Designers as Entrepreneurs: An Investigation on Why Startups Need Design and Design Need Startups

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Fine Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2015

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Abstract

Research have shown that the design-centric companies have yielded returns 228% greater than non-design-centric companies over the last 10 years. In another parallel research, Dyer et al. developed an Innovative Premium Test and discovered that leaders with high ‘innovative premium’ tends to lead a company in an innovative way, thus having a higher chance for a more successful company. Both researches have shown either being design-centric or innovative leads to a more successful company, but the innovative test has not been done on designers specifically. A pattern among these design-centric companies found that design is needed to build quality and innovative products or services, develop strategic market advantage, and encourage innovative design-centric corporate cultures through design-led leadership styles.

Startups are newly found small businesses with the purpose of delivering new product or services and searching for a repeatable and scalable business model under extreme uncertainty. A startup needs design to build up a design-centric scalable and repeatable business model while at infancy, and be competitive and innovative to navigate through the uncertainty of delivering novel products or services. A startup with a designer as one of the founders is said to help cultivate a design-centric culture within the company. UX designers in particular are needed for their competencies to deliver products that meet user’s needs and to juggle strategically between business and design.
In recent years, while more startups realize the importance of design, more designers choose entrepreneurship than before. Despite the surge in designers becoming founders, there seems to be greater demand than supply for designers in the startup community. Designers are underrepresented in the startup community as compared to business and engineering. In this thesis, interviews with designer founders, and startup and design experts, and a survey with designers, were conducted to examine the contributions of designers as founders, the needs of learning of designers to be a founder and designer’s motivation and barriers for entrepreneurship. The Innovative Premium Test was also conducted through the survey to measure the innovative premium of designers.

The results showed that the main barrier was designers’ self-limitation to the contribution of design to a startup, which is partly due to the lack of exposure to entrepreneurship. Designers have high innovative premium, thus showing that designers are innovative in general. There is also a positive correlation between entrepreneurial activities and “Idea Networking” skill, one of the behavioral traits of an innovator according to Dyer et al. UX Designers are discovered to have similar skillsets as Entrepreneurs, but they still need to build business literacy as a founder. Thus, designers who are aspiring founders need to learn the skills of UX Designers, build business literacy and cultivate their “Idea Networking” skill. Interestingly, these needs of learning are also applicable to designers who do not want to be a founder. Therefore, I propose the introduction of entrepreneurship as a career option to all designers through collaboration with startups.
Dedicated to my Mom and Dad
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Brian Stone, my Advisor for encouraging me to pursue a Master’s Thesis during my final year of undergraduate studies. Without that thought planted in my mind, and his guidance throughout, this thesis would never have happened.

This thesis is also possible with the help of my committee members, Professor Scott Shim and Dr. David Staley.

My mom, for her support throughout the difficult times. My family all the way in Singapore, China and Australia.

My friends and classmates, for their help and peer support.

All participants in my research.
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Chapter 1: Thesis Overview

1.1. Preface

After graduating from the National University of Singapore in Industrial Design, I had the ambition to manufacture my final year thesis project “Blindspot”. The path of entrepreneurship naturally came as an option in the journey to achieve this goal. The process was not as smooth as I expected, with new business jargon, finding co-founders that cared about design and my vision, raising funds and working with logistics, etc. Everything was overwhelming and I realize how little I knew about startups and how little startups know about design. I also noticed that there are very few designer entrepreneurs, which is quite depressing. This trend is consistent, even after I came to the United States, where designers are also the most underrepresented group as compared to business people or engineers in a “Startup Weekend” event held in Columbus.

Carrying this personal experience drove a motivation for me to write this thesis as I wanted to explore the role of a designer as a founder in a startup, to bridge the gap between the understanding of design between startups and designers and to develop coping strategies for designers who want to become an entrepreneur. This journey began with the intention of understanding the current perception of design in the startup community, with the hypothesis that there is a difference between the perception of design between designers and non-designers and that is a barrier of entry to entrepreneurship. My research revealed something more interesting than I would have
planned to discover; there are parallels between the competencies of a User Experience Designer and an Entrepreneur and that designers should learn the skills of a User Experience Designer if they want to become an Entrepreneur. However, User Experience Designers still need to learn business literacy. I have also discovered that designers should learn the skills of a User Experience Designer and business literacy, even if they do not want to be a founder. I proposed that startups are the best platform to learn those skills and business literacy.

This thesis was written with the aim of helping designers and entrepreneurs understand this relationship between design and startups: that there are needs of startup that can be contributed by designers and there are needs of designers that can be contributed by startups. This understanding would hopefully aid designers in articulating their value in the startup community, especially to their non-designer counterparts and also help designers overcome designer-specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship through exposure to entrepreneurship. I also hope for non-designers to gain a better understanding of the value of design in a startup and for designers' understanding on startups, so as to encourage empathy for each other.
1.2. Purpose

Startups are newly found small businesses with the purpose of delivering new products or services and searching for a repeatable and scalable business model under extreme uncertainty. The idea that design is important to startups can be traced to two trends: the rise of startups and the rise in the importance of design in business. Research has shown that the design-centric companies have yielded returns 228% greater than non-design-centric companies over the last 10 years (Rae 2014). A pattern among these design-centric companies found that design is needed to build quality and innovative products or services, develop strategic market advantages and encourage innovative design-centric corporate cultures through design-led leadership styles. Businesses, whether it be a stable corporate entity or startup are aware that design is needed, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2: Startups and Design.

According to serial entrepreneur and Stanford consulting professor Steve Blank, the ideal startup team consists of a hustler, a hacker, and a designer (Blank 2010). A hustler is known as a business, marketing, or sales person, while a hacker is the technical engineer or programmer. Since startups are essentially small businesses, the influences of design in businesses are also applicable to startups (Monk 2013; Ellwood 2012). A startup with a designer as one of the founders is said to give the startup the edge in being competitive and innovative to navigate through the uncertainty of delivering novel products or services and also help cultivate a design-centric scalable and repeatable business culture while at infancy. More interestingly, my research showed that the
competencies of a User Experience Designer are similar to that required of an Entrepreneur. However, User Experience Designers lack business literacy.

In recent years with the parallel growth in startups realizing the importance of design, more designers choose the path of entrepreneurship than ever before. Despite the surge in designers becoming founders, there seems to be greater demand than supply for designers in the startup community. Designers are very much underrepresented in the startup community as compared to other disciplines like business and engineering (Alter 2013). The involvement of designers in a startup community benefits both startups and the design community. With designers as a founder of a startup, they are building future design-centric companies that value design.

Just as not every business person and engineer can be entrepreneurs, not all designers are suitable to be entrepreneurs too, as explained in Chapter 3: Designer Founders. My research showed that there are highly likely to be barriers of entry to entrepreneurship that are specific to designers. This thesis aims to identify these barriers of entry that are specific to designers and hopes to offer recommendations for it. Additionally, the thesis also hopes to educate designers on the opportunities and benefits of their involvement in the startup community.
1.3. Approach

The thesis initially began with three hypotheses:

1. There are designer specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship

2. A mismatch in the perception of design’s contribution between designers and non-designers in the startup community is one of the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship.

3. Designers can contribute innovatively to a startup

The first hypothesis assumes that the low representation of designers in the startup community is due to the existence of designer specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship. There could be many possibilities and the second hypothesis is one such possibility. The perception of what and how a designer can contribute to a startup from a non-designer’s standpoint could be vastly different from a designer’s. While startups are aware that they need design, awareness could be different from understanding or appreciating how design works in a startup. This misconception could be a barrier for designers to pursue entrepreneurship or work in a startup environment.

In a research study conducted by business educators Jeff Dyer, Hal Gregersen, and Dr. Clayton M. Christensen, they developed an Innovative Premium Test to measure the ‘innovativeness’ of an individual (J. Dyer, Christensen, and Gregersen 2011; J. H. Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen 2008). They discovered that leaders with high ‘innovative premium’ tend to lead a company in an innovative way, thus having a higher chance to build a more successful company. In the research mentioned in the previous
section 1.2. Purpose, being design-centric also leads to a more successful company. Both studies have shown either being design-centric or innovative leads to a more successful company. However, being design-centric was never mentioned by Dyer et al. Upon comparing the innovative behavioral qualities of an innovator by Dyer et al. and the qualities of a design thinker by Tim Brown (Brown 2009), several similarities were found, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.4. Innovation by Design. This formed the third hypothesis that designers should be innovative according to the Innovative Premium Test and they could contribute innovatively as a founder.

These three hypotheses formed the basis of the initial primary research, which was designed in two parts: interviews and survey. The first part of the interviews were aimed at startup experts and design founders and compare their perception of design and designer's contribution to startup and their perception on the motivations or barriers of entry to entrepreneurship. Examining the value of design and designer’s perspective on entrepreneurship could identify perceived or actual barriers of entries that are mostly speculated. The second part of the survey was aimed to quantitatively compare between designers and non-designers on their perception of design, designer’s contribution to startup and their entrepreneurial intent and their Innovative Premium.

Through the initial round of interviews, the perception of design or designer’s contribution became too broad, and, therefore, too general, in order to accommodate all backgrounds of designer. On the other hand, I have discovered that User Experience Designer in particular have very similar set of competencies as required of an entrepreneur. Further background research showed that abilities such as having systemic
thinking ability and broad knowledge about non-design related fields are some of the many qualities of that an Entrepreneur and User Experience Designer share. (This will be discussed in Chapter 4: User Experience Design). This redirected the survey and secondary research to be focused on User Experience Design. The survey is still understanding designer’s entrepreneurial intent and their Innovative Premium; however, the perception was changed to the perception of User Experience Design and User Experience Designer’s contribution to a startup.

The comparison between the interviews and survey led me to conclude that there are designer-specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship and learning the skills of a User Experience Designer and building business literacy would be beneficial for designers, even if they do not want to pursue entrepreneurship. Understanding this relationship between startups and design, a proposal was made to bridge this gap through discovering the designer-specific barriers.
1.4. Structure

This thesis is structured in three parts: background research, research process and findings and conclusion.

The first three chapters describe background research about startups and design. Chapter 2: Startups and Design is aimed at understanding the current literature on the value of design in startups. Chapter 3: Designer Founders will talk about how startups work and how design founders play a role in startups, followed by case studies of startups with design founders. User Experience Design will be further discussed in Chapter 4: User Experience Design.

The methods of research and analysis will be discussed in Chapter 5: Methodology.

The core research findings will be discussed in the following three Chapters: Chapter 6: Interview Findings: Individual Interview Group, Chapter 7: Interview Findings: Comparison Across Interview Groups, and Chapter 8: Survey Findings. The final conclusion and proposal will be discussed in Chapter 9: Research Conclusion. The limitations of this thesis and potential future studies will be discussed in Chapter 10: Next Steps.
1.5. Summary

This thesis is written with the aim to educate designers that there are opportunities within the startup community and benefits for the design community to be involved with the startup community. The research process led to a finding that there is an overlap between the skill set of a User Experience Designer and an Entrepreneur. However, User Experience Designers still need to build their business literacy if they want to be a founder. Thus, learning the skills of a User Experience Designer and building business literacy are important for designers who want to be a founder. In addition, this is also beneficial for designers who do not want to be a founder. A proposal was made to bridge the gap between design and startup by identifying designer’s barriers of entry to entrepreneurship.

In the next chapter, we will begin the first of the three background research chapters that will give an overview on the current literature and research surrounding design, startups, designer founders, user experience design, and user experience designer founders. The first chapter is an introduction on the rise of startups and the increase in influence of design in business. This will lay a foundation on the history of how startups and design converge and how design is valued in businesses.
Chapter 2: Startups and Design

2.1. Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, we have understood that the importance of design in the startup community is led by two trends: the rise of startups and the growth of design’s influence in business. In this chapter, we will be discussing the two trends in detail. There will be two main sections in this chapter: Entrepreneurs and Startups, and Influence of Design in Business.

The first section will lay down the definitions of startups and entrepreneurs for this thesis. We will then delve into the history of startups and the causes for the rapid growth of startups. The overall startup process will also be described in this section to help understand the different components needed to make a successful startup. This would include the discussion about the ideal startup team: “hustler, designer, and hacker.”

The next section will begin with the definitions of design used in this thesis, which will be followed by the discussion on the value of design in business. More businesses are aware of the need to integrate design into their business in order to be more successful. The influence of design will be explained in four subsections: Quality by Design, Strategic Advantage by Design, Leadership by Design, and Innovation by Design. This section will end with the arguments for and against designs influence in business.
2.2. Entrepreneurs and Startups

2.2.1. Definition

There have been many definitions of entrepreneurship and startups and both terms have been used interchangeably. In general, entrepreneurship is defined by the action of the entrepreneur – starting an organization (Gartner, W.B. 1988), or discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). According to Professor Howard, Sarofim-Rock Professor of Business Administration, Emeritus at Harvard Business School, the definition of entrepreneurship is “the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled” (Stevenson 1988).

