.

9. How likely are you to listen to more episodes of Makeready?

Extremely likely	5	35.71%	
Very likely	5	35.71%	
Moderately likely	2	14.29%	
Slightly likely	1	7.14%	
Not at all likely	1	7.14%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

Extremely likely: 35.71%

Very likely: 35.71%

Moderately likely: 14.29%

Slightly likely: 7.14%

Not at all likely: 7.14%
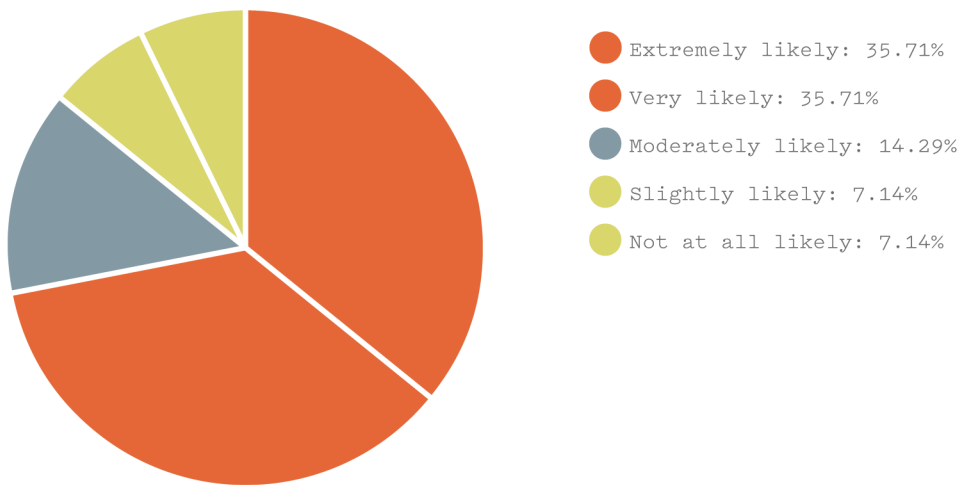
10.How likely are you to recommend Makeready to someone you know?

Extremely likely	3	21.43%	
Very likely	6	42.86%	
Moderately likely	4	28.57%	
Slightly likely	0	0.00%	
Not at all likely	1	7.14%	
Total	**14**	**100%**	

- Extremely likely: 21.43%
- Very likely: 42.86%
- Moderately likely: 28.57%
- Slightly likely: 0.00%
- Not at all likely: 7.14%
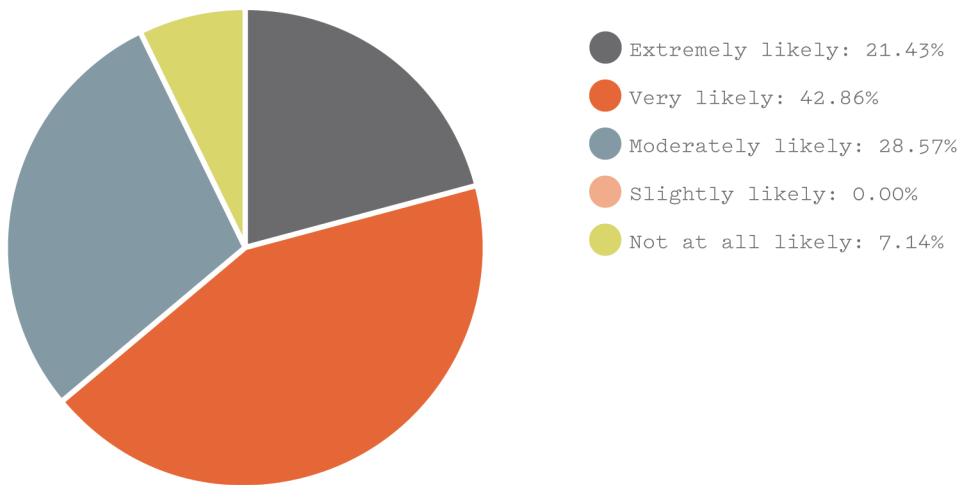
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