**Personal Reflection**

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GRA 491

October 22, 2022

My personal portfolio is a culmination of what I learned as a designer at SNHU and how well I executed those lessons. The process was thought-provoking and challenged me to go beyond what I already knew as a working designer. It also reminded me to go back to basics and implement those concepts that are often forgotten. Each class taken was a logical step towards the final portfolio. The modules not only had you creating designs but documenting your process and justifications behind them. Because I’ve been working as a designer for quite some time, the designs I created in class showed my growth in not only my technical skills, but as a collaborator too.

Picking the portfolio pieces was one the hardest parts of the project. Not only do you want to choose stand-out pieces, but you want it to be the best representation of who you are as a designer. I visualized how each piece could complement the other and how I would logically lay them out in the design. Research, previous classes, and work-related projects gave me a foundation of what I wanted to design. The overall look came from my previous work on my personal branding pieces. I had to rearrange the layout a couple times to get it where I thought it looked best. I took into consideration image size, margins, color, and font styles. I used the grid to organize everything proportionately.

I think the only thing I would do differently is make my personal website more compelling and add more dynamic elements like video or animation. Web design is not a skill that comes easily for me, it’s something I definitely need to work at and practice on a consistent basis if I’d like to be more skilled. The internet has helped me tremendously from 15 years ago, it still takes me awhile to grasp everything. I like problem solving, however the process seems to take me longer, so I don’t really like it. Also, due to the duration of our class terms, learning everything and really grasping it while juggling life outside of school can be hard. I think I did a good job at fulfilling the requirements and problem solving any issues with the help of my professor. However, I’d like to elevate the site even more in the future to be more attractive and engaging to visitors.

Receiving and giving feedback is an important skill to develop. Not only will it help you in school, but in a professional working environment as well. Attention to detail and looking at the whole picture are key skills to learn. Feedback helped me to look at all my pieces with a more discerning eye. Through multiple critiques, I was able to change things I didn’t see or fix mistakes I didn’t even realized I made the first time around. Feedback from others is not only helpful but essential. I aligned things that were off on my Amethyst Bay ad, changed font styles on the Upper Crust letterhead, added missing information on my personal website, and corrected a headline on my typography layout.

One of key factors I learned in school was brand consistency. We established three brands, including our own. Having brand consistency is important to help create client loyalty and keeping brand integrity. Using the logo appropriately is important. Logo use affects how the consumer views and interprets the brand. The logo is the main aesthetic of the brand. It can communicate a certain personality and values to the target audience. If you represent your brand one way and then go a whole different direction, it can cause confusion and break loyalties. If you distort the logo or use the wrong color palette it would look very unprofessional, leave an unsavory impression and it could communicate the wrong message.

My work represents my ability to be a problem solver and visual communicator. I listen, research, and provide options. I design simple, clean, and coherent work. Within every piece I created in my portfolio I applied elements of design like contrast, balance, typography, and hierarchy of information. It also shows how I interpret feedback and included those changes to make my work better. If I ever must find a new role, this portfolio will represent my abilities to translate creative briefs into impactful and meaningful work.

I’ve learned so many things throughout my 16 years of being a graphic designer. Graphic designers are visual communicators. What we communicate matters, whether working for a large corporation or individual startup. Not only do we need to be ethically and socially responsible, but act as gatekeepers as well (<http://www.ethicsingraphicdesign.org>). We have the ability to sway opinions and shape narratives. It’s our responsibility to be ethically conscious and not put our own agendas into our work when we are working with others. However, we need to be aware if our own ethics and social consciousness align with the company or individual, we are working for as well (Perkins, 2006).

Another key concept I’ve learned within working in the Marketing department is the target audience. A target audience is set to focus and narrow down who you are designing your site for. Age range, gender, education, and occupation are all classifications to help determine your target audience. For a personal portfolio site, age range, education and occupation would all be important factors. Potential employers, clients, and educational faculty could all access the site
to view your portfolio. So, designing your site to have clear messaging and easy navigation would help the user interact with your site. Having your work presented in an organized way with clear descriptions are vital to potential employers, you don’t want the viewer to be confused or frustrated.

Being a graphic designer at my current employer is where I hopefully plan to stay for the rest of my career. I wanted to finish my degree to feel accomplished, be an example for my children, and possibly teach in the future. I’m happy being a designer at a corporate level and help others in a freelance environment as well. Having a work-life balance and the freedom to work on other things is important to me. Also, working at the corporate level gives me the security of a steady paycheck to live life and save for the future. Going back to school after such a long time has been a great achievement. I didn’t take school seriously back then and let other things take precedence. I never fully believed in myself and knowing that I’ll be finishing school with all A’s feels really good. I’m filled with gratitude for my experience and all the professors who guided me along the way. It was a journey I’ll never forget.

**References**

<http://www.ethicsingraphicdesign.org/morality/cultural-influence/>

# Perkins, Shel. (2006). *Ethics and Social Responsibility*. AIGA.org. https://web.archive.org/web/20120206061429/http://www.aiga.org/ethics-and-social-responsibility/