Startups, on the other hand, are the result of an entrepreneurial act. A startup is an organization formed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model, according to Steve Blank (Blank 2010). Eric Ries, author of Lean Startup, defines startup as “a human institution designed to deliver a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty” (Ries 2011). Therefore, a startup, according to Ries, could be a team setup within an established corporation with the mission to deliver an innovative new product under extreme uncertainty without a viable business model. Not all entrepreneurial acts lead to a startup.

In the law of the United States, small businesses are “independently owned and operated, are organized for profit and are not dominant in its field. Depending on the industry, size standard eligibility is based on the average number of employees for the preceding twelve months or on sales volume averaged over a three-year period”
Therefore startups could be small businesses, but not all small businesses are startups because of the lack of “extreme uncertainty” or the existence of a “repeatable and scalable business model.”

In this thesis startups are referred to as **newly found small businesses with the purpose of delivering new products or services and searching for a repeatable and scalable business model under extreme uncertainty**. The scope of this thesis would only consider Business-to-Consumer startups in the discussion. Entrepreneurs are people who are pursuing or have pursued the opportunity to start a startup. Founders are entrepreneurs who have initiated a startup and they typically hold the genesis of the idea. More about the process of a startup will be discussed in section **2.2.3 Startup Process**.

With this definition in mind small businesses such as design consultancies or restaurant franchises, are not considered as a startup in this thesis due to the absence of the search for a repeatable and scalable business model under extreme uncertainty. This also means that designers who have founded a design consultancy is not considered as an entrepreneur in this thesis due to the nature of the business they have founded. This thesis would be focusing on entrepreneurial activities of founding a startup among designers, which is known as designer founders. **Chapter 3: Designer Founders** would address more about this role.

**2.2.2. Rise of Startups**

Traders and merchants were the original entrepreneurs with the first recorded humans trading founded in New Guinea around 17,000 BCE. Since then, cities, trade
routes, money, markets, machines, and capitalism were created (Allis and Daly 2014). Companies were built by entrepreneurs through the Industrial Age, Information Age, and now, through the transitioning of Innovation Age (Allis and Daly 2014; Pink 2006). Rise in accessibility to the Internet will signal the start of the Innovation Age. As of 2013, only 36% of humanity has Internet access. The Innovation Age will begin at the end of 2015 when for the first time more than 50% of humans have access to the Internet.

According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, there has been a steady increase in entrepreneurship activities around the world over the past 15 years. Within the United States, entrepreneurial activities increased from 8% of the 18-64 population in 2009 to 12.7% in 2013 (GEM 2013).

The 20th century mainly consists of warfare and conflicts of market ideologies. As the global system today developed sufficiently with greater global stability, transparency, and rules, anyone can start and build a business and solve problems in their community easily (Allis and Daly 2014). After 2001, bandwidth, processing power, storage, and reliable open source programming that are significantly cheaper began to emerge. Web services have become increasingly cheap and easy to launch. As broadband penetration increased, the Internet empowered the communication and distribution network. Web services companies can reach new customers and users much more easily through paid search and social networking. Both consumer and enterprise use these new technologies to lead a period of tremendous growth of new generation of web services (Beim 2014).
As such, business and product ideas could drive innovation as much as it does technology ideas. Being a technologist is no longer the sole requirement of an entrepreneur to start a technology-driven company, which led to a proliferation in entrepreneurs who could start technology-driven companies. The backgrounds of those entrepreneurs ranged from creative artist with social product ideas, to aspiring business school graduates trying to disrupt existing industries, or industry experts with insights to solve industry problems with information technology. This shift substantially favored big cities and caused a growth in startup ecosystems such as Silicon Valley and NY Metro.

Another disruptive change in the Innovation Age is the availability of massive amounts of new data generated by information-centric industries, such as financial services, advertising, marketing services, publishing, entertainment, real estate and design. These information-driven industries have end products that are partly or totally digital, and their customers and supporting industries are also constantly producing new data. More successful disruptions in these industries further fuelled more startups to continue to emerge, and add on more disruptions in the Information Age (Beim 2014).

By 2020, it is speculated that there will be more entrepreneurs than employees (In this case, entrepreneurs refers to business owners of any kind, including freelancers, franchise owners, restaurants, service shops, new business ventures, etc.) (Demirkaya 2014).

As more startups emerge in the business world, intense competition is inevitable. In the next section I will talk about the components that are required for a startup to be successful.
2.2.3. Startup Process

Figure 1: Infographic on Business Startup Process (Dubenskyj 2013)
All startup process begins with an idea. The founder (sometimes founders) have an idea that they wish to pursue as a business. From an idea, the founder(s) will have to put together three things: Team, Product and Market. According to Marc Andreessen, co-founder of Netscape Communications:

“The caliber of a startup team can be defined as the suitability of the CEO, senior staff, engineers and other key staff relative to the opportunity in front of them. You look at a startup and ask, ‘Will this team be able to optimally execute against their opportunity?’ I focus on effectiveness as opposed to experience, since the history of the tech industry is full of highly successful startups that were staffed primarily by people who had never ‘done it before.’

The quality of a startup’s product can be defined as how impressive the product is to one customer or user who actually uses it: How easy is the product to use? How feature rich is it? How fast is it? How extensible is it? How polished is it? How many (or rather, how few) bugs does it have?

The size of a startup’s market is the number and growth rate of those customers or users for that product” (Andreessen 2007).

Highland Capital Partners Mulloy said that “focus on team (and) everything else will fall into place. The right team combined with a large emerging market opportunity is the winning formula” (Mulloy). In the beginning of a startup the team is the only one of the three components that is determined; the team is the only determinant as the product has not yet been built, nor the market has been explored.
Some people from the product development perspective, i.e. the engineers, may argue that product is the most important of the three (Andreessen 2007). As Andreessen describes the thought process of product people: “Apple and Google are the best companies in the industry today because they build the best products. Without the product there is no company. Just try having a great team and no product, or a great market and no product” (Andreessen 2007). However, Paul O’Brien, a seasoned online marketer having directed Advertising Solutions for Yahoo! and HP’s e-commerce business, also agreed with Mulloy that the team is far more important than market and product. A product is ranked the least in the three because it is “the result of great team and great understanding of market” (O’Brien 2013).

Andreessen argued that market is more important than team as there are several examples of a mediocre team succeeding in a good market, and a great team failing in a bad market. If the market is not there, the quality of the team will not force a success out of it. In Steve’s book *Four Steps to the Epiphany*, he writes: “Customer Validation proves that you have found a set of customers and a market who react positively to the product: By relieving those customers of some of their money” (Blank 2013). Product/Market Fit, also known as PMF, is often described as the most important foundation of a startup. In Ellis’ words, the foundation of a startup pyramid. The top of the pyramid represents growth and growth is built upon the foundation of PMF (Ellis 2009).

While I agree with Andreessen, I support the stand that the quality of the team is important to discover a good market. In the next few subsections I explain how
Product/Market Fit is achieved and how the ideal startup team (Hustler, Hacker and Designer) contributes to achieve Product/Market Fit.

2.2.3.1. Product/Market Fit

Schmidt explained that a Product/Market Fit, also known as PMF, “requires a product that’s technically feasible to develop, loved by users and meets the revenue growth expectations of its business stakeholders.” In other words, the balance of technology, users and business. Figure 2: Product Fit and Product Misfit (Schmidt 2014) shows the levels of PMF before PMF is achieved, as explained by Schmidt (Schmidt 2014).

Figure 2: Product Fit and Product Misfit (Schmidt 2014)
There are 8 types of stages that a product could be at in relation to its fit to the market. This is visually illustrated in the figure below:

![Figure 3: Levels before attaining Product/Market Fit (Schmidt 2014)](image)

In Level 0 nothing about the product is really defined. There could be a hunch about a certain market, an idea about how the product could be built or a way money could be made, but nothing is validated. All ideas start at this level.
In Level 1 at least one of the three fits is identified. Typically technical-fit would be a “genius technical solution that is searching for a problem or application.” For example, the invention of the Near Field Communication (NFC), before the application of wireless payment or data transfer. Validated user demand with no product or business to satisfy would be user-fit. This could be an unmade product with no business model that has managed to achieve millions of users signing up through a website. Lastly, a business-fit would be a business model with no technology or user value proposition, typically known as “the fantasy of an MBA.”

In Level 2, at least two fits are identified. Technical-User-Fit would be a technology that users love but is not profitable to build; for example the airline business. A brilliant technology that some people pay for, but not enough to take off, or two-sided marketplace that is stuck in the chicken-and-egg phase, would be considered a technical-business-fit (Manzari 2013). Finally, a user-business-fit would be a product that has not yet been built, but has successfully been sold.

Level 3 is the fundamental goal that all startups want to achieve before they can start scaling the business (Schmidt 2014).

According to Andreessen having a good market, also known as User-fit, would pull the Technology-fit and Business-Fit out of the startup team, even from a mediocre team. However, having a strong team that puts market-fit as a priority would definitely put the startup in a better position for success. According to a study by Harvard Business School, “all else equal, a venture-capital-backed entrepreneur who succeeds in a venture (by their definition, starts a company that goes public) has a 30% chance of succeeding in
his next venture. By contrast, first-time entrepreneurs have only an 18% chance of succeeding and entrepreneurs who previously failed have a 20% chance of succeeding.” (Gompers et al. 2010). It is no surprise that venture capitalist like Mulloy of Highland Capital Partners look at the quality of the team as the primary consideration when investing.

2.2.3.2. The Ideal Startup Team

Figure 4: The Types of Builders in a Startup (Schmidt 2014)
The Figure 4: The Types of Builders in a Startup (Schmidt 2014) shows Schmidt's explanation of the type of builders in a startup (Schmidt 2104). The red dots represent T-Builders, U-Builders and B-Builders, who are people who solely know their own parts with little knowledge about the others. The green lines represent the UT-Builders, BU-Builders and TB-Builders, people who knew at least two parts of the three. Finally people who know all three components are represented by the yellow triangle, which is known as the Full-Triangle-Builders.

Dave McClure of 500 Startups fame also agreed that the ideal startup team for a tech company should include a hacker, a hustler and a designer (McClure 2010). They are defined in the following ways:

“Hacker: The hacker is the back-end, front-end, or ‘full-stack’ developer (i.e. the chief technology officer or chief technologist) who can create the algorithms, intellectual property and resulting technology that customers want via the insights drawn from the discovery process. The hacker is instrumental in choosing the coding environment and platform for the startup to sustain growth. They are the ‘T-builders’ or sometimes ‘UT-Builders’ to achieve technology-fit.

Hustler/visionary: This is typically the leader of the team (i.e. the CEO), the one who builds the team, ignites their passion, manages projects, updates the business model, forms partnerships and guides the team along the validation path while cementing its culture. The hustler has a keen eye for numbers (including financial, cost structure and user metrics), can speak to the long and short-term vision of the company and can make investor pitches and tough decisions under the extreme uncertainty that startups operate
within. In most cases, the hustler hires the chief technologist and helps guide the startup to success. Typically, they are the ‘Full-Triangle-Builders’ who manages everything and is in-charge of B-building or BU-Building.

**Designer/Hipster**: The designer follows the best practices in brand identity building, user experience, information architecture and wire framing, while constantly informing the customer archetype. Wearing multiple hats the designer builds layouts and, in most early-stage startups, is the copywriter as well. Ideally the designer is also integral to the ‘get, keep, and grow’ marketing plans generated by the startup for both business-to-business and business-to-consumer campaigns. He or she understands messaging and how to A/B test and can likely measure the success of marketing tactics through all brand touch points as well as paid and free forms of media” (Monk 2013, Ellwood 2012).

Depending on the type of product or market, the technical requirements are slightly different. For example in a finance industry of an app product, it is essential for the Hacker to be a coder and the Designer to be a User Experience person. The hustler should be someone who knows the finance industry very well. On the other hand, if the product were a physical health care product, the team would expect a mechanical engineer as the hacker, an industrial designer as the designer and a hustler preferably from the health care industry.

However one common point required of a designer, either a User Experience Designer from an app startup or an Industrial Designer from a physical product startup, is the ability to integrate design with technical requirements/limitations and business marketing. A good designer is a very strong U-Builder, moderately good UT-Builder or
BU-Builder, with the knowledge of a Full-Triangle-Builder. That is an ability that User Experience Designers have, and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4: User Experience Design.

From this discussion we begin to understand that a designer in the founding team is essential. The ideal startup team depended on the hustler to be the visionary and the designer and hacker to make the vision possible. But what happens when the designer can contribute to vision too? In the next section we will discuss the influences of design in businesses to understand the potential value of design.
2.3. Influence of Design in Business

2.3.1. Definition

Design in its broadest sense is “an applied discipline, with the aim of creating simpler, more meaningful, rewarding experiences for customers” (Adam Swann 2012). With such a broad definition of design, challenges arise when trying to identify the perception of design in startups in the initial rounds of my interviews. Therefore, I redirected the survey to focus on User Experience Design to be more relevant to startups. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5: Methodology.

