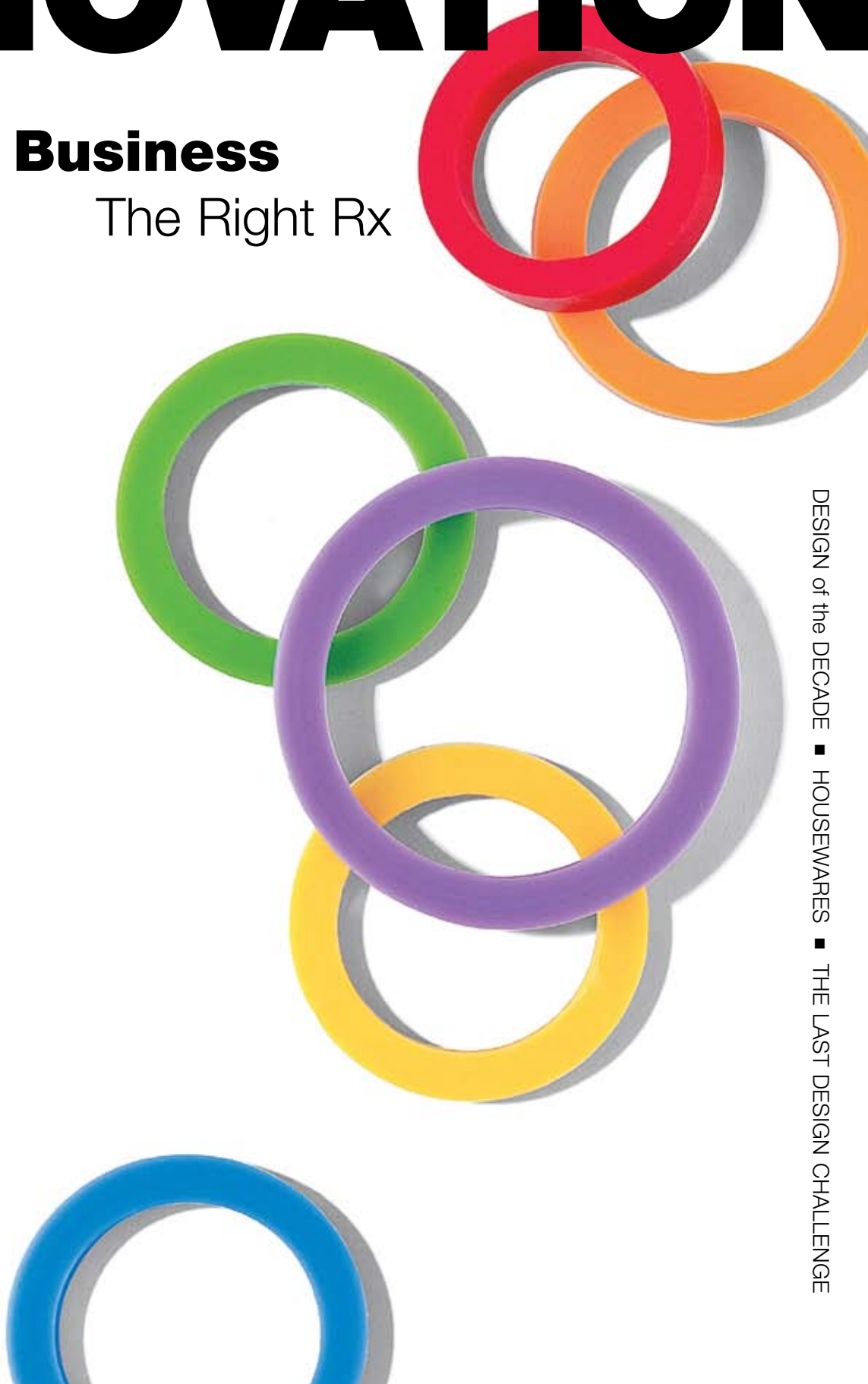


QUARTERLY OF THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA **WINTER 2010**

INNOVATION

Design in Business

The Right Rx



DESIGN of the DECADE ■ HOUSEWARES ■ THE LAST DESIGN CHALLENGE

INNOVATION®



Kyle Weiss, co-founder of FUNDaFIELD, gives a One World Futbol to a group of kids in Swaziland. See page 41.

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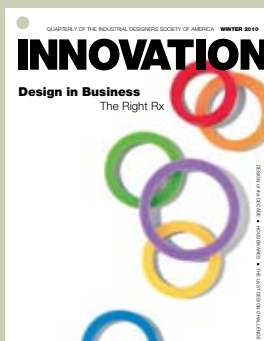
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FROM THE EDITOR

DESIGN OF THE ... WEEKEND

This issue's theme—design in business—was set to capture where we are in the ongoing discussion of design's role in business. Ten years ago, it seemed that the most common quandary of design in business was the quantification of design's value. *Prove it!* and *How do you measure it?* were common challenges given to design teams trying to justify budgets or breakthrough approaches.

Something changed around the middle of the last decade when the notion emerged that a core ingredient in design could be leveraged in business practice. Design process or design thinking, as some refer to it, became the latest newsworthy aspect of design, and it has triggered a groundswell of interest outside of design, and often a misunderstanding of what this profession has to offer.

