Michigan Governor
Jennifer Granholm on Design

Governor Jennifer Granholm tells Corporate Design Foundation Chairman Peter Lawrence why she has placed design at the forefront of her program to make the State of Michigan the innovation capital of the United States.

Could you give me your definition of design, because it means different things to different people?

To me, design is more customer-focused — which is exactly what it should be if you’re going to sell a product today. You’ve got to make sure that the product is designed in a way that doesn’t just work, but is really responsive to the customer. Good design is a critical factor when people make their buying decisions.

Does Michigan have a design heritage?

Michigan has a rich design tradition. It is part of our DNA. Detroit is synonymous with automobiles and Motown music. West Central Michigan is a great center for cutting-edge office furniture, including Herman Miller, Steelcase and Haworth. That area has been very well known for its design focus from way back. In Benton Harbor, Whirlpool has used design to turn basic household appliances into fashionable best-sellers. Michigan has also made significant contributions to architecture over the years. We have been the home of such giants as Albert Kahn, designer of the modern concrete factory; Minoru Yamasaki, the architect of the World Trade Center; and Eiels Saarinen, who co-founded and designed the Cranbrook Academy of Art. We continue to have a large concentration of phenomenal architects here today as well.

You are the first governor in the nation to promote the importance of design to your state’s economy and to give it priority. Why design?

The bottom line for why design is important to the State of Michigan — especially a state that has been challenged by a global economy where we see manufacturing jobs leave — is because future growth will be based more and more on the creative work that goes into making great products, or developing great cities, or even providing great customer service. We are going to base our economy more and more on our intellectual property, on the creative side, the value-added side of what we can offer. We have a strong record as a producer of new products, and now we want to make sure that Michigan’s brand image is all about innovation, design and creativity.

Can professions in creative fields really make that much of an impact on Michigan’s economic future?
The power of creativity in propelling our economy is a fundamental building block of our state's transformation. Since we have lost many repetitive-motion-type jobs, we have moved from muscle to mind, from brawn to brain, from carrying to creating. Aesthetics are part of a functional economy. The effort that I am engaged in now is focused on the creative aspects of the products that we produce. We have the R&D facilities of domestic automakers here, and we just got Toyota to place their North American R&D center in Ann Arbor. We also got Hyundai and Nissan to locate their global R&D centers in Michigan. R&D is where design and engineering innovations emerge in this industry. Expanding the pipeline of engineers for those facilities is an enormous focus of ours. We have policies in place to forgive loans to engineering students so we can generate the numbers of that creative workforce that we need. Related to that is our intention to excel in simulation software, which is critical in R&D facilities.

A recent Business Week article, titled "Get Creative," describes how successful companies must understand that they exist in a creative economy where design and design-thinking are essential for innovation. How does Michigan fit into that model?

Michigan is home to major industries that shape how the nation travels, works, and lives. They all rely on good design. No other state has the history and future that we have relative to design impacting people's lives. No other state has the combination of success with respect to products — namely, cars and furniture — that virtually everyone in the U.S. and the world touches. This means that huge opportunities still lie before us. Where do I think Michigan fits into this creative economy? Michigan is poised and has taken advantage of creativity to shape its economy. We are dissatisfied with status quo. We want to continually evolve and shape and attract others who are at that level in a design, research and development economy.

Does that mean Michigan will also seek to foster the growth of new industries and businesses? We want to be the most entrepreneurial state in the country. We want to be the place where entrepreneurs come and where they are supported and incubated. Some of the folks we want to attract are those who only need a computer and some software to provide value to what they are designing. We have smart zones attached to our 13 universities around the state as start-ups for people who can create the workforce for the 21st century.

What about jobs in the fast-growing digital arts field? Absolutely, diversification is important. In Michigan, we seek to foster a welcoming environment for those we fondly refer to as "the green hairs," the iconoclasts, so we can take advantage of their imagination and ease around computer technologies. When you look at the digital magic of movies and all that unbelievable software that goes into the development of video games, that's what we want to link to. Right now those kids are going to Pixar in California. We want them there. That means we must support schools that put the focus on the creative side of digital technologies.

Michigan is the home of several respected art and design schools. Are you working with them in any way? Yes, we have great art and design schools here — The College for Creative Studies, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Kendall College of Art & Design and others. We have been focusing on connecting the private sector with the education system, encouraging internships that give students hands-on experience in applying what they learn in real-life situations. Several active dialogues between businesses, educational institutions and economic development groups aim to identify ways to build on our creative environments. Focused scholarships, internships and interdisciplinary educational experiences, symposiums and conferences are some considerations.

Are you going to push design exposure to the high school level? You bet. In fact, we would love for a major design firm to join us with our pilot curriculum. We are canvassing the field for those who would help us create a high school that is focused on design. Maybe some of those folks reading this would be willing to step forward.