In this section, the influence of design in business is discussed with design in the broad definition. As business also has a broad definition of “an organization involved in the trade of goods, services, or both to consumers” (O’Sullivan 2003). The principles that designers use are much more relevant to apply into businesses than the background of the designer (i.e. graphic design or industrial design). Such principles, thinking or approaches are called Designerly Thinking (Cross 2006). When applied outside of design context, such as business, it’s called Design Thinking (Brown 2009; Johansson-Sköldberg 2013). Further discussion on Design Thinking will be discussed in subsection 2.3.2.4. Innovation by Design and 2.3.3. Discussions about Design Thinking. Businesses that use Design Thinking are also known as a design-centric business or company. A designer would be someone who has either worked as a designer or has a design-related education, or both.

Sir Thomas J. Watson Jr. said, “Good Design is Good Business” in 1973 (“IBM100 - Good Design Is Good Business” 2012). At that time, the design and business
symbiosis was “more prophecy than reality.” Today the importance of design in many businesses has been increasing (Cliff Kuang 2012). Apple, Target, and Nike are just some successful companies that advocated themselves as a design-centric company.

In 2014, Design Management Institute and Motiv Strategies developed a tool to track the results of design centric companies and the results showed that design-centric companies have yielded returns 228% greater than non-design-centric companies over the last 10 years (Rae 2014).

According to UK Design Council, design can play a role in businesses through the following ways:

1. Design is customer-centered - Benefit is greatest when design is intimately related to solving problems, especially customers’ problems.

2. Design is most powerful when culturally embedded - It works best when it has strong support in the organization, especially from senior management.

3. Design can add value to any organization - Design can benefit manufacturing and service-based organizations, small, medium or large. (UK Design Council 2014)

The influence of design in businesses will be explained in the next four subsections.
2.3.2. Value of Design in Business

2.3.2.1. Quality by Design

Daniel Pink argues, “... because of abundance, businesses are realizing that the only way to differentiate their goods and services in today's overstocked marketplace is to make their offerings physically beautiful and emotionally compelling.” Pink further explained, “Design is a classic whole-minded aptitude. It is, to borrow John Heskett’s terms, a combination of utility and significance. Design has become an essential aptitude for personal fulfillment and professional success for at least three reasons. Firstly thanks to rising prosperity and advancing technology, good design is now more accessible than ever, which allows more people to partake in its pleasures and become connoisseurs of what was once specialized knowledge. Secondly in an age of material abundance, design has become crucial for most modern businesses – as a means of differentiation and as a way to create new markets. Thirdly as more people develop a design sensibility, we’ll increasingly be able to deploy design for its ultimate purpose: changing the world” (Pink 2006).

Creating quality emotional brand experiences is now a standard. These experiences and expectations are accelerated due to the Internet and connectivity through social media. Companies that do not embrace design are losing out in terms of providing quality products (Adam Swann 2012).
2.3.2.2. Strategic Advantage by Design

Companies that use design strategically grow faster and have higher margins than their competitors. A design-led firm is characterized by a dominant logic that views design as central to the firm’s strategic positioning (Rae 2014). Creationz partner Michael Smythe says, “An organization is known by the way it manifests itself through its products and services, its visual communications, and its operational environment.” Design-centric firms are unable to separate the brand from the design process and they attribute design to bring the brand’s promise and core values to life (Francis Farrelly and Michael Beverland 2008).

At a strategy level, products have the opportunity to be designed as product ecosystems rather than standalone products. Designers are best situated when figuring out the human interface for a vast chain and how parts of each design could contribute to the bigger chain. When done right, a working ecosystem is a far better platform for innovation than an isolated product. Apple’s products from iMacs to iPods, iTunes, iPhones and iPads, are all linked as an ecosystem through iCloud. Another example, Nike, with Nike+ and Fuelband created a network of wearable devices (Cliff Kuang 2012).
2.3.2.3. Leadership by Design

In *The Fifth Discipline*, systems thinking writer Peter Senge explores the concept of the “leader as designer”. He suggests, “If an organization is a ship, the leader is not the captain, navigator, helmsman, engineer or social director. There is another that eclipses them all in importance... the designer of the ship. No one has a more sweeping influence... It’s fruitless to be the leader in an organization that is poorly designed.” Senge recognized the holistic and realistic nature of design when he writes, “Design is, by its nature, an integrative science because design requires making something work in practice” (Senge 1999).

In the case of Nike’s Mark Parker and John Hoke, they did not just use Design as a way to be innovative (which will be discussed in the next section), but also lead the company with design as priority. “The role of design at a company is to allow you to recreate yourself, to allow your company to find a new way of success before the old way fails,” says Parker. They lead the company by a designer’s mindset (Robert Safian 2013b).

Maria Giudice and Christopher Ireland, author of *Rise of DEO*, argues that the new age of leadership style is something similar to what designers have. “Part strategic business executive and part creative problem-solver, the DEO is a catalyst for transformation and an agent of cultural change. With this perspective and these abilities, the DEO looks at business problems as design problems, solvable through the right mix of imagination and metrics” (Giudice and Ireland 2013). A poll of 1,500 CEOs by IBM
listed ‘Creativity’ as the most important leadership competency for the future (IBM 2010).

A cohesive design culture can be built in many different ways. Google does not have a chief designer, nor do they have any design guides. Instead as Manjoo writes, “Google's new process leans heavily on conversation and collaboration.” At Warby Parker, the top designers are co-CEOs. The overriding model to design-driven solutions, is that there are no single overriding models for anything (Giudice and Ireland 2013).

In Innovator’s DNA, the authors argued that the ‘DNA’ of the leader will strongly influence the company's innovativeness. Dyer et al. coined the term ‘Innovative Premium’ to measure the innovativeness of an individual. They discovered that leaders with high ‘innovative premium’ tend to lead a company in an innovative way, thus having a higher chance to a more successful company. Having an innovative CEO is essential to having an innovative culture in a company (J. Dyer, Christensen, and Gregersen 2011). Additionally, authors of Rise of DEO, also supported that the qualities of a leader will strongly affect the culture (Giudice and Ireland 2013). As such, in order to be design-centric, there needs to be designers in top management roles (Robert Safian 2013a).
2.3.2.4. Innovation by Design

The term ‘Design Thinking’ is largely referring to the application of a designer's way of thinking in a non-design context, commonly in businesses (Johansson-Sköldberg 2013). Tim Brown of IDEO explained that Design Thinking “is a discipline that uses the designer’s sensibility and methods to match people’s needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity” (Brown 2009). Design thinking in his terms is a process that anyone could use, using designer’s tool to problem solving – Abductive reasoning. It advocates the use of design thinking for innovation. Brown argues, “A purely techno centric view of innovation is less sustainable now than ever and a management philosophy based only on selecting from existing strategies is likely to be overwhelmed by new developments at home or abroad. What we need are new choices – new products that balance the needs of individuals and of society as a whole; new ideas that tackle the global challenges of health, poverty and education; new strategies that result in differences that matter and a sense of purpose that engages everyone affected by them... instead of an inflexible, hierarchical process that is designed once and executed many times, we must imagine how we might create highly flexible, constantly evolving systems in which each exchange between participants is an opportunity for empathy, insight, innovation and implementation.”

Roger Martin, author of The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking Is the Next Competitive Advantage, further supported that business that rely solely on Deductive and Inductive Reasoning are no longer sufficient to stay competitive. “Without the logic of
what might be, a corporation can only refine its current heuristic or algorithm, leaving it at the mercy of competitors that look upstream to find a more powerful route out of the mystery or a clever new way to drive the prevailing heuristic to algorithm.” Therefore, businesses need to build a design-thinking corporation (Martin 2009).

In an era of big data, companies have an abundance of quantitative customer data and they hope that the data will give solutions to all problems. But consumers will rarely explicitly display opportunities they have not yet seen. The best designers can identify these innovative opportunities from the gaps in user experience, not through focus groups (Kuperman 2014).

In an interview with Fast Company, President and CEO Mark Parker and VP of Global Design John Hoke talked about Nike’s unique relationship with design that every innovator should know. Parker said, “Design helps a company think about where it is and where it wants to be... It’s important to be open to new ways of innovating, even if they come at the cost of the proven way of doing things” (Robert Safian 2013b).

Pink also argued, “After all, before the Indian programmers have something to fabricate, maintain, test, or upgrade, that something must first be imagined or invented. And these creations must then be explained and tailored to customers and entered into the swirl of commerce, all of which require aptitudes that can't be reduced to a set of rules on a spec sheet – ingenuity, personal rapport and gut instinct.”

Dyer et al. discovered 4 behaviors and 1 cognitive qualities of an innovative thinker. This is presented in Table 1: Comparison between Innovative Behaviors from Innovator’s DNA and Qualities of a Design Thinker from Change by Design
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovator’s DNA (Dyer, Christensen and Gregersen 2011)</th>
<th>Design Thinker (Brown 2009)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>Observing</td>
<td>Integrative thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idea Networking</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
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<td>Experimenting</td>
<td>Experimentalism</td>
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<td>Associating</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
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Table 1: Comparison between Innovative Behaviors from Innovator’s DNA and Qualities of a Design Thinker from Change by Design

Upon comparison between the qualities of an innovative thinker and a design thinker, similarities could be found between Observing/Questioning with Empathy, Idea Networking with Collaboration, Experimenting with Optimism and Experimentalism and Associating with Integrative Thinking.

Dyer et al. also developed an Innovative Premium Test to qualitatively measure the ‘innovativeness’ of an individual based on their findings on the study of innovative thinkers. However, there has yet to be a study on the Innovative Premium of designers. Therefore I see this as an opportunity to conduct the test on designers. From this I generated one of my hypotheses that designers are innovative in general and could contribute as an innovative leader. This will be conducted through a survey, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5: Methodology.
2.3.3. Discussions about Design Thinking

2.3.3.1. Arguments against Design in Business: Design Thinking is just Creative Thinking

In 2010, Don Norman argued that Design Thinking is essentially just creative problem solving that people have been doing all the while, way before the term ‘designers’ even existed and thus it is not something that is unique to designers (Don Norman 2010). Three years after he published the article, Don Norman took back his argument and said that design curriculum has supported the training of creative thinking and making. Thus, the design education has produced designers that are experts at creative problem solving. However, he did not revoke his stand that Design Thinking is just creative problem solving (Don Norman 2013).

Stanford d.school has been teaching non-designers about design thinking (“Standford d.school” 2014). Recently Tom and David Kelly, teachers at d.school and partners at IDEO, published a book Creative Confidence. The authors believe that everyone is essentially creative but through their many years of teaching design thinking experience, they noticed that most of their students labeled themselves as ‘non-creative.’ This lack of confidence in creativity inhibits their own imagination. The book follows several exercises that would progressively improve the creative confidence of ‘non-creative’ (Kelley and Kelley 2013). Despite teaching design thinking, the authors did not use the term ‘Design Thinking Confidence’, but ‘Creative Confidence’, which could hint that Design Thinking could be only just creative thinking.

I believe there is still a fundamental difference in Design and Creativity. Design itself includes the approach, the mindset and the actual craft. It is about service to other
people and less about self-expression. There are elements of self-expression involved to a certain extent when designing, however most designers are providing design for other people and other users. Creativity, in its broadest sense, is about the ability to make connections. Creativity could be applied to anything (Lotto 2013). Therefore, I believe that design thinking is a subset of creative thinking.

2.3.3.2. *Design Thinking is an acquired behavior*

There is a perception that ‘Design Thinking’ can be acquired through workshops. Design Thinking is what designers use to approach and solve problems for other people; it is a behavior that requires many years of training and doing to get into this rhythm and habit of thinking and doing. Designers learn by doing. Depending on how Design Thinking is taught, there is a misconception that knowing design thinking is knowing design. Some business managers would claim that they could make design decisions after going through Design Thinking workshops. Jon Kolko mentioned that in the actual design, the craft of design couldn’t be separated from the thinking of design; both are required to complete a design. “You could have design thinkers to think about design and solve problems in a design thinking way, but when it comes to the actual execution, you still need a designer to do it” (*Jon Kolko: What Is Design Thinking* 2012).

According to Kolko, the term ‘Design Thinking’ undermines the act of doing, when design is actually all about doing and even learning through doing. Design Thinking is a mindset to problem solving that requires many years of training and practice to become a habit of thinking and doing. I believe that claiming that design
thinking can be picked up through a few hours of workshop is akin to saying that a religion can be changed overnight; not impossible, but radical. Therefore, learning about design thinking would be planting the seed of such behavior, and allowing the awareness and appreciation of its existence. This is not to say that a non-designer cannot be a design thinker, but that design thinking has to be learned through practice and that design decisions still require the knowledge of the craft of design.

Therefore, I support the stand that when a design-related problem is involved, the non-designer design thinker will still need the facilitation of and collaboration with designers. Designers who are trained to think and do design, are better design thinkers that corporations need to hire. Instead of sending managers to design thinking workshops, hiring designers to facilitate and encourage a design culture in the corporation might be a better way. As mentioned earlier in section 2.3.2.3, Leadership by Design, there is a need to have designers at a management level in order to have impact and be a design-centric company. However, it is much easier to cultivate design-centric culture while the company is at its infancy. The next section will give an overview on the growth of startups and the last section will discuss the relations of design in a startup at greater details.
2.4. Conclusion

Thanks to the success of many design-centric companies, such as Apple and Nike, the influence of design in business is growing. Businesses are willing to change and try to embrace design in order to enjoy the value it brings. However a change of business culture cannot happen overnight and most companies struggle with trying to change an established culture into a design-centric one.

