**Antelope Valley College Digital Media Advisory Committee**

**Meeting: March 4, 2013**

Digital Media Businesses:

Lee Engstrom Antelope Valley Web Design

Donna Turner Antelope Valley Web Design

Justin Rasmussen Coffee House Ideas

Roger Rodriguez Freelance Editor

Johnathon Filion High Desert Broadcasting

AVC Faculty Attendees:

Terrence Rezek Faculty, Antelope Valley College

Ron Smith Adjunct Faculty, Antelope Valley College

Dean Richards Adjunct Faculty, Antelope Valley College

Kiley Craft Adjunct Faculty, Antelope Valley College

Brad Smith Adjunct Faculty, Antelope Valley College

Russ Williams Adjunct Faculty, Antelope Valley College

Terrence Rezek (TR) started the meeting with some question for the Digitl Medi.a business

**TR:** When hiring a student, what are the qualities that employers in the tech field look for in applicants? Do employers look for those with certificates/degrees, candidates with experience...?

**Lan Engstrom (LE):** A solid foundation of education is an important quality a candidate can possess in the hiring process. Experience, creativity, the ability to problem solve, expertise, and imagination are all important factors when looking at a candidate.

**Justin Rasmussen (JR):** We also want the candidates to communicate effectively. The industry seeks individuals who operate in the field at an efficient and innovative ways rather than those operate solely on books and exams.

**TR**: How do employers seek out employees?

**LE**: Employers are usually found rather than sought. There's no need to advertise and no form of advertising is usually made.

**Johnathon Filion (JV):** Internships that are presented at job fairs usually turn into employment. We narrow down the applicants and usually hire locally.

**TR**: If a new hire comes in as an entry-level applicant, how do you assess whether they are competent for the job?

**LE**: The applicants are tested on a multitude of things. For example, project management, working on client projects and meeting client expectations. Applicants are tested on their ability to work outside the typical framework of a classroom setting. We want to see candidates endure and rise to the occasion, so to speak. We want to see an applicant's ability to manage a variety of tasks so we assess their communication skills, task management skills and how effectively they use these skills to adapt into the workplace. This is an important quality we look for because we want our candidates to reflect the level of professionalism in our companies. After we evaluate their competency and have assessed that they comprehend the basics, we then want to know their level of creativity.

**Russ Williams (RW):** We can have 40 people fill a job. If we then go to their FaceBook accounts and see if they didn’t like what they saw. Send me the ten possibles and narrow it down. Go to a international website and find thousands.

**RS:** My projects are more mercurial. I have to hire some people and so I put the word out hire locally. I know a handful of people so I then ask, “Do you know someone who?s good?” I don’t want to get someone who uses Photoshop as a video game. They actually have some design concepts. To me anybody can pick up a manual. It’s like Word. Anybody can pick up a Word manual and learn how to type word and use it but that doesn’t make them an author. I want someone who has more of the design concepts so that I don’t have to hold their hand. I don’t have to walk them through stuff and correct things. To me, time is money and if I have to spend time holding their hand and teaching them?

**RW:** Well, it also comes down to creativity. It doesn’t matter what their resume says. I’ve had maybe- at a time- ten folks that I have hired here in Southern California and they were great on paper and it turned out to be one of my worst employees of all time.

**LE:** One of my best friends is a video effects editor down the hill. He works on Avengers, and Wizard of Oz. Kid comes in and shows you something wonderful, and you take a look at it — well he’s a young adult — but you look at it and you say, Wow! This is really great work! I remember showing him something once that a young man had turned into us as a work sample and he says, Well here’s the thing [that] you?re probably not taking into consideration: this is probably something you or I could do in a half hour — maybe an hour. This may have taken him all semester. And that’s what you have to look at. That’s really hard to gauge, because you end up a lot of times with people that look good on paper but for all we know they come in and they say, Oh, this is a website or this is an ad I did for a make-believe soda company, let’s say, or energy drink company. You look at it and say, Wow! This is solid. The color scheme looks right. It’s monochromatic. They can — they can speak the speak and talk the talk and you don’t know what assets they were provided by the instructor. The instructor could have given them great photography that was already cut out that they may have already had their hands tied with the color scheme. Maybe everyone was handed the same type and the same tagline. So there might be 30 people walking around with the same piece in their portfolio.

**RS:** A professor once — back when we didn’t have computers- and he’s talking about portfolios and people coming into Disney and everything and he said this one portfolio was amazing. You know, the paper they chose to put things together they asked, Well why did you choose this paper?? and he replies, Well the instructor told us to use this paper. It’s the process [I’m interested in] because, for me as a designer, it’s a process. What’s their thought process? And I know I’ve gone on big job interviews for Santa Monica handling with other designers and sometimes the processes you provide is what wins it. How’d you think? How’d you get there?? A lot of clients want to know. They don’t want you to say, Hey we want this job — and you come back three weeks later, Here’s the final project? No, they want to see the sketches and the thought processes and the [conversations]. You have to meet with the client numerous times. They want to see every step of the way because they don’t want to spend $35,000-$45,000 on a project and just see the final product on the end day?