In a manufacturing-heavy state such as Michigan, is the value of design education widely understood? I think lay people who are not deeply immersed in design still see art education as unrelated to practical use. There is a tendency to see design as exclusive versus inclusive.

They think of artists drawing pictures rather than about how designers recognize a need and apply their skills to improving the effectiveness, beauty, functionality and enjoyment of all the products that touch our lives. Our school systems can help provide the educational experience that integrates design into good business decisions. We want to promote that awareness.

In 2004, you introduced a pilot program called "Cool Cities" that uses environmental design to revitalize low-income downtown neighborhoods and attract businesses and a skilled workforce to the area. Could you tell us more about it? It emerged from the idea that Michigan needs "cool cities" to attract the jobs, young professionals, diversity and innovation necessary to make the state economically competitive. It stemmed from my belief that successful neighborhood revitalization requires broad, inclusive and thoughtful planning, rather than sporadic and piecemeal projects here and there. We wanted to create places where people were willing and able to invest themselves and their resources in their homes, businesses and neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods linked closely with commercial districts are the key to keeping downtown areas vibrant. So two years ago, we held a conference that drew together 2,000 people from municipalities all over the state to talk about enhancing their environment. They were invited to apply for catalyst resource grants by submitting a detailed plan on how they would enhance their neighborhood through façade and physical infrastructure improvements, addition of streetscapes including public art, creation of green spaces and parks, and rehabilitation of dilapidated buildings and the like.

The first year, we had 100 cities that applied and 20 that qualified because they had phenomenal plans. I understand that Cool Cities has been very successful. Yes. It has opened up a whole trove of state resources, including expert consultants who work alongside neighborhood stakeholders, to grant recipients. It has enabled communities to redevelop factories as loft housing, revolve blocks of abandoned storefronts, add miles of new landscaping, bike paths and sidewalks and even fund new mass transit systems. It has given communities a way to implement their vision for their city and move projects along faster than they could on their own. The end result is creating places that people say are cool places to work and live.

The design-related programs that you outline for Michigan encompass everything from urban renewal and new business development to education. Do they cover the full spectrum of issues Michigan faces?

Design is about problem-solving. For us, it is an opportunity to leverage technology to solve problems and sell products — whether it's an industrial product or in an interior design or the landscape, healthcare, the design of tourism promotion, the design of cities or the design of a new economy. It is all about breaking down the way things have been done before. We see great value in creating and sustaining the environment where creative disciplines can flourish and continue to lead the innovative process so important for our state's future. That, to me, is the richest opportunity we have.
Harley’s Touring Exhibition

When Harley-Davidson set out to host the global gala of the century to celebrate its 100th anniversary, it included an exhibition that was as ambitious as many major museums. Staged largely within three big-top tents, the Harley-Davidson Open Road Tour was an extravaganza that embodied the essence of the Harley mystique.

Creating a major exhibition for one of the most beloved icons of America was a challenge in itself, but designing it so it could travel to ten major cities around the globe and be set up and dismantled in just a few days was a test of logistics, fabrication and portability.

Such difficulties didn’t faze Harley-Davidson. It wanted its centennial celebration to be more spectacular than its annual rallies which draw thousands of passionate Harley fans to Sturgis, South Dakota, and Daytona, Florida, for a week of festivities and biker bonding.

For Harley-Davidson, such events are more than good public relations. “Motorcycle rallies are a lot like tribal gatherings. They allow a community of people to share in a culture and celebrate it,” writes Willie G. Davidson, grandson of the founder, in his book “100 Years of Harley-Davidson.” The cultural phenomenon that has grown up around Harley-Davidson goes beyond the motorcycles themselves. Its brand identity is not just a product, but an attitude, a philosophy, a fantasy of adventure and the freedom of the open road that has been celebrated in popular culture and admired by people around the world. Although fewer than 2 percent of American households own a Harley-Davidson or any other brand of heavyweight motorcycle, many still want to share in the experience through buying Harley-branded apparel, gift items and collectibles.

For its 100th anniversary, Harley-Davidson decided that rather than invite fans over for a party, it would take the party to them. Joanne Bischoff, Vice President of Marketing, who spearheaded the project for Harley, says that in addition to providing great food and entertainment, “We wanted people to walk away having been dipped in the brand.” To do that, the company asked Pentagram New York to design an exhibition that would be part of its global Open Road Tour. Harley also advised the design firm that the weekend events would be held at NASCAR racetracks in North America and at outdoor Olympic arenas overseas in order to maintain the authentic feel of a Harley gathering, support the large crowds arriving on motorcycles, and allow room for a music concert and food booths.