Design process is now being exported to many other disciplines and is changing the way companies are conceived, run and reinvented. Books are being written and seminars held to understand or infuse design thinking into everything people do at work. I was recently surprised when I visited the Freestore Foodbank in Cincinnati where John Young, the CEO, talked to me about how he demands generative thinking and creativity from his team. In a place where I expected to see a warehouse filled with stacks of cast-off canned goods, I saw weekend "Power Packs" carefully designed to feed kids who go home from school on Friday without much hope of a meal until Monday. There was also a tricked-out kitchen complete with roof-mounted webcams to spread responsive food preparation tricks to church basements and soup kitchens who may find themselves oversupplied with figs. Wow!

I had not heard the term "generative thinking" anywhere but in a design studio, and I had previously been a bit worried about the generalized concept of design thinking leading to misunderstandings about the rigor and discipline required to deliver great design in traditional product development companies. But the Foodbank showed me the unbelievable



Weekend Power Pack by the Freestore Foodbank, Cincinnati. www.freestorefoodbank.org/powerpack

power of design unleashed across disciplines, and even categories of companies.

Industrial design baked these concepts over decades. It is still true that industrial design excellence requires a commitment to the hard-core discipline and process of design execution that is necessary to produce the amazing accomplishments you will read about in this issue. It is not enough to think. You have to sign up for the whole journey and sweat the details—from strategy to planning to concept to shipment and beyond—in order to deliver great design.

The greater design opportunity is for us to ensure that we lead, evangelize and codify design practice into the many adjacent disciplines that we rely on for success and to companies that may not be the typical

customers of design—like the foodbank—where the results are possibly less sexy, but just as inspiring and sometimes more meaningful.

So, it is convenient that this issue of *Innovation* combines the work of the Design of the Decade winners with the theme of design in business. The theme articles share carefully selected thought and work in this area—work at the intersection of design, business process and education. They expose inspiring initiatives and the inner workings of thought leaders looking at how to get better traction for design processes, or how to use design to make business and the world it serves better.

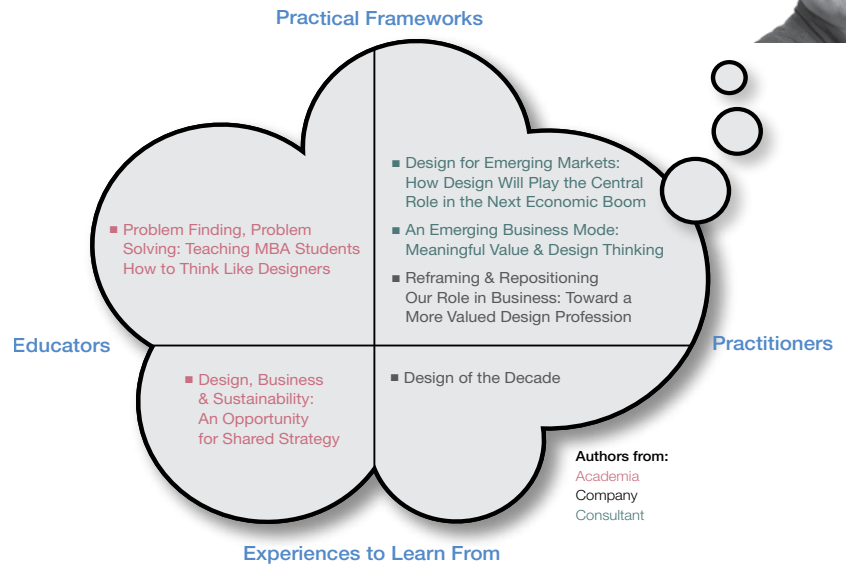
Our guest editor Steve Sato personifies the integration of design and business. He has brought his trademark thought, rigor and inspiration to this issue. Thank you, Steve, and congratulations to the Design of the Decade winners.

Finally, in this issue you will read (or reread) the last design crime. For many years this has been the bookend of *Innovation*. Budd Steinhilber, FIDSA has enlightened and amused us with this brilliant column and is taking a well-deserved break. Thanks is hardly enough, Budd, for your indelible and generous contribution to this pierced journal and all of its readers.

—Alistair Hamilton, IDSA
Innovation Executive Editor



DESIGN IN BUSINESS



WHAT WAS I THINKING?

Alistair Hamilton, IDSA, *Innovation's* executive editor, and I met in a rustic, cozy coffee shop to discuss giving form to this issue. After I thanked Alistair and expressed that I was honored to be the guest editor for this issue, we quickly got down to trading thoughts and ideas, and sketching concepts and making lists. What we sought was a healthy, tasty, well-balanced “meal plan.” Our time together passed quickly, and over the next few months we shopped, cooked samples and made adjustments. This is what emerged. I hope you enjoy consuming it as much as we did planning, cooking and serving it.

So, what did we have in mind? I was thinking.

- How today’s footbridge between business and design is a bottleneck.
- What designers are good at doing is making things more relevant to customers.
- Design thinking is in part about applying designers’ expertise in making products and services more relevant to customers, and to making strategies and business models more relevant to stakeholders (customers and managers).
- In order to work on strategies and business models designers need to position themselves upstream in the development and planning processes, the proverbial “seat at the strategy table.”
- The common advice given to designers to move upstream, to “speaking the language of business” was misleading.
- “Speaking the language” is really the end result of understanding how business people think, decide and do; learning the concepts comes first, then speaking the language emerges.
- Designers have the research skills to understand how business people think, decide and do.
- Designers have what it takes to understand and modify business frameworks and approaches, so companies deliver more value to customers by integrating qualitative, non-rational factors into decisions; perhaps call it “stakeholder-centered strategy and planning.”
- For this issue, what would most help designers and educators to do more of this?
- We should introduce some useful frameworks and insightful approaches that bridge both design and business thinking.
- What are we waiting for?

—Steve Sato, IDSA
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