Startups are essentially businesses and therefore we could easily translate the value of design in businesses to startups. We understand that designers are needed as one of the important members of a company. However, there is more to the benefit of having a designer as a founder than just a team member. In the next chapter, I discuss in detail the value of a designer as a founder. I will also review some case studies on startups that are founded by a designer founder.
Chapter 3: Designer Founders

3.1. Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, we understood the value that design can bring to businesses, whether it be startup or large corporations. However, large businesses with established culture faced difficulties in changing to a design-centric company. On the other hand, startups are new businesses that hardly have any culture established. This gives them a great opportunity to become design-centric.

It is no surprise that serial entrepreneur and Stanford consulting professor Steve Blank said that the ideal startup team consists of a hustler, a hacker and a designer. “The hacker should be someone who’s great at writing code – better than anybody else, and the hustler tends to be the CEO, with the ability to distort reality and who can run experiments. The designer figures out user interface, which is especially important for both the web and mobile” (Karol 2013). A founder which can be sometimes more than one person, and typically holds the genesis of the idea or vision for the startup. Therefore a founder with design ability will be referred to in this thesis as a Designer Founder. We will begin discussing the value of design in startups in the first section of this chapter.

Just as not everyone wants to be an entrepreneur, not every designer wants to be a designer founder. Over the past few decades, there has definitely been a surge in the number of designers becoming entrepreneurs. However designers are still the most underrepresented group in the startup community, despite the demand for them to be part
of the ideal startup team. There were several discussions on the reasons behind such
trends, however there were not a lot of studies done behind this topic. These reasons will
be discussed in the later section of this chapter.

The last part of this chapter will focus on the case studies of startups that were
founded by designers, namely AirBnB, Pinterest and Fab.com.
3.2. Value of Design in Startups

As understood in the previous chapter, the role of design in the startup community has been gaining attention in conjunction with the rise of entrepreneurial activities and design's importance in business in the recent decade. The influence and value of design in businesses can also be applied to startups, as startups are essentially also businesses. This section attempts to explain how design brings value specifically to startups through the mix of the four values of design in businesses explained in the previous chapter, 2.3.2. Value of Design in Business.

Joseph Alois Schumpeter argued that entrepreneurs deserve the credit for the industrial revolution as they create “clusters of innovations” that are the causes of business cycles because their actions create disruptive dislocations and arrive in huge waves (Schumpeter 1934). However, differentiating based on tech talent alone is no longer sufficient to stay competitive.

Structural changes in more competitive markets mean consumer expectations for product experience have risen (Allen 2012b). Since 2000, global time spent on the Internet has seen a great increase, and since 2009, mobile devices have seen a sharp rise too. As the Internet becomes a commonplace, users have come to expect high quality and ease-of-use (Kozlowski 2013). Most startups today are delivering products that are partly or fully digital. As competition increases in a crowded market and startups are primarily dependent on user engagement with their products, design is becoming a key differentiator for companies to acquire funding, press coverage and loyal users (Schectman 2013).
In a recent survey, 63% of mobile decision makers cited customer engagement as a top priority (Schectman 2013). Engagement is key. The easier the product is to use, the more users will stay and engage with it. However, creating simplicity is difficult and the selection of the most important product elements requires several design rounds and testing. Great design is lasting and works well with all aspects of the product and touches all areas of the business. When a user looks at any area of the design, there should be a comprehensive understanding of how the product works and a design language that works throughout the product (Kuperman 2014).

99designs CEO Patrick Llewellyn says, “We’ve seen successful startups like AirBnB, where design is at the forefront, beautiful simplicity. The way you interact with their design has played a part in their growth to prominence. We’ve seen the rise of Instagram and other startups with a very clean, well-designed look and feel” (Stein 2012).

Angel investor Dave McClure argues, “Design and marketing are way more important than engineering for consumer Internet companies. Addictive User Experience (Design) and Scalable Distribution Methods (Marketing) are the most critical components of success in consumer Internet startups, not Pure Engineering Talent” (McClure 2010).

99designs CEO Patrick Llewellyn polled a survey from 1,500 entrepreneurs, startup founders and small-business owners and found that 80% of them think the design of their logos, websites, marketing materials and other branding tools is either important or very important to their success. Just 3% said design was not important. 67% of respondents believe design will become even more important to business success over the
next five years (Stein 2012). Startups where design is greatly emphasized are becoming more prevalent, such as Square, Fitbit and Tapbots (Riley 2013).
3.3. Designers as Founders

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the leadership of a company is very important. In order to be design-centric, the management of the business has to embrace design. Most startups know that design or a designer is needed in order for them to enhance their chances of being successful. Designers can be involved in a startup either as a founder, part of the founding team, an employee or a consultant. However most startups do not understand that in order for the company to be design-centric, designers cannot be just a consultant or treated like an employee, even in the founding team. The fundamental management of the startup has to live a design culture.

As discussed in section 2.3.3.2. Design Thinking is an acquired behavior, not everyone can be a design thinker through workshops or classes. Enrique Allen recounted his experience of trying to teach entrepreneurs how to think more like a designer, but only led to his frustrations. In the end, he decided it was easier to encourage designers to become entrepreneurs, and, thus, founded Designer Fund, a venture capital firm that funds startups that have a designer founder (Allen 2012a).

Great designers will have the innate understanding of users, where they are able to craft the experiences to get responses from users. They are the strong U-builder in the company. Since people typically have short attention spans, startups need to show their value, capture users’ imaginations and engage users in seconds. Great design will reflect this understanding of the end user. The rightly designed icon will be recognizable and stick in the minds of users that will work on all marketing materials in the future. Product features or elements are intentionally designed to encourage users to share the product
When designers are one of the founders, they are able to shape the vision of the company to be user-centered.

Good designers are also known to be able to identify innovative opportunities from the gaps in user’s needs. Designers at Apple, AirBnB and Dropbox are impacting the world today, because they make their products more usable, aesthetic and human, on top of their better technology (Riley 2013). As mentioned in the previous chapter, design is not just a service industry, but also a way of thinking that is invaluable in starting innovative companies. Yves Behar, designer of Jawbone, Ouya, and August, thinks designers could be great entrepreneurs because they “are uniquely suited at solving problems on multiple dimensions without losing sight of the big opportunity to wow the customer.” Therefore, the key commonalities between both designers and entrepreneurs is problem solving. Both are obsessed with a problem and in how to solve it (Alter 2013).

### 3.3.1 Well-Designed Product doesn’t mean Well-Designed Business

As explained in the previous chapter, for a good product to be successful, a sound business model is needed. Often at times, designers are able to create a well-designed product through identifying a solid customer demand from a proven market. However, they lack the knowledge to build a growing business with a solid, logical business model. The absence of a business model discourages potential investors and partnership, thus limits the growth market of the product (Stark and Stewart 2012).

This problem is especially more prominent in businesses that have complementary network effects, also known as two-way marketplace (Eisenmann,
Parker, and Alstyne 2006). Some examples of such businesses include social networks, marketplaces, auction systems, classified listing sites, advertising networks or payment systems. These businesses need either “buyers” or “sellers” first before being able to attract the other. As such, the success of the product is no longer just about the elegantly designed product, but more about the strategies to solve this “chicken and egg” issue (Manzari 2013). Many designers are unaware of, or are not equipped with the skills to solve this problem, leading to a poorly designed business.

When designers are able to understand the business aspects, the startup will be able to achieve Business-User-Fit without a real product, as illustrated in the figure in the next page.
Depending on the product, technology-fit at times could cost the most money for a startup. Therefore, before investing in the technology of a product, it is beneficial to “fail fast” if it turns out that a user-fit or business-fit is not possible. Designers with the understanding of business therefore have this advantage to push to as much market-fit before even spending much money on building an actual product.
3.4. Trends of Designer Founders

Compared to the previous decades, there are more designers today who choose the path of entrepreneurship to pursue and create meaningful impact through tech startups (Allen 2012a). As more startups realize the value of design, the number of designers involved directly with startups as founders or shareholders continues to expand. This takes the next generation of products and service to a new level of quality (Darke 2012). Communities like Designer Founders (Designer Founders Book Team 2013), Designer Fund (“The Designer Fund” 2013), Kern and Burn: Conversations With Design Entrepreneurs (Hoover and Heltzel 2013), and programs like 30 Weeks: A Founders Program for Designers (Wilson 2014), and schools that are training entrepreneurial designers, such as the Stanford d.school and School of Visual Arts, have emerged over the last few years (Allen 2012a).

More possibilities are given to designers to create experiences with touch, sound, and movement interaction as technology revolutionizes user-interface and user-interaction. Designer founders should lead in user experience and bring the world of technology and people together (Allen 2012a). Startups that are pivoting, developing a new product, or expanding user base are not uncommon. Having a designer founder can allow the startup to competently develop the product by empathizing with users, identifying the right problems to solve, and targeting the use-cases that best address company goals (Allen 2012b). Designers think visually and mixing this unique thinking with a completely different school of thinking in a startup team will encourage a greater perspective (Kuperman 2014).
Despite the surge in designers becoming founders, there seems to be greater demand than supply for designers in the startup scene. Jessica Alter, founder of FounderDating.com, found that there are far fewer designer founders relative to other skill sets according to members registered in her website. Around 15 percent listed design as their primary skill set. Among these, there are people who have had experience working as a designer, have a design-related degree, or are just design-appreciators. Removing those who are just design-appreciators, there are only closer to 6 percent designer founders. This is significantly smaller compared to other types of founders such as engineer founders, which is about 50 percent (Alter 2013). The following are some of the speculated reasons:

3.4.1. Not Every Designer is Suitable to be a Founder

Mark Boulton tweeted “The designer as founder who stays at a startup for more than 3 years is a rare thing. Creating things is in our DNA. Running things isn’t” (Boulton 2012).

Most designers are creative people who have a desire to build things and wanting to move onto other projects is inevitable. They are passionate about and driven by design. Some designers see working on a variety of projects through client work at agencies as the only way to fulfill their creative desires. In addition, designers working at startups are often the lone designer for years, a contrast with consultancies and bigger companies with an in-house design team (Darke 2012; Alter 2013). Most entrepreneurs in contrast, are
actually not amazing at any one thing. Founders are typically just sufficiently skilled at many things that will keep the startup alive: fundraising, product, partnerships, etc.

Thus, if designers are only dedicated to their own craft, they are unlikely to be entrepreneurs. Designers need to love more than the act of design; they need to love the process of design to the extent that they are willing to apply the design process onto designing the company from the ground up (Alter 2013). The term ‘founder’ can mean many things and does not necessarily mean an unspoken vow to work for a company full-time indefinitely. Founders simply have the passion and drive to be one of the people to make the idea happen. Today, startups could be another source of creative opportunities outside of consultancies (Darke 2012).

Another reason for the lack of designers in the startup scene could be that designers cannot tolerate their polish skills to be undervalued at an early stage startup. In a resource-constrained startup world, polished design skills is of little use at any early stage startup. The product must always solve the customer’s biggest pains in order to be successful. When the customers are really in pain, they won’t care about rough edges or pretty edges, as long as the product is more usable and useful than the next best alternative. Those customers would rather use a minimum viable product today over a polished product tomorrow. To a startup at this stage, the time spent perfecting the design yields no value. This could be a deal breaker for designers as they do not want to be associated with low quality products (Uesugi 2013).

In addition, many designers are also unsure if they are suitable for entrepreneurship, or not even aware that entrepreneurship is a possibility. Education is
partially a contributor to some of this lack of awareness or exposure to entrepreneurship. Traditionally, designers are trained to be service agents: working for someone else’s vision. This is true for advertising or design agencies, or at larger companies where corporate design or design departments often act as an internal design consultancy for the corporation. Young designers fresh out of design school are typically only educated to work for these services firms and departments. Few design schools embed the idea of entrepreneurship into their programs (Alter 2013).

A rare few designers are highly skilled, driven and equipped for uncertainty. Being a ‘product’ person who is objectively focused enough to know when to compromise, and be a great manager are a rare combination of qualities to find in an individual, albeit they do exist (Darke 2012; Allen 2012b).

3.4.2. Non-designers in the Startup Community don’t Understand Design

“The fact that so many tech startups are founded by coders is a disadvantage when it comes to hiring a designer. After all, if you’re not a designer yourself, you won’t know where to look to find one and even if you do find someone you might not know how to judge them” (Greif 2012). A designer founder, on the other hand, understands design.

Steve Jobs said, “In most people’s vocabularies, design means veneer. But to me, nothing could be further from the meaning of design. Design is the fundamental soul of a man-made creation that ends up expressing itself in successive outer layers.” Jobs worked closely with Apple’s lead Designer, Jonathan Ive, to create an integration between designers, engineers and the manufacturing team. Jobs had the vision, but he also had
Jonathan Ive to lead the team to make great products (Isaacson 2011; Esslinger 2014). Having great designers as co-founders would help create an environment where great designers can thrive. This is especially useful for startups that requires design and user experience as core competencies of the company. Designer founders that model and teach others innovative design thinking behaviors that will foster a long-term culture of design (Allen 2012b).