Pentagram partner Abbott Miller, who headed the design project, adds that Harley expected this event
to draw a broader audience than its annual rallies. “In addition to catering to their core enthusiasts, Harley wanted to reach out to people who were intrigued but may not have had much contact with the brand.”

Miller says it quickly became clear that they needed to convey three distinct parts of the Harley-Davidson story. “The story breaks down to the Machine, which is about the bike itself; the Journey, which is about the history of the company and the experience of the ride; and the Culture, which is about its impact on pop culture,” Miller says. “We built out the contents from that initial impulse, knowing there would be people there to see amazing bikes from the Harley archive and others who may not be as crazy about motorcycles but interested in Harley’s impact on movies, fashion and music or in the company’s history.”

Once these stories were defined, the design team concluded that the exhibition had to be presented in three 20,000-square-foot tents that could be quickly constructed on the open racetracks. In addition to securing valuable artifacts and sheltering them from uncertain weather, the tent venue offered the designers greater control over the size and shape of the exhibit area so they could plan how the displays would be laid out.

Working with FTL Hapgood, an engineering firm known for its lightweight fabric structures, Pentagram designed a circular tent to house the Machine exhibition of vintage motorcycles and gas tanks. Less expensive “off-the-shelf” rectangular tents were used for the Culture and Journey displays.

To visually connect these shapes and communicate Harley’s internationalism, Pentagram decided to wrap type around the exterior edges of the three structures to create a cohesive identity. Rendered 12 feet high in Harley’s distinctive black and orange-outlined letters and set in five different languages, the signage proved highly visible and easy to transport.

Typography became a graphic centerpiece in the Machine exhibit space as well. Pentagram turned the center support pole in the Machine tent into a monumental typographic tower that displayed the names of Harley-Davidson’s famous engines in metallic letters.

Surrounding this tower were displays of 32 vintage motorcycles from the Harley-Davidson archive collection, along with 100 vintage teardrop-shaped gas tanks housed in their own teardrop-shaped orange tent. This
The Machine Tent
The custom-designed Machine tent was 20,000 square feet in size and had to be engineered for quick installation, since the entire exhibit had to be installed in two days. A critical challenge was determining how to communicate the internationalism of Harley and show a link with the other exhibit tents. The answer was to wrap each tent in typography, showing the name of each exhibit inside in multi-languages in 12-foot-high letters.

The Culture Tent
The tattoo art gallery had a special section that let visitors apply temporary "tattoos" of Harley-Davidson insignias and motifs.

The Journey Tent
Harley-Davidson in the Movies
Film clips of heroes and renegades riding Harleys in Hollywood movies were screened in a theater-like environment. A row of vintage movie posters leading into the theater identified many of the films that visitors were about to see.

The Tank Room
Harley-Davidson's legendary tear-drop-shaped gas tanks were displayed in a tear-drop-shaped orange tent housed within the larger Machine tent.

The Machine Tent
Schematics of Exhibition Tents
In the early stages of planning the exhibition, Pentagram developed a schematic layout for each tent on paper and then built 1/8-inch scale models showing where each display would be placed.

Company History
An exhibit in the Journey tent chronicled the sometimes bumpy roads that Harley-Davidson traveled from the making of America's first motorcycle in 1903 to its current worldwide success.

Toys
The children's activity zone displayed a collection of vintage motorcycle toys and featured hands-on games that demonstrated principles of speed, velocity and motion.

Rock & Roll
Harley's role in popular culture was communicated through music, videos and artifacts (including Elvis Presley's own bike) from Harley-Davidson's archive collection and from the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

Next day
Like an umbrella up the center mast. By the next day, crates of displays were stacked outside ready to be arranged into place.
Word Search

Here's a puzzler that challenges both left-brain and right-brain people. The answers to the questions below are hidden in this field of random letters and may be found horizontally, vertically, diagonally, forward or backward. Word search puzzles are a great exercise for showing the different ways that people see things and organize ideas... and, if you are not a fan of word search games, they also illustrate how design that seems illogical can confuse, frustrate and make it much harder to access information quickly.

1. This sportswear logo was named for a famous French tennis pro nicknamed "The Crocodile." What was his last name?

2. What global apparel company created this magazine to emphasize its corporate philosophy "United Colors"?

3. This typeface was inspired by the London Underground typographic system. What is its name?

4. What was the last name of the American industrial designer who created this mid-century classic chair out of molded plywood?