**LE:** What they’re buying is the process.

**RS:** So you know, what I tell my students is that you need to put [that] in your portfolio. Sometimes there has to be one piece that goes from initial thumbnails all the way to final product so that [they] know that you have a brain. It wasn’t just instructors telling you ABC and D let’s see what you can do?.

**BS:** I do it by projects. It’s a one day project and I divide them into groups. There’s an art director for each one and I say, It’s 12 o’clock now. I want to see sketches at 1 from all the art directors on what you’re going to do. They have no idea what they’re going to do when they come into class and by 4 they have to have it finish. It’s usually an ad page. I learn a lot about the students who really jump in there and move. When I hired people I would usually run into that problem — of someone coming from Art Institute — and I would say, Okay this is the project that you’re going to work on. How soon can I get it from you?? The student says, I’m really fast. I can get this done in two weeks! Then I say, No it’s 12! I need it by 3! It’s a different mind-set. They got to be able to learn to work quickly and accurately, and get it down. There’s another test I give them a project that’s finished. Tell me ten things that are wrong with it. They have to take the project apart and tell me what’s wrong. They’re not used to thinking that way. But that’s the first job they’re going to get. By you telling me what’s right and what’s wrong I’m going to know what you know. It’s just that simple. It’s kind of a backwards test. Now the group test, everyone participates. But I can see who’s shining and who’s just sitting and talking on their iPhone. You’ve got five people in your group, now rate their work. It really throws them when I make them rate each other. They have to get graded by their peers and if I do it in the beginning, I get a lot more cooperation and they really work. I usually bring in a set of antique locks. I say, You can bring your cameras and but when you walk in here, you’re not going to know what the project is going to be. They’re really tense at first, but by the end of class the get the feel of what it’s like to be at a studio working in a group to get one thing out. Most of the time you’re not working alone. You’re working in a group. You’ve got a copyrighter, you’ve got someone else who’s doing the photography. They get the experience, and they think Well, maybe I should take some photography classes so I can communicate well with the photographer that I’m dealing with.

**TR:** For all of you that are hiring, you start out at the beginning process. How do you decide whether they are good or not? Everyone’s referred to projects, is that generally how you can see whether they do well or not? If they do good, you can give them a paycheck?

**RW:** That’s part of the process.

**JR:** It’s important to see whether they can work on client projects. Every client is different. Every client has a different set of expectations. Whether it’s colors or a budget. Some people have a non-negotiable logo. When we have some people working, they can’t work through these issues of Well it has to be this way? or it has to be that way? They’ve only known one way of working a project. It’s only one step and they don’t understand different processes and they aren’t as flexible when working projects. The flexibility and understanding how to problem solve is an important characteristic of employees that we look in hiring. Some clients are willing to put down money even though they’ve put in three months worth of money that’s now going to go into another different direction- we’ve had some employees where that type of thinking does not jive with what they’ve been taught and they really struggle.

**LE:** One thing that we do, is- we’ve done this in the last year and half, unbeknownst to the individuals- is that we’ll give them a task. So we’ll have a professional to complete a task and then we’ll have them work and see their decisions. We’ll time them and we’ll see what they do. Then we give the same test to another individual and time them. But they don’t know that they’re being timed. We look at the outcomes and we try to judge people by giving them the same set of variables to test them and see the results for each candidate. That helps us get an idea to see who the cream is within the crop, I guess. But you have to spend time with them and talk with them. What I like to spend time with is writing assignments. I ask them to write a couple paragraphs on why they want to get into this industry because I think if you’re well written, you’re well thought out. Some of the things we’ve seen now are just appalling. You know some emails are just all lower case. All lower case or sporadic lower case- grammatical errors- is just one way not to get through the door. If you don’t know things you don’t know things that you’ve learned in third grade, you can’t be on the team. If you write poor emails, then you’re reflecting the professionalism of everyone in the company.

**RW:** And that’s something this department has no control over when teaching the basics.

The tough part [with this] is up-to-date equipment. It’s the constant changing. In the video world, it’s websites and such. The equipment is 1990’s. That’s the problem is that they don’t have the skill level of what would be current. You try to teach them what would be current in the real world.

**TR:** We also don’t have the current software. When Final Cut Pro came out, they introduced it to soon and they started increasing and increasing. They have it increased to almost final cut 7. Adobe does the same thing. They try to upgrade every 18 months. Now that Adobe has the “Cloud,” they upgrade every three days.

**RW:** But it’s not just software. It’s the equipment. Tape loading cameras, fish poles.

If you’re serious about photography, you should have a photography camera.