In Llewellyn’s survey, while many startups and small-business owners understand the importance of design, many are not willing to spend a lot of money for professional design work. 65% are willing to pay up to $500 for a new custom logo, 20% up to $1,000 and 15% more than $1,000. More than half do their design work themselves or assign it in-house, while 21% use freelancers and 18% use crowdsourcing sites like 99designs. Only 7% hire a design agency (Stein 2012).

Braden Kowitz coined the term ‘Unicorn Designer’, a magical designer who can solve all companies’ problems (Kowitz 2011). The reason for this term is the high and unrealistic expectations of startups looking for designers who are experts of both front-end and back-end development, trying to combine two or three person’s job into one, and using them as a UT-builder mentioned in the previous chapter. This is a reflection of the lack of understanding of design by startups because ‘Unicorn Designers’ very rarely exist.

From the investor’s point of view, not all investors have operational backgrounds in design and development. The problem arises with startups when investors of such
backgrounds are providing product and marketing advice, causing a clash with designer founders (McClure 2010).
3.5. Case Studies of Design Founders

In this section, we will look into three startups that are founded by designer founders, AirBnB, Pinterest and Fab.com.

Two Industrial Designers, Brian Chesky (CEO) and Joe Gabbi (CPO) founded **AirBnB** with a tech co-founder. They were fresh graduates who developed the idea out of necessity to pay rent.

**Pinterest** was founded by two business persons and Evan Sharp, who was formerly an architect and a product designer at Facebook before Pinterest. Unlike Brian Chesky of AirBnB, Evan is the quiet behind the scene guy of Pinterest.

Finally, Bradford Shellhammer founded **Fab** with a business co-founder. Bradford is the chief design officer and founder of Fab while still running his own design consultancy.

These designer founders were chosen to represent the different entrepreneurial paths and contributions of the designer founders.

3.5.1. AirBnB

AirBnB is a web-based community marketplace for people to list, discover and book unique accommodations around the world -- online or from a mobile phone. Two Industrial Designers, Brian Chesky (CEO) and Joe Gebbia (CPO) founded it, with a tech co-founder in 2008. The following is an info graphic by Anna Vital.
As the CEO of AirBnB, Chesky drives the company’s vision, strategy and growth as it provides interesting and unique ways for people to travel and changes the lives of its community. Under Chesky’s leadership, AirBnB stands at the forefront of the sharing economy and has expanded to over 800,000 listings in 190 countries. Gebbia, who had a double major in Industrial Design and Graphic Design and is the CPO of AirBnB, leads
the product team in creating meaningful experiences through intuitive design and oversees AirBnB’s brand and product development.

Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia created the initial concept for AirBed & Breakfast during the Industrial Design Conference held by Industrial Designers Society of America. At the time, Chesky and Gebbia could not afford the rent for their loft in San Francisco. They made their living room into a bed and breakfast, accommodating three guests on air mattresses and providing homemade breakfast. The original site offered short-term living quarters, breakfast and a unique business networking opportunity for attendees who were unable to book a hotel in the saturated market. Chesky and Gebbia approached their former roommate, a Harvard graduate and technical architect, to be the third co-founder of AirBed & Breakfast. During the company’s initial stages, the founders focused on high-profile events where alternative lodging was scarce. The site Airbedandbreakfast.com officially launched on August 2008.

To help fund the site, the founders created special edition breakfast cereals, with presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain as the inspiration for “Obama O’s” and “Cap’n McCains.” In two months, 800 boxes of cereal were sold at $40 each, which generated more than $30,000 for the company’s incubation and attracted Y Combinator’s Paul Graham. After its inauguration, the site expanded to include properties in the market between hotels and CouchSurfing. In January 2009, Y Combinator invited the founders to join the incubator’s winter session for three months of training.
However, in 2009, AirBnB was close to going bust. Like so many startups, they had launched but barely anyone noticed. The company’s revenue was flat lined at $200 per week. The founders found a pattern that all the pictures of the listed places were really bad. Graham proposed a non-scalable and non-technical solution – fly into New York and help users take quality photos. They did it even though there was no data to back this decision. In the end, their profit doubled after their effort. Like most entrepreneurs, the founders thought that every solution for a startup should be scalable, like any code. However, this experience proved that code alone couldn’t solve every problem that customers have and brought the designer mentality in them back into the company.

Gebbia pushed to make ‘being a patient’ a core value of their design team for all new team members. He said, “Every (employee) takes a trip in their first or second week in the company and then they document it. We have some structured questions that they answer and then they actually share back to the entire company. It’s incredibly important that everyone in the company knows that we believe in this so much, we’re going to pay for you to go take a trip on your first week.”

The founders do not completely rely on data to inform their next steps. Instead, individual team members at AirBnB make small bets on new features, and then measure its returns. If it showed potential, they advance towards that direction. This structure encourages employees to take measured, productive risks on behalf of the company that can lead to the development of major new features. It allows AirBnB to move quickly and continually find new opportunities.
The company encourages new employees to ship new features on their first day at the company. This allows them to adapt to company culture really quick, and shows that great ideas can come from anywhere. This approach yields results in unexpected ways. For example, one AirBnB designer was assigned a small task of reevaluating the ‘star’ function. In the original AirBnB product, users could ‘star’ properties to add them to a wish list. A ‘heart’ icon was proposed instead, as the stars are usually seen in utility-driven experiences. They tested the simple switch and engagement increased by over 30%. This simple culture of letting employees try new things helped move the company to greater heights.

Today, AirBnB has 17,000,000+ guests from 34,000+ cities and has a valuation of $10 billion. (Barnes 2013; Vital 2014; Choe 2007; Botsman and Rogers 2010)

3.5.2. Pinterest

Pinterest is a web and mobile application company that offers a visual discovery, collection, sharing and storage tool. Users create and share the collections of visual bookmarks (boards).

Before Pinterest, Evan Sharp was a product designer at Facebook and studied history at the University of Chicago and architecture at Columbia. He later left Facebook to lead the design and front-end engineering of Pinterest full time. Today, he leads Pinterest’s creative team.

Sharp’s co-founder, Silbermann, who is the hustler and CEO of Pinterest, started the predecessor of Pinterest since 2008. He didn’t have any technical background but had
a vision. The product failed terribly. Silbermann met Sharp in 2009 and they started talking and shaping the product into today’s Pinterest. Sharp was still in architecture school at the time and started Pinterest as a fun side project. He was the sole main designer and coder of Pinterest since its early stage. Sharp went to work at Facebook while Silbermann and another founder launched Pinterest that was designed by him. He officially left Facebook and joined Pinterest as a co-founder in 2010.

Figure 7: Screenshot of Pinterest

Sharp said that Pinterest is a consumer Internet company and a very intentionally designed product. “A lot of what makes it unique is its design, even more than its engineering. We’re trying to build a company where the opportunities that design and
engineering and our community team seek, all live on a relatively equal playing field. It’s aspirational.”

Due to its simplicity and beautiful execution, Pinterest has escalated to success with more than 30 million users globally and a $1.5 billion valuation. Tech pundits attributed Pinterest’s rapid success from merely popular to phenomenon to its emphasis on images and ease of use. Napkin Labs CEO Riley Gibson calls it the “Apple of social networks.”

“I think if I hadn’t been a co-founder of the company, there wouldn’t have been that reductionist sensitivity to design, even though Ben (Pinterest CEO) is actually incredibly sensitive to it too,” said Sharp. He built a strong design-culture in the company by encouraging three things:

First, to communicate everything by drawing or making, not just talking. “There are a lot of problems at Pinterest that are engineering problems and there are a lot of problems that are design problems. The solution is a perfectly drawn mockup or wireframe that when people see it, they immediately understand how to use the product and get value out of it.”

The second thing is maintaining a relatively egoless culture while still highly talented. This reflected how the company strongly values social communication. Their offices are in confined space and have very small desks to create social interaction and collaboration. Sharp thinks working and communication in-person is an important way of working as people can relate at an emotional, empathetic level.
And the third is hiring engineers who are motivated by product and understands design. A mid- or front-end engineer who really understands design removed a huge amount of unnecessary work. “If an engineer doesn’t speak design, we have to spec everything and do all this work to communicate exactly what we want, like five pixels here and two pixels there. But other people whom we can give them a mockup and talk to them for five minutes and we actually get something better. Finding those people is difficult, but it’s worth our time.”

In Sharp’s perspective of a great company, everyone is doing an amazing job at their craft. The founders are trying to tie the value of their product to every function – engineering, design, support, content, marketing, sales – and allowing them to do high-quality work. Employees are given the scope and the challenge to be the best at what they do that inherently makes value for Pinners and for Pinterest. He thinks that building a product in service of a business is the only way to make something long term. “We’re trying to build a really great brand and a lot of that is about design. It’s about how you communicate; there’s not a big line between design and language. We’re very careful about all the language we use with people, as much as possible and what changes we make to Pinterest. It’s important to us that we turn that into a brand that’s meaningful. And it’s already a positive brand.”

Today, Pinterest has 70 million users, 30 billion pins, and a valuation of $3.8 million. (Smith 2014; Bosker 2012; Pinterest 2014; Designer Founders Book Team 2013)
3.5.3. Fab

Fab is an e-commerce site which specializes in ‘everyday design’ items. It grew sales by nearly 300% in January 2013 over January 2012. In Europe alone, 50% of its members have come from social sharing and lead to 33% of revenue in the region. Its member base grew to 11m people, up from 1.5m at the start of 2012.

When it launched in June 2011, Fab set out to pioneer a new kind of e-commerce: letting people shop with friends online just as they do offline. The New York City-based company has made casual online browsing authentic and fun. Fab sells colorful and modern art, apparel, home products and other items that bring functional design into customers’ lives.

Bradford Shellhammer was a Parsons The New School for Design Retail Design graduate, and the co-founder and Chief Design Officer for Fab. Shellhammer first founded Fabulis, a lifestyle reviews and recommendations platform targeting gay men, with his business co-founder. The social media site was failing and the founders had to pivot. Shellhammer and his co-founder were discussing their future options and the conversation shifted immediately to design.

In January 2010, after trying numerous product models, the Fabulis team introduced a daily deals program, spotlighting special offers on fashion, furniture, accessories, and anything else that captured their imagination. Even though these actions seemed unrelated to their original target audience, the deals initiatives went viral, and quickly growing beyond the signature Fabulis user base to attract consumers from across the demographic spectrum. The founders noticed users liked Shellhammer’s selections
and taste, and this gave them an insight to focus on designer products. Fabulis was shut down, rebranded and re-conceptualized to Fab.com in April 2011. Fab was an instant success, with orders exceeding 1,000 per day, bringing the business to profit within the first month.

Figure 8: Screenshot of Fab (Lunden 2012)

Shellhammer attributed the success to having great products. In addition to his creative sensibilities, Shellhammer’s retail experience and his insight into the consumer
consciousness are essential components of the Fab ethos. “When you work retail, you get to hear every day what people want,” he says. “You realize how much joy something can bring to someone’s life. It’s a very emotional process.” Shellhammer relied heavily on the curatorial eye of his team to find products that resonate with consumers. At first, Fab’s list of designers who met that requirement was limited. “I was calling every designer and artist I loved and begging them to do business with us,” said Shellhammer. Today the process is more streamlined – the company enlisted 30 scouts who scour the globe in search of new designers. Shellhammer retained final approval over everything Fab sells.

Fab filled and exploited a void created by the economic decline of conventional retail. “Traditionally, designers have been very dependent on their few retail channels,” Shellhammer explained. “Retailers called the shots – they paid your mortgage or your rent. When those accounts go away, designers are no longer tied to these companies dictating how, when and at what price they sell your products. Suddenly, (with Fab), people were free. They didn’t have to worry about stepping on anyone’s toes, because the big retail accounts are no longer big retail accounts. That’s a new phenomenon.”

Shellhammer had four simple principles as a Chief Design Officer:

1. **Relax Control of Visuals**: Shellhammer almost always uses vendors’ product shots, which guarantees more diversity (and lower costs) than if everything were reshot in a studio. “The person who designed a product is also the best person to present it.”
2. **Tap into Emotions:** eBay may sell cool objects, but Fab pairs each item with a story, making shoppers feel supportive of the seller. “People invest more in things they form emotional attachments to.”

3. **Re-Create the Real World:** Fab’s real-time feed shows what items other users are buying, mimicking the effect of watching shoppers at a store. “Most people need reinforcement from others before purchase, so it helps when you can see what’s moving.”

4. **Don’t Distract Users From the Product:** Fab’s site is built with purposefully clean grid lines and a simple, three-color palette. “Eva Zeisel said good design is about getting out of the way and that has been the driving force in our own design,” Shellhammer said.