5. What is the last name of the post-modern architect who created a line of products for Target stores?

6. What is the word for a typeface that is more than two or more letters together?

7. What is the brand name of the desktop computer marketed by Apple under this symbol?

8. What are the initials of the broadcasting company for which William Golden designed this logo in the 1950s?

9. Chemayeff & Geismar designed this logo in the 1960s. Which financial institution was it created for?

10. This typeface was the cornerstone of the Swiss design movement in the 1960s. What is it called?

11. Since the 1910s, this mark has been the logo for which German automobile manufacturer?

12. What is the name of this ergonomic office chair created by Bill Stumpf and Don Chadwick for Herman Miller, Inc.?

13. What is the last name of the designer who created IBM's logo in the 1960s?

14. In the 1980s, Saul Bass created this symbol for which global networking company — once affectionately nicknamed "Ma Bell"?

15. The U.S. Government commissioned Raymond Loewy to design this symbol in the 1970s. What are the initials of this service entity?

16. This unique bottle shape has been associated with this Fortune 500 company for more than a century. What is its name?
A Magazine for Literate Dog Owners

Dogs don’t read. Dog owners do. Therein lies the secret to the success of an independent magazine called Bark. It knows who its real audience is. Literate, sophisticated and aimed at people who share their lives with dogs, this pet magazine appeals to the intellectual interests of dog lovers through literature, essays and art.

With 1,006 new magazines launched in the U.S. in 2004 alone, wooing subscribers has never been harder. Major publishers try to minimize their risk with business plans, pre-launch direct mail campaigns, and lavish premiere issues, while independent publishers sometimes simply follow their passion, starting small and growing organically.

Such was the case with two avid dog lovers, Cameron Woo and Claudia Kawczynska, who back in 1997 sought to drum up support for a leash-free zone in a park in Berkeley, California, by producing a modest advocacy newsletter that they named “Bark.”

Working out of the back of their garage, Kawczynska, a public policy consultant, and Woo, an art director at Autodesk, put together an eight-page newsletter, supported by a few dog-friendly advertisers, and printed 1,000 copies to hand out to dog owners in the park and leave behind in pet shops. Along with reporting on the progress of the “off-leash” task force and the Mutt Mitt “Adopt-an-Orphan-Poo” program, they filled up the extra pages with essays, canine recipes, reviews of books, art and films with a dog angle, and interviews pertaining to the relationship between humans and dogs.

The content of Bark was so fresh, smart and readable that dog lovers couldn’t wait to fetch the next copy. Bark quickly grew from 8 to 12 to 16 to 28 pages and a larger tabloid size. By the fifth issue, Kawczynska and Woo realized that readers would be willing to pay to get Bark—an opinion validated by the magazine distribution buyer at Tower Records and Books who called saying his mother insisted that he look into stocking the ‘zine. The buyer recommended a couple of changes to increase newstand appeal—namely, switching Bark from a black-and-white tabloid to a magazine format and introducing a color cover. Bowing to retail realities, they did.

About the same time, Bark began to draw national media attention. An article in the New York Times called Bark “The New Yorker of dog magazines.” The Associated Press described it as “a magazine aimed at thinking dog owners.” The Utne Reader gave it its coveted “Alternative Press Award” in 2000—the first time a
pet publication won that honor. The reason Bark created such a stir was that it was unlike anything else out there.

What distinguishes Bark from other pet publications is that it is not so much about caring for dogs as about living with dogs. Instead of articles on pedigreed pets, breeding and training, Bark features dog-pertinent stories by respected writers, poets, essayists, novelists and artists, many of whom regularly appear in The New Yorker and on National Public Radio as well as on best-seller book lists. It presents illustrative essays on dogs in fine art paintings, cartoons, history and pop culture. It provides thought-provoking articles on dog behavior, science and physiology, while also offering practical house-learning tips for pooch owners; advice on hiking, biking and traveling with dogs; office etiquette for dogs; veterinary health tips; and consumer-tested reviews of products such as poop bags and pet collars.

For Kawczynska and Woo, creating a dog-centric literary magazine was less intentional than motivated by an awareness of "dog people"—specifically, the fellow dog walkers they knew from the park near the University of California, Berkeley campus—have a sophisticated range of interests and appreciate intelligent content.

Early on, Kawczynska, who handles the editorial side of Bark, looked for ways to appeal to this segment. Her limited budget made commissioning original work prohibitive, but she discovered that well-known authors and experts who were dog enthusiasts were usually willing to grant phone interviews, especially when it gave them an opportunity to talk about their canine friends. "People always love to be interviewed," Kawczynska says. "Interviewing people who had something important to say was a way to get quality content that was original to our publication. And it didn't cost much money at all."

A voracious reader, Kawczynska gravitated toward featuring literary types, seeking out some of her favorite authors who were known to love dogs. In turn, Woo, who serves as design director, indulged his fondness for illustrations by commissioning dog-owning artists to do drawings.

Identifying such people was not hard. "You can always tell when an artist has a connection to dogs because dogs will often pop up in their work and sometimes in their author's photos on book dust jackets," says Woo.