**LE:** Whether it’s videography or cinematography- do they need base level?

**RW:** In the world of still photography, you’re not going to get a job at the LA times, the Post or in magazines if all you know is wet photography because they don’t have the wet photography anymore because it’s now digital. You have to keep up with that standard.

**LE:** You should teach them what is being used by the larger networks.

**LE:** Yes but depending on what the goals are. By and large, our job is not to get people ready for the work place but rather to move into a university.

**RS:** Because it’s a community college, they’re not going to move onto an art school. Even though we put out graphic design and graphic design assistance. A lot of them are going to be graphic designers because companies want to hire cheaper employees. It’s vocational and transferring over. For the design department, you guys are heavily involved in the hardware.

**TR:** What they’re saying is that everything they teach can go back 20 years. It’s the modern equipment.

**RS:** It depends on the field whether you need to know the equipment when you go on the job or whether you go in the field with a 20 year old computer.

**KS:** When students ask me, I want to get a job. What do I need to know? It seems to be a matter of technology and speed and accuracy; conceptual, foundational and creative process skills.

**RS:** That’s what I tell my students, is that if you’re great at building houses you can do the same job with a $5 hammer similar to a $50 hammer. The $50 hammer will provide you some things that a $5 hammer won’t. Analagous to cameras. You’re getting the basis of what you’re going to be seeing in your career.

**LE:** But just because you have a Red camera doesn’t make you a DP.

**RS:** You can teach aesthetics and rules. Then you teach how to break rules.

**JR:** The first tool you pick up when designing a website is pen and paper. You need to bounce ideas off a white board.

**KC:** Which is easier to teach then? If the guy comes in with conceptual skills can you say, Okay I get it. You had tape loading cameras. Here’s an SD card?. Or is it easier to say, You already know how to use the technology, I’ll teach you conceptualization skills.?

**RS:** It’s the opposite for all the top companies. When you go to Lucas, when you go to Pixar- in fact Pixar even had on their website saying they wanted you to know how to use the computers but they wanted you to know how to draw, paint, and design. To them, it was We’ll teach you the software. I did a survey a little while ago and I sent them out. The responses were prioritized this way: software skills and photoshop were at the bottom and top priorities are typography, concept, and design. When you get an employee you don’t want to teach creativity and concept and those kinds of skills. You can teach them Dreamweaver.

**RW:** The students are usually here to get the paycheck. Some will do that but some will come and actually work. They unlock their creativity that they had that even they didn’t know they had.

**LE:** The thing is, well going back to Russ point. There are some people who will have a better end product with an iPhone than with a high end camera. In a world where you have to shoot tape, digitize the tape- in most cases it’s real time it takes 45 minutes to capture that footage.

**RW:** When we first started doing non-linear, we thought it was a time saver. But in reality, there wasn’t enough time because the creativity just overflows.

**LE:** By telling the students, the computer is just another tool. It’s like using a charcoal, a pencil. It’s the concepts but there’s a balance. I don’t want a student who’s never seen a computer before. The priority is the creativity and the process and being able to do all that.

**JR:** We tend to hire people who are a good fit personality wise. If you’re a big pain in the rear and you’re very creative, you’ll deal with them. But if you’re not very creative and you’re difficult to deal with, you’re not fit to hire.

**TR:** I want to find out what your thoughts are in terms of what the future is going to come to.

**RW:** If you’re shooting still photography, keep that separate from video. Film is different from video. Film you have different hook ups, separate audio systems. For video, you have to do long term and you have to have it all compact in one.

**LE:** Video department needs digital video that needs to be actual cameras that are set up for video. Your photography department should be using DSLRs — the best that you can afford. Wacom tablets for illustration but should not be a substitute for real colors and art tools. The Wacom is just another tool.

**JR:** In terms of equipment, [the classroom] should resemble the work room, in that it resembles the modern work flow of today. If they’re not familiar with the newer equipment but they’ve worked with older models, then all it is, is just updating them. If you don’t understand the modern workflow of how modern videography works, then you’re useless and there’s nothing I can teach you. That’s just as fundamental as modern workflow.

**LE:** For us, if we’re doing a photography project, once we get the files onto a card this is how we do it, transfer, proofs for the client — the relative process is the same.

**RR:** For [NFL.com](http://NFL.com) we do a lot of files that come on different cards. We need to know frame and transfer rates, aspect ratios, standard math, standard definition. A lot of young people don’t know what that is. It makes my job difficult because I have to do the work for them. I have to transfer using a different type of codex. These workflows are very key. All things are digital through a file transfer. At other studios, they’re doing stuff on tape but it’s all on a server. Everything is all file based. If we can do something that’s file based media into the department? Learning the different image formats are important because they give unique instances in which you will be using them. It’s always the wrong format. File formats are important for modern workflow. You need to know formats.

**LE:** Workflow is critically important.