As of April 2013, Fab received 6 million unique visitors per month and have sold over 7 million products since launch. It has 14 million registered users. Shellhammer left his position as a Chief Design Officer of Fab in late 2013, though still retaining his shares. As of March 2014, he became the Chief Design Officer of Backcountry, an online-only retailer for outdoor gear needs. (Goldberg 2013; Chaey 2014a; Flaherty 2012; Greenfield 2014; Jason Ankeny 2011; Chaey 2014b; Fisher 2013)
3.5.4. Summary of Case Studies

Like many founders, the AirBnB founders, Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia, had the great idea in the most unexpected way; they just wanted to pay rent. However, their execution of the idea and problem solving techniques were, as they claimed, attributed to their designer mentality. They understood the power of group creativity and truly empower their employees to propose ideas. All employees experienced ‘immersion’, a user-centered design approach, to allow them to have empathy as the company’s customers. AirBnB had great user experience from the first day it launched. The user experience continued to evolve and change to adapt to their expansion, while never losing their original vision.

Pinterest’s Evan Sharp was the rarer type of designer who could do mid-end coding development. This gave him tremendous control over the user experience of the website, where the layout stayed roughly the same since its first launch. The tile-like layout and viewing experience of Pinterest is now much copied by many other websites. The vision was the genesis of his co-founder, but Sharp was the main builder of the website in the early stages. Because of this, he truly understands the importance of communication between design and engineering, and with every other department. Luckily, his co-founder is also a great design-appreciator, and, therefore, the culture of the company is very much design-driven. In Sharp’s words, “design-driven just means everyone had the opportunity to play their role very well.”

Shellhammer of Fab had a slightly different role than the other founders. While he was the designer, he was also the content curator of the company. The company sells
designer products, and depended mainly on Shellhammer’s taste and creative sense to choose designer products in the early stages. He sets the tone and brand of the company right down to every product listed. When paired up with his great business CEO co-founder, the combination was a great success. The blend of great marketing and great design was the winning formula for Fab. Without the right blend of either, Fab would not have been successful.
3.6. Conclusion

Designer Founders are founders whose primary skill set is design and is defined by either a working experience in the design industry or a degree in design-related fields.

All designer founders in the previously discussed case studies played an important role in the success of the startup. This is not to say that a designer founder is the winning formula; there are definitely lots of startups that fail with a designer founder and many more startups that succeed without a designer founder. Given the right conditions, a good designer as a founder would have the expertise to maximize user-fit. In the case of the predecessor of Fab, the number of users was at 150,000. Shellhammer and his co-founder hit a bottleneck and could not grow any further as the market they are targeting was not ‘robust’ enough.

Design is now the competitive advantage a startup could use in order to better their chances of survival. Great designers are able to create products that are aesthetically pleasing, experientially engaging, user-centered, that tied to the overall company brand, vision and experience. Great designer founders are not only able to do the above, but also encourage a design-centric culture in the company; to empower employees, to encourage creativity, to communicate effectively, etc.

However, not every designer understands business, a great product that meets user’s needs, but does not have a business model will make a startup fail. In the three case studies, Pinterest’s Evan Sharp and Fab’s Shellhammer had a great business co-founder to cover this area of expertise. AirBnB’s two designer founders had a technical
co-founder, and, therefore, one of the designer founders had to step up to become the CEO and learn about business, while the other hyper focused on design.

For designers to be founders, they need to:

- Absorb the characteristics of great founders, such as relentless determination, ability to overcome rejection, adaptability, craftsmanship, a passion to change the world (not just make money) and resourcefulness
- Be experts in practicing innovative design thinking behaviors such as questioning, observing, networking and experimenting (not just pushing pixels).
- Be multidisciplinary; have the full range of skills necessary to make decisions about product design and work with a development team to execute on those decisions. They may not be experts in all areas, but they can ‘wear all the hats’ in the early days of a startup and attract specialists when needed.
- Understand engineering skills, technical understanding and the technology commonly used to build software products, and the business methods used to market and evaluate those products. As a designer, design skills are important, but as a founder, technology and business skills are critical so designers can continue to stand with feet in both worlds and lead not only product design but also an entire company.
- Be a strategic thinker and communicate well. A great designer will not only be creative, but also apply that creativity in a practical way.

(Allen 2012b; Kuperman 2014)
After comparing these to the competencies of a User Experience Designer, we can see many similarities between the requirements of a designer founder and the skill set of a User Experience Designer, which will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: User Experience Design

4.1. Chapter Overview

Through the first two chapters, we understood that design has a value in the business context. In a study, design-centric companies yielded returns greater than non-design-centric companies. These values that design could bring to a company – quality by design, strategic advantage by design, leadership by design, and innovation by design – can be translated into startups, as startups are essentially businesses, albeit small ones.

Startups in particular need design to help them compete and increase their chances of survival. However, it is much harder to make a non-designer entrepreneur understand design, than to make designers entrepreneurs, according to Enrique Allen, co-founder of Designer Fund, lecturer at Stanford d.school, previously a designer at venture capital funds including 500 Startups, and Facebook’s fbFund & Heinrick.

However, not all designers are suitable to be founders. As we understood in the last chapter, designers need to be able to not only be practicing innovative design thinking behaviors, but also be multidisciplinary, understand engineering skills, technical understanding, and the technology commonly used to build software products and the business methods used to market and evaluate those products, and be strategic thinkers who communicate well. These are competencies similar to a good User Experience Designer, as I will explain in this chapter.
At the beginning of my research, I was focusing on design in general, instead of User Experience Design specifically. I had three hypotheses:

1. There are designer specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship

2. A mismatch in the perception of design’s contribution between designers and non-designers in the startup community is one of the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship.

3. Designers can contribute innovatively to a startup

In order to research on hypothesis number 2, I began with interviews to identify the perception of design. However, the broadness of the definition of design made design difficult to identify between the designer founders interviewed. Designers with a different design background would describe design differently. This posed challenges. However, through the first few rounds of my interviews, the insight that “User Experience Designers already have the skills needed in entrepreneurship” came up in the preliminary round of analysis. The insights of my research will be further discussed in Chapter 7: Interview Findings: Comparison Across Interview Groups.

This insight made me embark in deeper secondary research surrounding User Experience Design, and I found literature on the competencies of User Experience Designers and Entrepreneurs.

In this chapter, I will introduce the definition of User Experience Design that is used in this thesis. I will also cover the competencies of a User Experience Designer in the design industry. This will be followed by a comparison of their competencies with
Entrepreneurs, and how User Experience Design in particular would be beneficial to a startup. Finally, the chapter will end with the current perception of User Experience Design.
4.2. Definition of User Experience Design

User experience design, or UX Design, traced roots in human factors and ergonomics, or human-computer interaction or HCI. The HCI field focused on the interaction between human users, machines, and the contextual environments to design systems that address the user’s experience (HFES). ISO 9241-210 defines user experience as “a person’s perceptions and responses that result from the use or anticipated use of a product, system, or service.” It includes all the users’ emotions, beliefs, preferences, perceptions, physical and psychological responses, behaviors, and accomplishments that occur before, during, and after use. The ISO also list three factors that influence user experience: system, user, and the context of use. ("ISO FDIS 9241-210:2009")

Don Norman first made the phrase ‘User Experience Design’ popular in the 1990s, of which he said, “I invented the term because I thought human interface and usability were too narrow. I wanted to cover all aspects of the person’s experience with the system, including industrial design graphics, the interface, the physical interaction, and the manual. Since then the term has spread widely, so much so that it is starting to lose its meaning” (uxdesign.com 2010; Merholz 2007).

There are multiple definitions of User Experience Design, some include:

- The judicious application of certain user-centered design practices, a highly contextual design mentality, and use of certain methods and techniques that are applied through process management to produce cohesive, predictable, and desirable effects in a specific person, or persona (uxdesign.com 2010).
- A discipline focused on designing the end-to-end experience of a certain product. To design an experience means to plan and act upon a certain set of actions, which should result in a planned change in the behavior of a target group when interacting with a product (Treder 2013).

- The process of enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty by improving the usability, ease of use, and pleasure provided in the interaction between the customer and the product (Kujala et al. 2011).

The definitions of UX design ranged from being a process, a purpose, or both. All definitions had one common theme: user-centered. UX focuses on having a deep understanding of users, what they need, what they value, their abilities, and also their limitations. It also takes into account the business goals and objectives of the group managing the project. UX best practices promote improving the quality of the user’s interaction with and perceptions of your product and any related services (usability.gov 2014).

In this thesis, User Experience Design would be defined as: the judicious application of user-centered design practices to produce enhanced user perceptions and responses that result from the use or anticipated use of a product, system, or service, through a deep understanding of users, while balancing business goals and technical limitations.
4.3. Competencies of a User Experience Designer

A UX designer’s work should always be derived from people’s problems and aim at finding a pleasurable, seductive, inspiring solution. The results of that work should always be measurable through metrics describing user behavior. UX designers use knowledge and methods that originate from psychology, anthropology, sociology, computer science, graphic design, industrial design, and cognitive science. Depending on the purpose of the product, UX may also involve content design disciplines such as communication design, instructional design, or game design. Designing an experience involves planning a change in the behavior of the target group by finding out their problem and removing burdens using design methods. UX is a balance of art and science, and requires both acute analytical thinking and creativity. The goal of UX design is to create a seamless, simple, and useful interaction between a user and a hardware and/or software product (Riley 2013; Treder 2013).

Steve Psomas’ The Five Competencies of User Experience Design labels the five competencies of user experience as Information Architecture, Interaction Design, Usability Engineering, Visual Design, and Prototype Engineering (McKillop 2013). Dan Willis added content strategy and user research as other ways a User Experience Designer solves a problem. The following is a visual by Willis:
Therefore, planning, measuring, building, and validating are required to create good UX Design. UX also exceeds prototyping and wireframing and is more of a product development strategy. According to Treder, Product Development and User Experience Design are becoming almost the same today, and the trend is expected to continue where both will eventually become the same. UX Designers are expected to understand business objectives, be really team-oriented and guide the product through iterations (Treder 2014).
With this in mind, UX designers are not only champions of users, but also product development strategist that balance business and users. Looking at the competencies of a UX Designer, we can easily classify them as a strong User-builder with Technology and Business knowledge. In the next section, we will see how these skills translate into a startup context.
## 4.4. User Experience Designers as Founders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies of a UX Designer (Treder 2014; Willis 2011; McKillop 2013; Riley 2013)</th>
<th>Competencies of a Designer Founder (Allen 2012b; Kuperman 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and provide for people’s problems</td>
<td>• Founder qualities like: relentless determination, ability to overcome rejection, adaptability, craftsmanship, a passion to change the world, and resourcefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop innovative product that meets people’s needs</td>
<td>• Be experts in practicing innovative design thinking behaviors such as questioning, observing, networking, and experimenting, not just pushing pixels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Product Development Strategies</td>
<td>• Be multidisciplinary; able to ‘wear all the hats’ in the early days of a startup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understands from multiple perspectives; able to balance between users’ demand with business objectives and technology possibilities</td>
<td>• Understand engineering skills, technical understanding, and the technology commonly used to build software products and the business methods used to market, and also evaluate those products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interaction and Visual Design</td>
<td>• Be a strategic thinker and communicate well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Usability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information Architecture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Prototyping</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Comparing the competencies of a User Experience Designer and a Designer Founder

From the comparison in Table 2: Comparing the competencies of a User Experience Designer and a Designer Founder, the similarities between what is required of a Designer Founder and the competencies of a UX Designer is very similar, with the only exception of the founder qualities. The founder qualities are required for anybody who wants to be an entrepreneur, and is not restricted to only designers.
When UX designers become a startup founder, they have to be the product leader who combines business, design, and team-leading competencies. Treder thinks that it might be easier for a UX Designer to become a founder if there are not a lot of dealings with stakeholders, marketing can be done in guerrilla style, sales are limited to simple activities, the financial side of the product is rather obvious, etc. and there are not enough resources to bring on board an additional person (Treder 2014).

In the era where the majority of the startups are delivering products that are partially or fully Internet or mobile based, the role of UX design is becoming more important than ever. UX Design is often associated with efficient, smart, and beautiful products. Products that are simply well designed are what the market pays for. Apple and Instagram are some examples of companies that have good product experience. UX Designers were and still are employees in high demand for any tech company (Treder 2014).

A UX Designer should stay constantly motivated to fight for the good of users, through knowing the most about user’s problems and how to embody the solution for these user problems in the interface of a product. In small startups, a UX designer should have a very good understanding of business goals, user needs, and should be focused on delivering an amazing product. The product is created through ongoing, efficient collaboration with other specialists (Treder 2014).

Bianca Fuchs, a UX Strategist and Design Consultant in L.A., said, “Start early. Design and UX done right require an incredible amount of time. Many people tend to forget that good design, proper layout structure, and an intuitive flow (whether it’s
navigating a page or playing a video) doesn’t come spilling out onto a screen in a single day” (Kozlowski 2013).

Just as there are designers in short supply, there is definitely a short supply of UX designers in the startup community. The same reasons that might deter designers will also deter UX designers too. In the next section, we will discuss the current perception of UX design.
4.5. Perception of UX Design

Catalina Naranjo-Bock, User Experience Design Researcher said, “If you ask people if user experience is important, everyone will say it is. But elevating UX to the corporate level and implementing it in a fast-paced product development process can be a struggle. Some people have a hard time understanding the value of user experience when there are constant time and budget constraints, and it can be hard to sell the process” (Arad 2013).