An invitation to contribute to Bark, even as obscure as it was then, was usually greeted with delight. "A lot of writers and illustrators have a great passion for dogs, but not many avenues to express that in their published work," says Woo. "We give them a lot of latitude."

The contributors' enthusiasm for the caliber of Bark's content soon snowballed into introductions to other dog-loving writers and artists across the country and led to more contributions from some of the nation's best-known creative talent.

Even when Bark was distributed only in the Bay Area, it took a world-view approach to the subject. "It's important to bring in many voices so it will not be seen as a vanity press project," says Woo. "We discovered early on that what we needed to present articles, essays and artwork that were more universal. That's the one thing we ask of the material—that it be part of a shared experience."

The quality of Bark's essays and evocative images have resonated with readers everywhere, no matter their age or the type of dog they own.

Woo also found that illustrations were a good way to make that connection with readers. "An illustration opens up one's imagination," Woo observes. "With an illustration, readers are not locked into 'Oh, this is an article on a golden retriever'. When they see a photograph, they think there is something specific about that dog. With illustration, it is more universal."

Woo also learned that the reverse was true when it came to the cover image. "We would go to professional magazine conferences to get feedback from the pros,
Diverse Topics

Without anthropomorphizing canines, Bark manages to capture the diverse personalities of dogs and all the ways they figure into human lives and how humans figure into their lives. The graphic approach is as wide-ranging and interesting as the lively editorial topics inside.

Poetry in Motion

This photo essay by Seth Affoumond of a dog frolicking in the water complemented the poems about dogs on the facing page.

Classic Profiles

An article on an 18th-century naturalist who classified different types of canines provided an opportunity to use classic profile engravings of dogs.

Promotional Gift

Perforated postcards featuring the works of some of Bark's talented artists are occasionally included in the magazine as a gift to readers.
Regular Features

With the single proviso that all articles must somehow involve dogs, Bark manages to encompass virtually every subject known to man or beast. The wealth of art and literature featuring dogs may be somewhat attributed to the natural affinity that people working alone in the creative arts have for pets. Dogs are both muses and companions and a reason to go out for a walk.

Dorothea Lange Photo

The frequent appearance of dogs in Dorothea Lange's documentary photographs of Dust Bowl migrants from the 1930s prompted a photo essay on Lange, with personal recollections by Elizabeth Partridge, the daughter of Lange's assistant and granddaughter of photographer Imogen Cunningham.

Antique Collector's Corner

A story that appeals equally to collectors and dog lovers, this collection of antique dog tags is accompanied by an interesting article on the history of dog license tags.

Rex in the City

An ongoing autobiographical series by Lee Forgetson, "Rex in the City" recounts the life of a young New York couple and their rescued dog. Readers hang on every turn of events and adventure, illustrated by Susan Synarski. Villard recently picked up the stories, which will appear as a novel in spring 2006.

Reader Contributions

Picking up on a reader's suggestion to hold a smiling dog contest, Bark was deluged with photographs — so much so that it has made "Smiling Dogs" a regular feature.

and they would say, 'Like the magazine, but you got to use photography on the cover.' Our newstand representa- tive would say, 'Use a photograph, use a celebrity, if possible. You'll sell more copies.' After a while we realized the benefit of using photography on the cover for that immediate eye contact. A dog looking the viewer in the eye was a really bold effect. We kind of settled in on using head shots of dogs about five issues back.'

For Bark, communicating the right subliminal message has been important even in the area of advertising. From the start, Kawczynska applied her public-policy instincts to building a broad constituency. "Since we were an advocacy newsletter, I thought it was important to show the people at city hall that we weren't just a group of dog people who meet in the park; we had the whole community supporting us. So I got ads from restaurants as well as dog businesses," she says.

Bark soon went a step further by turning away local advertisers. Woo explains, "We felt from the beginning that our content had national appeal. We tried to encourage the local dog walkers, pet sitters and trainers to advertise in other Bay Area venues because we knew that if someone in New York picked up the magazine and saw even one Bay Area ad, they would say, 'Oh, this isn't for us.'"

Instead, Kawczynska made cold calls to advertising agencies that handled national accounts. Early on, she saw a New York Times article on a new Saab station wagon that included accessories geared to people with dogs. "I never read articles about cars," she admits. "But when you start doing this, you have a sixth sense for seeing dogs in the newspapers. We contacted the agency and, lo and behold, they invited Cameron to fly to Atlanta to make a presentation."

"We are fortunate that the niche that we are in has never lagged in the last ten years," says Woo. "The pet business is one of the fastest-growing sectors — a $32 billion market. It's huge! People's passion for dogs has grown and the market has grown around it."