As explained in Chapter 2: Startups and Design, not everyone understands Design, the same problem is also prevalent in UX design. The definition of User Experience is not shared by the majority of the non-designers in the industry. It may not be even agreed by designers in the same industry. In the previous two sections, we discussed the definition of UX design and the competencies of UX designers. All of these discussions were done with current practicing UX designers or design research scholars. The listed competencies are also of good UX designers. Therefore, we can assume that not all designers share the same definition of UX design, and not all UX designers possess those competencies of a good UX designer.

The following is a visual by Erik Flowers about the perception of UX Design.
The above illustrate that many people, non-designers and sometimes even designers, still think that UX design is just about how it looks, whereas it is more about how it works. This perception is commonly attributed to non-designers “not getting design.” When there is a lack of understanding about design, there is a chance that startups either invite design in too late, or embrace it the wrong way by demanding a
‘Unicorn designer’; i.e. a programmer that knows how to do visual design, or a designer that also does programming.

Part of my hypotheses is that this misconception of design is one of the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers to become founders. Therefore, designers prefer to stay in the comfort zone of design consultancies or established organizations, instead of being unappreciated in startups.
4.6. Conclusion

User experience design is definitely needed in the startup community, where the majority of them are making products that are mobile- or web-based. In the competitive world of startups, engagement is the key to success, and user experience designers are specifically trained to be experts of users. They strive to deliver products that meet user’s needs and juggle strategically between business and design.

As we discussed in Chapter 2: Startup and Design, research shows that leadership has a strong influence on the culture of a company. When a designer, who champions for users while balancing business and technology, is placed in the leadership position, the company would be strongly influenced to be design-centric. This is especially more evident in the startup community, where the culture has yet to be established and the innovativeness and execution ability of the founder strongly determines the success of the company.

The skill sets of User Experience Designer are much needed by startups. However, just as there is a shortage of designers in the startup community, User Experience Designers are also in great demand, since User Experience Designers are only a subset of all designers in the startup community. One of the hypotheses developed to explain this lack of designers is that there is a misconception of design by the startup community. Despite startups needing design, or more specifically User Experience Design, startups still do not understand User Experience Design as much as they should. As we have discussed in this chapter, the perception of UX design is still much misunderstood not only by non-designers, but also with some designers. Therefore,
designers prefer to go to other places where they are better appreciated and avoid startups.

After my research was redirected to User Experience Design specifically, more patterns emerge. In the case studies of the designer founders in the previous Chapter 3: Designer Founders, we understood that all of the designer founders, regardless of their retail design or industrial design background, are in-charge of the overall user experience of their product. This is mainly because their products are web-based. In the startup environment, web-based products are very competitive, and, therefore, the user experience of a product plays a big role. For a non-web-based product startup, branding and communications are also important parts of the experiences that the designer should consider. Therefore, we can see that when designers become a founder, they will have to be experts of User Experience Design.

My hypotheses evolved to:

- There are designer specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship, which applies to designer of any design background
- There are misconceptions about UX designs contribution by designers and non-designers in the startup community
- Designers can contribute innovatively to a startup

In the next chapter, I will further explain how I went about evaluating these hypotheses and the methods of analysis for my research.
Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1. Chapter Overview

The importance of design in business, and particularly in startups, has been discussed in the previous chapters. Being design-centric is known to increase the chance of success for a company, and also startups. When designers are founders of a startup, they have great influence in the company’s culture, and, therefore, are able to steer the company towards a more design-centric culture. Specifically, User Experience Design is demanded and needed in a startup. In the process of designing the enhanced user experience, a User Experience Designer has to not only have a deep understanding of the users, but also the business objectives and technology possibilities. These skill sets required of a User Experience Designer to make them suitable entrepreneurs.

While startups are more aware of the value of design, and more designers today are becoming founders, there seems to be a greater demand than supply of designers in the startup community. Designers are the most underrepresented group in the startup community. Therefore, this prompted my investigation on the barrier of entry to entrepreneurship for designers.
5.1.1. Research Goals

There were two main objectives for this thesis:

1. Understanding the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers, and
2. Helping designers understand their contributions and things they need to learn as a founder of a startup

Three hypotheses were developed when approaching the thesis:

1. There were barriers of entry to entrepreneurship specifically to designers
2. The misconception about the contributions of a designer to a startup between designers and non-designer is a barrier of entry to entrepreneurship
3. Designers can contribute innovative to a startup.

As discussed in Chapter 3: Designer Founders, some of the perceived barriers of entry to entrepreneurship by designers include:

1. Designers love to create things, not a single thing
2. Designers cannot tolerate their polish skills to be undervalued at an early stage startup
3. Designers are unsure if they are suitable for entrepreneurship, or not even aware that entrepreneurship is a possibility

Most of these are opinions from blogs, and there are hardly any studies done surrounding designer-specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship. We could easily
argue against (1) that startups actually have more interesting opportunities for innovation; (2) could be an explanation of the lack of understanding of startups in the contributions of design, and designers’ interest in just the polished work than business objectives; (3) could be the same for any non-business major such as engineering. Therefore, my research study aims to identify designer-specific barriers of entry to design, if any at all. My first hypothesis assumes that the low representation of designers in the startup community is due to the existence of designer-specific barriers of entry to entrepreneurship.

Another barrier of entry that has been discussed in the earlier chapters is lack of understanding of design from startups. The fact that business people or coders found most companies means that the company culture typically is not design-centric. The perception of what and how a designer can contribute to a startup from a non-designer’s standpoint could be vastly different from a designer’s. While startups are aware that they need design, awareness could be different from understanding or appreciating how design works in a startup. This misconception could be a barrier for designers to pursue entrepreneurship or work in a startup environment. However, this is only discussed as opinions, and not many studies are done surrounding this. Therefore, my second hypothesis for this thesis is that the misconception of design between designers and non-designers in the startup community is a barrier of entry for designers.

My third hypothesis is based on the Innovative Premium Test developed by Dyer et al. The test was used to determine the behaviors of successful innovative leaders. Upon comparing the innovative behavioral qualities of an innovator by Dyer et al. and the
qualities of a design thinker by Tim Brown, several similarities were found, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.2.4 Innovation by Design. However, the Innovative Premium Test was not conducted on designers. I hypothesize that designers can contribute innovatively, and this could be showed through the qualitative test that is developed and recognized by Harvard Business Review.

The research was designed to achieve the two main objectives of this thesis, while testing out these hypotheses. The method was mainly to collect qualitative data through interviews, and compare the quantitative data collected through surveys. Finally, to compare the primary research with the secondary research.

Through the interviews, the greater insight about User Experience Design came out unexpectedly. While redirecting the second part of the research, the survey, to User Experience Design, the overall objectives of this thesis still remains.

In this chapter, the methods used to conduct and analyze the research will be discussed. The chapter is written in two sections: Methods of Research and Methods of Analysis.
5.2. Methods of Research

5.2.1. Overview

The research includes a qualitative interview component and quantitative survey component.

1. Interview

The first part of the research involves interviews with experts on the subject of Design and Startups. Three groups of experts are engaged: Startup Experts, Startup Experts with Design Background, and Designer founders. These experts are asked similar questions about the definition of design, the contribution of design and designer founders, the advantages and disadvantages of designer founders, the motivations and barriers of entry for entrepreneurship, and the perceived prevalence of designer founders.

2. Survey

The second part involves a survey targeted at Designers, Entrepreneurs, or both. This survey will provide insights on their definition of UX design, their perceived contribution and shortcomings of designers as founders, their individual entrepreneurial activity and Innovative Premium.
5.2.2. Interviews

5.2.2.1. Objectives

This research was designed to answer the three initial hypotheses developed in this thesis:

1. There were barriers of entry to entrepreneurship specifically to designers
2. The misconception about the contributions of a designer to a startup between designers and non-designer is a barrier of entry to entrepreneurship
3. Designers can contribute innovatively to a startup.

A qualitative approach was taken so as to engage in open-ended questions to the interviewees. The questions were designed with the intention to meet the overarching goal of this thesis: Understanding the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers, and helping designers understand their contributions and things they need to learn as a founder of a startup. The hypotheses were hidden among these questions, as to avoid asking biased questions, and also allow unexpected insights to be discovered in the process of the interviews.

Experts in design and/or startups in the startup community are engaged as interviewees to compare their opinions from a designer and non-designer standpoint.

The interview questions can be categorized into the following areas:

- How is Design valued in startups by Designers and Non-Designers
  - The definition of design
  - The contribution of design and design founders
● What are the perceived and actual entrepreneurial activities of the Designer

● What are the perceived or actual motivations and barriers for Designers to become Founders

More details about the purpose of these questions categories will be discussed in the subsection 5.2.4. Questions.

5.2.2.2. Methods & Activities

Participants are asked similar questions about the definition of design, UX design, the contribution of design and design founders, the advantages and disadvantages of design founders, the motivations and barriers of entry for entrepreneurship, and the perceived prevalence of design founders.

Participant’s expert opinions on topics were discussed through interviews, and collected through phone, video or personal meetings depending on the participant’s preferences. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, and recorded upon participant’s consent.

Data of participant’s previous public expert opinion on topic were assessed and discussed during the interview.

The duration of the interviews was approximately 45mins to an hour.
5.2.2.3. Participants & Recruitment

Three groups of experts are engaged:

1. Startup Experts; experts who are mentors, entrepreneurs and/or consultants in the startup community, and do not have a design background.

2. Startup Experts with Design Background; experts who are mentors and/or consultants in the startup community, and have a design background.

3. And Designer founders; designers who are not mentors and/or consultants in the startup community, but are founders of a company that is not a design agency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founders (5)</th>
<th>Startup Experts (3)</th>
<th>Startup Experts with Design Background (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Single Founder</td>
<td>• Startup Founder &amp; Mentor</td>
<td>• Startup Founder &amp; Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Founded with non-designers</td>
<td>• Startup Founder &amp; Consultant</td>
<td>• Design Consultancy Founder &amp; Entrepreneur Educator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Founded with Designer</td>
<td>• Entrepreneur Educator</td>
<td>• Designer at Consultancy with Majority Startups Clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Founded Design Consultancy Prior</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Background of Interviewees

The participants were eligible by their scholarly works and professional experience in either of the above-mentioned groups. They are all based in the United States of America, and are currently active in the startup community.

A total of 11 participants were recruited for this interview; 3 each for the Startup Experts Group and Startup Experts with Design Background, and 5 in the Designer Founders Group. Each participant in the interview group was specifically chosen to differ...
in terms of their experience in the group. The intentional differences were chosen to represent a certain archetype from that particular group, as shown in Table 3: Background of Interviewees.

For example: The interviewees in the Startup Expert Group included a young business entrepreneur and consultant of startups, an experienced entrepreneurship educator and director of entrepreneurship center, and a startup mentor and technology & commercialization expert. These three experts have vastly different backgrounds and would be a persona representation of others in the startup community.

The participants were recruited through the investigators’ professional contacts. A professional email with a similar content as the following was sent to the participant:

Dear <name of interviewee>,

I am Selene Chew, a graduate student pursuing my MFA in Design Research and Development at the Design Department of The Ohio State University. <Professional Contact> recommended me to speak to you regarding my thesis. My thesis is about Designer’s Role as Founder of Startup, looking into what can Designers contribute as a founder, and what designers need to learn to be a founder. I understand that you are <Interviewee’s Profession> and, therefore, have tremendous experience working with startups <or specific experience of Interviewee>. Based on your experience, <select two sample questions for the Interviewee>. Would you be interested in having a conversation with me regarding this topic?

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Regards,
Selene Chew
5.2.2.4. Questions

The interview questions can be categorized into the following areas:

- How is Design valued in startups by Designers and Non-Designers
  - The definition of design
  - The contribution of design and designer founders
- What are the perceived and actual entrepreneurial activities of the Designer
- What are the perceived or actual motivations and barriers for Designers to become Founders

The first category was intended to compare the perception of design and designer’s contribution in startups between designers and non-designers. The hypothesis is that there is a difference in the perception between the two, and that is a barrier of entry to entrepreneurship. The contribution of a designer founder is also asked as an open-ended question, so as to not be leading to the interviewees. This can be compared to the value of design mentioned in Chapter 2: Startups and Design.

The second category was asked to challenge the notion that “designers are underrepresented in the startup community.” This underrepresentation is the main motivation for this thesis to identify the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers. By understanding the interviewee’s perception about the representation of designers in the startup community, I could identify the ‘pushing’ or ‘blocking’ forces speculated by them.
The final category was intended to be direct to the purpose of this thesis: reasons for and against entrepreneurship faced by designers. The first two categories were used to build up their momentum surrounding this topic.