This passion for dogs has allowed Bark to build its circulation to 90,000 readers, with new subscribers coming from all parts of the country. "Last year we put a one-inch ad in The New Yorker," says Kawczynska. "What surprised us is that there are New Yorker readers everywhere. People were calling in from Oklahoma and all around. We used to think that our appeal would be with urban readers because so much of the dog culture that was being reported seemed to be set in cities. Certainly that is still the case, but there are many folks in rural areas and small towns who subscribe to the magazine." A subscription to Bark has become a popular Christmas gift.

Although Kawczynska and Woo now think of Bark as a viable business (enough so that Woo quit his day job at Autodesk to devote full time to the magazine), they are proceeding cautiously. Woo still does nearly all of the design and production himself, while Kawczynska handles the editorial side with help from a part-time copy editor and some freelancers. Two years ago they moved the business out of their garage and backyard shed and into a 2,400-square-foot office space.

Currently, Bark is a 112-page quarterly magazine, but Kawczynska and Woo plan to go to six issues in 2006. "That's a big leap for us," admits Woo, and he recognizes they have to be more business minded. "We have never done any direct mail, which is how most magazines get their subscription base. We have grown mostly by word-of-mouth.

Bark came out of our interest, commitment and passion for the project. We didn't sit down with a business plan or budget and say this is where we are going to be in two or three years. It has been an organic process."

As enviably laid-back as this approach may seem, especially to publishing giants that need to show a profit from year one, Bark made all the right moves. It introduced a unique voice to a fast-growing niche market and focused more on building a "dog community" through an affinity of shared interests than on building a subscriber base. Readers embrace Bark with the kind of affection and loyalty identified with dogs — a devoted following indeed.
Can You Read Me Now?

Bad signage contributes to more people getting lost than a poor sense of direction. Consider the times that you failed to see a sign because it was too small or obscurely placed. Or stood baffled before a directory that was illogically organized and badly lit. In the realm of graphic information, wayfinding systems abide by their own set of rules. Many typefaces that are easy to read on a printed page are frustrating to make out in signage. The same goes for colors. This is why some designers and their clients are chagrined to find that the system that looked so stunning in miniature mock-up failed miserably when installed at actual size. Offered here are a few basic rules of thumb to keep in mind – they all apply to interior signage and viewing in optimum lighting conditions. A recommended source is “Wayfinding: People, Signs and Architecture” by Paul Arthur and Romedi Passini (Focus Strategic Communications Inc.).

Rule of Thumb #1: "X" Height and Reverse Type
Research has shown that the most legible type for signage is black on white, with lower case type having an "x" height that is in a 3:1 ratio with capital letters. When type is reversed, white on black, the letters tend to look 10-12% bolder. A drawback of white-on-black is the optical halo that forms around words. Also, when using these backgrounds in combination, adjust the type so they will look consistent in size.

Rule of Thumb #2: Distance Legibility
Studies have shown that in normal daylight conditions, people with 20/20 vision are able to read a 1-inch-high letter (25mm) from a distance of 50 feet. So, for every additional 50 feet make the letter 1 inch higher. Approaching a sign from an angle can reduce legibility by as much as 30-50%. Combine that with less than perfect sight and dim lighting and legibility is diminished further. So, for directional signs many experts recommend upping the ratio to 1.75 inches for every 50 feet.

Rule of Thumb #3: Directories
Information on a wayfinding directory should be limited to six items, which is about as much as a person can take in quickly as walking by. Information should be organized by direction, not listed alphabetically or according to what looks graphically interesting.

Rule of Thumb #4: Color
Wayfinding signs are not the place to feature subtle corporate colors or the latest fashion palette. When using a combination of colors, the higher the contrast the easier the sign can be read. These boxes show a range of legibility with black on white (1) being the easiest to make out and gray on purple (15) being one of the hardest color combinations.
Creating a visual brand language did more than bring structure to the many brands of household appliances within the Whirlpool family; it allowed the company to increase the speed of new product development, foster futuristic user-friendly innovations, and improve the rate of product introductions into the marketplace.

**VISUAL BRAND LANGUAGE**

Back in the mid-1990s, Whirlpool’s then-CEO David Whitman noted a troubling consumer trend that showed a lack of brand loyalty in the household appliance sector. Research indicated that two-thirds of appliance shoppers entered the retail store without a specific brand in mind, a clue that consumers had come to view appliances as commodity products. Little wonder, since the brands all tended to look alike — generic and white.

David L. Swift, Executive Vice President, North American Region, Whirlpool Corporation Benton Harbor, MI

Before accepting his current position at Whirlpool in 2001, David Swift was president of Eastman Kodak Company’s Professional Group.

This sent Whirlpool on a mission of creating visual brand distinctions, beginning with differentiating their own many brands. The world’s largest manufacturer of household appliances, Whirlpool markets products under Whirlpool, KitchenAid, Brastemp, Bauknecht, Consul and other major names in more than 170 countries. It also is a significant supplier to Sears, which owns the Kenmore name.

To execute its brand-focused strategy, Whirlpool wooed Chuck Jones away from his position as head of design at Xerox to take on the job of design chief. At first, Jones dismissed the idea of moving from a cutting-edge technology giant to “a rust-belt kind of industry,” but an interview with Whitman convinced him of senior management’s sincerity in elevating the role of design in Whirlpool’s transformation, a commitment that continues under current CEO Jeffettig. Whirlpool’s reputation during its 94-year history was that of a very strong engineering manufacturing culture. Design was viewed as an appendage of the engineering discipline. “Products would get thrown over the wall to design, and they’d have a week to make it look good,” Jones recalls.

In evaluating how to bring innovation to the forefront, Whirlpool came to recognize that design had to be a key element. “It’s not all about product features; it’s about how the consumer perceives your product,” says David Swift, Executive Vice President of Whirlpool North America. “This was viewing design in a different way than we had perceived it before.”

Swift adds that Whirlpool’s acceptance of design as an innovating force freed Jones to “hire people who understood color, space, the psychographics of interfacing with products, and ergonomics.” While these issues had been discussed within the context of engineering before, now the customer experience was considered from a broader perspective.
Jones' first job at Whirlpool was running a program called Advanced Product Concepts—a unit charged with turning conceptual innovation research into products that could actually be taken to market. This led to the formation of a new organizational structure in which human factors and usability experts worked side by side with Whirlpool industrial designers worldwide and, ultimately, became an entity renamed Global Consumer Design, headed by Jones.

It also paved the way to establish a strategy to speed up new product introductions. "If we were going to continue being the leader in our industry, we needed to have an overall brand architecture that we could then inject with new innovative products that fit within a specific brand family," Swift says. "The design group was able to take our customer data and data from our branding organization to create what we call a Visual Brand Language, VBL, and then translate that into a brand architecture. Anything that was KitchenAid, Whirlpool, or our other brands—you could tell by seeing the product that it would fit within that family. That then enabled us to come out with products at a more rapid pace and do it more cost effectively."

Jones compares VBL to a pyramid with the brand's core values at the base, the visual positioning at the next level, design principles at the third level, and signature elements at the top. "The focus of VBL is to differentiate itself from the competition and our sub-brands by leveraging the power of the brand itself to develop distinct and appropriate visual personalities for each of our 28 global brands," he explains. "In the past, independent Whirlpool product teams started from scratch with regard to what a product should look like with every new project, a practice that was costly, wasteful, inefficient and eroded any kind of visual equity for the brand—everything was 'one off'."

A brand favored by serious home cooks, KitchenAid adopted a visual brand language that communicates the kind of rugged durability of appliances that are normally found in commercial kitchens. The types of products in this line—such as the espresso machine—acknowledge this consumer segment's sophistication and confidence in the kitchen.

The Whirlpool brand is targeted to a segment the company calls "active balancers," busy young mothers who do not want any more complexity in their lives. Whirlpool's Gold Kitchen Suite features sleek lines, integrated controls and innovative time-saving details that facilitate ease of use and cleaning.

Whirlpool's concept studies examine ergonomic, aesthetic and technological approaches, exploring a broad range of innovative new products, including dishwashers that have a special zone to clean heavily soiled pots, refrigerated ovens that keep food cold until remotely prompted to bake, and microwave clothes dryers that can dry wet jeans in 60 seconds.
result was a tangle of schizophrenic product lines that missed the opportunity to build brand equity through coherent appearance and operation.

That visual coherence allows consumers to replace appliances and still maintain a single look in their kitchens. It also helps retailers anticipate how to effectively merchandise new Whirlpool products because the units already have a design aesthetic that fits with what retailers have on the floor.

Swift uses the company's various kitchen brands to explain the influence of VBL. The Whirlpool brand primarily targets the needs of busy women, "active balancers" who look for cooking appliances that produce the best quality of meal for the least possible effort. That contrast with the company's KitchenAid line designed for the "home enthusiast" who is passionate about cooking and would rather have total control over the experience than ease through automation. A Whirlpool microwave has one button for popcorn which does the whole thing in a single step, while KitchenAid has a butter-melting button for coating popcorn, but can also be used in the preparation of other dishes.

"Visual Brand Language is an architecture that is more than just appropriate for today. It has legs into the future," says David Swift.

Whirlpool's most dramatic success linking design and innovation through VBL was the global launch of the company's entry into the front-loading washer and dryer market, introduced as Duet in the U.S. and Dreamspace in Europe. For Whirlpool, Duet was a breakthrough in design, ease of use, energy efficiency and low-water consumption. The solution propelled Whirlpool from a 0% share in front loaders to 40% share within the product's first year on the market. Whirlpool introduced the machines with a distinctive point of difference: a pedestal option that raises the drum height and thus reduces strain from bending and stooping. The optional pedestal, with space to store detergent and bleach, adds an extra $200 to the cost of each unit. “What it does for us as a company is provide a whole separate stream of revenue,” says Jones.

The attractive design of the units also changed another industry paradigm. Prior to the launch, about 20% of consumers bought washers and dryers in pairs. After Duet, that number immediately rose to 80%.

"Through the use of design, color, finish and material, we've now even driven certain sub-models within the front loader family up to almost 90%," says Jones.

Duet, begun in 1999, illustrates the change in the way Whirlpool now views design as a combination of both science and art. Jones expanded the talent base at his global design organization: Before initial Duet concepts were even considered, a small teams of usability anthropologists, industrial designers, engineers and marketing people went into consumers' homes to watch how they do their laundry. Whirlpool also has created "living labs" where the company installed working kitchens so Jones' team can video-tape consumers interacting with Whirlpool products.

Jones, himself, anonymously goes on Whirlpool service calls to observe consumers. “There’s this one lady in Indiana that was talking about how [Duet] was like a Ferrari. She wished it was in red," he recalls. “Who would have thought a consumer would be equating their washing machine to a sports car? There is that kind of intelligence we pick up. Some of this work has spurred additional development around the pedestals. That is unexplored real estate that is ripe for further exploration.”

Indeed, Whirlpool's current design innovations underscored by VBL are already having impact on the company's future.

"VBL is an architecture that is more than just appropriate for today. It has legs into the future," Swift concludes. "We have twice as many innovations in our pipeline today than we did three years ago, and the time to develop them has been cut in half. We're getting twice as productive with half the time to develop. Design architecture and the VBL work have been enablers of that."
Had it not been for Walter P. Chrysler's determination to build the world's tallest skyscraper, the familiar stainless steel spire of New York City's Chrysler Building might never have been. The original building was supposed to be 925 feet tall, but when the Bank of Manhattan announced that its skyscraper going up at 40 Wall Street would be two feet higher, Chrysler ordered his architect, William van Alen, to "think up something."

Van Alen (whose estranged former partner was the architect for 40 Wall Street) secretly began assembling a 185-foot spire inside the half-completed building. A week after the Bank "topped out," van Alen hoisted a 27-ton steeple through the roof opening and anchored it into place in just 90 minutes. At 1,046 feet tall, the Chrysler Building instantly became the world's tallest skyscraper — a title it lost a year later to the 1,253-foot Empire State Building.

Now 75 years old, the Chrysler Building remains a sublime example of Art Deco opulence and style. Its extensive use of Niokota metal (a mixture of chrome, nickel and steel) reflects the glories of the Machine Age, and its decorative elements give a pioneering nod to corporate branding. The sunburst spire echoes the hubcap design then being used on Chrysler cars, and the gargoyles extending from the 61st floor replicate the eagle hood ornament of the 1929 Plymouth, with the ones off the 31st floor resembling giant radiator caps. Although some critics panned the architecture as "stunt design" in 1930, today the Chrysler Building is a beloved icon of Manhattan's skyline.

And Now A Word From Our Sponsors...
TRUST FORGES ALLIANCES, it turns customers into partners and bonds those people of like mind into a force unimagined by each individual. Trust is that priceless feeling of well being, unfound in any quote or line item but essential to any great project. Trust is the iron bridge we build between the mediocre and the exceptional. A clear and solid path to the goal of excellence. We build it day by hour upon hour with everything we do, each and every detail. We build trust in the very best of times and more so in the worst of times. We build trust in every facet of our business. Without it we do not have a business. With it we can offer you something truly exceptional.

TRUST IN WHAT YOU SEE. TRUST MORE IN WHAT YOU FEEL.

LITHOGRAPHIE INC. 12250 S. CRENSHAW BLVD., HAWTHORNE, CA 90250 WWW.LITHOGRAPHY.COM
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL RANDY PARKS, VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING @ 323.770.1000 OR 800.848.1449

FINE LITHOGRAPHY FOR THE MOST DEMANDING EYE.
BUSINESS & DESIGN CONFERENCE

Continue the dialogue between business and design at Corporate Design Foundation’s @issue Conference, sponsored by Sappi Fine Paper and Lithographix. Hear leading CEOs and design innovators talk about how design figures into their winning business strategies and offer insights into how it might figure into yours.

Scheduled for the spring and fall of 2006 in New York and San Francisco. Watch your mailbox for more details, and ask your Sappi or Lithographix sales reps to keep you posted. More information is also available at www.cdf.org.

SPRING/FALL 2006