The Startup Experts and Startup Experts with Design Background were asked the following questions:

1. What is your experience working with Startups? What do you do?
2. How would you define a founder? What constitutes a founder?
3. What do you think makes for a good entrepreneur?
4. Do you have experience working with designers? Do you have experience working with design founders?
5. Do you think a designer makes for a good entrepreneur?
6. How would you define a Designer? What constitutes a designer? Does having a design education matter?
7. How would you define Design? What do you think about design thinking? How would you define UX design?
8. How would you define a ‘designer founder?’ What constitutes a designer founder?
9. Do you see a lot of design founders? Why do you think this reflects the trend?
10. What are the motivations for entrepreneurship?
11. What are the barriers for entrepreneurship?
12. How do you think designers are different or similar to other types of founders?
13. What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages when you have a designer as a founder?

14. What do designers today need to learn to be a founder? Why?

The Design Founders are asked a similar set of questions:

1. What led you to start your own company?

2. What are the challenges you faced when starting your own company?

3. How would you define a founder? What constitutes a founder?

4. What do you think makes a good entrepreneur?

5. Do you think a designer makes for a good entrepreneur?

6. How would you define a Designer? What constitutes a designer? Does having a design education matter?

7. How would you define Design? What do you think about design thinking? How would you define UX design?

8. How would you define a ‘designer founder?’ What constitutes a designer founder?

9. Do you see a lot of design founders? Why do you think this reflects the trend?

10. How do you think designers are different or similar to other types of founders?

11. What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages when you have a designer as a founder?

12. What do designers today need to learn to be a founder? Why?
The questions varied depending on the background of the participants. For example, one of the participants is an expert from the startup community but has never worked with designers, much less design founders. Therefore, most of his opinions are about his general perception of design, and the challenges that entrepreneurs faced.
5.2.3. Survey

5.2.3.1. Objectives

Gaining insight from the interviews, the survey is redirected to focus on User Experience design and designers instead of Design in general. The overall research goal of this thesis – understanding the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers, and helping designers understand their contributions and things they need to learn as a founder of a startup – remained the same despite the redirection. From the insight gained, and additional secondary research about UX conducted, a new hypothesis was developed: that one of the things designers need to learn as a founder of a startup is to think more like a User Experience Designer. In order to test this hypothesis, the survey was designed to focus on UX design.

The goal is to understand quantitatively, designers’ definition of UX design, their perceived contribution and shortcomings of UX designers as founders. Additionally, the participant’s individual entrepreneurial activity and Innovative Premium were also reported through the survey.

The Innovative Premium Test, developed by Dyer, Jeffrey H., Hal B Gregersen, and Clayton Christensen, measures innovative behaviors. They observed CEOs and Managers that are considered innovative leaders in their field and concluded 4 main behaviors that constitute to innovative thinking: Questioning, Observing, Idea Networking, and Experimenting. An average of these 4 main behaviors results in a quotient called Innovative Premium.
Dyer et al. states that leadership has a strong influence on innovativeness of a corporation, and therefore organizational performance. One of the reasons as to why Design should be valued in startups or businesses is due to the need for companies to be innovative. Most evidence for design’s linked to innovation are anecdotal. The Innovative Premium Test will evaluate this link of design with innovation by measuring the innovativeness of Designers.

The research is modified to identify the current perception of UX Designer as a Founder of a startup in the following areas:

- How is UX Design valued in startups by Designers and Non-Designers
  - The definition of UX design
  - The contribution of UX design and UX design founders
- What are the entrepreneurial activities of Designers
- What are the perceived or actual motivations and barriers for Designers to become Founders
- What is the Innovative Premium of Designers in relation to their entrepreneurial intent

The qualitative data was collected to substantiate or contrast the qualitative data from the interview.
5.2.3.2. Methods & Activities

The participants went through a questionnaire that consists of both close-ended and open-ended questions about their definition of UX design, perceived contribution and shortcomings of designers as founders, individual entrepreneurial activity and Innovative Premium.

The questions from Innovative Premium Test were taken from a journal article published by Dyer et al. in Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal. (Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen 2008) The permission to reproduce the questions was attained from Hal B Gregorian. (Refer to Appendix C for Permission Letter)

The questions were integrated into the questionnaire as “Self-Reported Behaviors”. This is to avoid public association with the Innovative Premium Test.

The number of questions each participant answered varied according to their response. The maximum number of questions was 40 for each participant.

The demographic data, occupation, years of professional experience is collected from each participant. At the end of the survey, the participants were given the option to leave their contact information if they were willing to contribute to the interview. Else, all entries by each participants was anonymous.

The duration of the survey is about 10-15 minutes.
5.2.3.3. Participants & Recruitment

The participants are eligible by their professional experience of being either a designer, an entrepreneur, or both. The survey was posted onto several online platforms on the 2nd of April 2014 and 55 responses were collected by the 26th of April 2014. The online platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Quora, etc., were design or startup related. Thus, it is expected that all participants who took the survey were interested in the topic of design and startups to a certain extent.

The posts on the platforms for survey recruitment looks like this:

Title: UX Designers as Entrepreneurs
I am an MFA student from The Ohio State University, Department of Design working on my thesis: Understanding the Role of UX Designers as Founders of a Startup.
I would like to understand what UX designers can contribute as founders of startups, and what do they need to learn to become founders?
I am also conducting a survey to understand entrepreneurial activities/intent of designers. If you are an entrepreneur, a designer, or both, you are definitely welcome to take this survey!
If you are interested in receiving the results of this survey, or wish to contribute your opinion on this topic, please leave your contact information at the end of the survey.
Thank you so much!
<link to survey> http://goo.gl/Jjwj4X
5.2.3.4. Questions

The questions for the Survey are structured in four sections: Demographics, Entrepreneurial Intent, Perception of User Experience Designer and Innovative Premium.

The respondents are first given an introduction as the following:

Hello everyone! Thank you for taking this survey!
I am Selene Chew, an MFA student from The Ohio State University, Department of Design.
This survey contributes to my thesis, which is about Understanding the Role of UX Designers as Founders of a Startup.
The goal of this survey is to understand the connection between entrepreneurs and designers. Your input will help me understand entrepreneurial activities/intent among designers.
If you are an entrepreneur, a designer, or both, you are definitely welcome to take this survey!
This survey is expected to take about 10-15mins to complete.
Participation is voluntary and anonymous.
If you are interested in receiving the results of this survey, or wish to contribute your opinion on this topic, please leave your contact information at the end of the survey.
Thank you so much for your time!

The survey then begins, and is illustrated in the figures presented in the next few pages.
Figure 11: Questions for Demographic
Figure 12: Questions for Entrepreneurial Intent
Figure 13: Questions for Perception of UX Designer

1. What is your definition of a UX designer?
2. Do you think UX Designers make good entrepreneurs/founders of startups? Explain your answer.
   - **YES**
     - Do you think a startup needs a UX designer?
       - **YES**
         - What role does a UX designer play in a startup?
       - **NO**
         - Why not?
   - **NO**
3. What are 5 ways you think a UX designer can CONTRIBUTE as a co-founder of a startup?
4. What are 5 things you think a UX designer NEEDS TO LEARN to be a co-founder of a startup?
Figure 14: Questions for Innovative Premium

Innovative Premium Test

How well does the statement describe you?
*In a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) – 7 (strongly agree)*

| I have a network of individuals whom I trust to bring a new perspective and refine new ideas | I love to experiment to understand how things work and to create new ways of doing things. |
| New business ideas often come to me when directly observing how people interact with products and services | I am always asking questions |
| I frequently experiment to create new ways of doing things | I have a continuous flow of new business ideas that comes through observing the world |
| I attend many diverse professional and/or academic conferences outside of my industry/profession. | I am constantly asking questions to get at the root of the problem |
| Others are frustrated by the frequency of my questions. | I am adventurous, always looking for new experiences. |
| I actively search for new ideas through experimenting | I regularly observe customers’ use of our company’s products and services to get new ideas |
| I initiate meetings with people outside of my industry to spark ideas for a new product, service, or customer base | I often ask questions that challenge the status quo |
| By paying attention to everyday experiences, I often get new business ideas | I regularly ask questions that challenge others’ fundamental assumptions |
| I have a large network of contacts with whom I frequently interact to get ideas for new products, services, and customers. | I have a history of taking things apart |
| | I am constantly asking questions to understand why products and projects underperform |

End of Survey
5.2.4. Summary

A total of 11 participants were recruited for the interview;

- 3 Startup Experts,
- 3 Startup Experts with Design Backgrounds,
- And 5 Design Founders.

Two of the design founder interviewees were recruited through the survey’s optional participation to interview. These two interviews were only conducted through email upon their request; therefore, the interviews were not as extensive as the other 3 interviews.

The survey managed to recruit 56 respondents, of which 47 listed themselves as Designers. As the presentation of non-designers is significantly lower than designers, only the results from the designers will be analyzed.

In the next section, I will be discussing how the research was analyzed.
5.3. Methods of Analysis

5.3.1. Overview

The qualitative interviews and quantitative survey was designed such that the questions would be able to support or oppose with each other. The whole analysis process included three steps. The first step involved individual analysis of each research to draw a conclusion. This was followed by a comparison between the conclusions of the two researches to develop a conclusion for the primary research. The final step involved the cross analysis of the primary research conclusion with secondary research to develop a final conclusion for this thesis.

The process for analysis for each step will be discussed in this section.

5.3.2. Interviews

5.3.2.1. Data Preparation

11 interviews were collected, of which 9 were live interviews and 2 were email interviews. All the live interviews were collected in the form of audio and written notes. The audio files were transcribed into a text document. (Refer to Appendix A for original transcripts) The questions asked were removed from the transcription, and the transcribed text was further broken down into discussion points that consist of one to a few sentences. The email interviews were prepared the same way. Each discussion point was coded as a data point to track back to the interviewees. The data points were all printed into separate pieces of paper for analysis.
The interviewees were categorized based on their background, into three groups: Startup Experts, Startup Experts with Design Background, and Design Founders. Data points were funneled into their respective interview groups, and analyzed within the group to find patterns. The data points were then analyzed across the interview groups.

5.3.2.2. Analysis

Within each interview group, the data points were sorted at random so that there was no particular order at which the data points were arranged. The data points were then grouped purely by its content and not by the question it was answering. Categories of
data points were formed and reformed as required through the process. Data points were duplicated for more than one category as required.

Figure 16: Categorization of Data Points

The source of the data points were then traced back to the interviewees, and their opinions on each category were analyzed and compared across the different interviewees. Their backgrounds were taken into consideration with their input, and the implications were analyzed.

With each analysis done on each group, the data points were reorganized into categories that were consistent across the interview groups. This allowed the data to be compared across the interview groups. After the data of all three interview groups were
analyzed, a final reorganization of the data categories were done in alignment to the research goals.

The categorized data points of each interview group were now viewed as a collective point of view representing each group. These collective points of views were then analyzed across the groups. They were compared and contrasted within each category, and plausible implications are derived.

5.3.3. Survey

There were 56 respondents for the survey that was posted online; of which, 47 listed themselves as designers. The non-designers are left out of the analysis due to the low number of respondents.

The respondents were required to provide information on their age, years of design experience, and entrepreneurial intent and activities, and provide their responses on their motivation or discouragement of entrepreneurship, perception of User Experience Design, and their Innovative Premium.

The analysis was mainly finding trends within the age group, design experience, entrepreneurial activities and between UX and non-UX designers. The following is an outline of the types of analysis for close-ended questions:

- Demographics
  - Age Group
  - Years of Design Experience
  - Age Group vs. Years of Design Experience
• Entrepreneurial Activities
  ○ Started Business
  ○ Never Started Business
  ○ Entrepreneurial Activities vs. Age Group
  ○ Entrepreneurial Activities vs. Design Experience
  ○ Entrepreneurial Activities vs. Age Group and Design Experience

• Perception of User Experience Designer
  ○ User Experience Designer as Entrepreneur
    ○ By UX Designer and Non-UX Designer
    ○ By Age Group and Design Experience
    ○ By Entrepreneurial Activities
  ○ Contribution of User Experience Designer
    ○ By UX Designer and Non-UX Designer
    ○ By Age Group and Design Experience
    ○ By Entrepreneurial Activities
  ○ Things to Learn by User Experience Designer
    ○ By UX Designer and Non-UX Designer
    ○ By Age Group and Design Experience
    ○ By Entrepreneurial Activities

• Innovative Premium
  ○ By Designers and Non-Designers
  ○ By Age Group
The open-ended questions included:

- The motivations or discouragements of entrepreneurship
- The definition of User Experience Designer
- The reasons for whether User Experience Designers make good entrepreneurs

The data of these open-ended questions were prepared by coding each data point to trace back to the respondent, and then printing on pieces of paper. These printed data points are then sorted into different patterns and categories to be analyzed quantitatively. (Refer to Appendix for the Survey Data)

5.3.3.1. Definition of User Experience Designer

For this open-ended question, the first round of data sorting grouped definitions in terms of similar content. Soon, this proved to be too difficult, as the definition can be interpreted in different ways. Besides sorting them by their content, the key ideas or keywords were also highlighted in each data points. These key ideas are then counted to show how frequently these key ideas are mentioned in the group.
All the data points are then reorganized into how User Experience Designer was defined. Four big categories showed up: By what User Experience Designer does, by how User Experience Designer does it, for what purpose, and for whom. The key ideas were then sorted into these four categories to see a pattern.
Finally, the top three key ideas from each category were used to represent the general definition of User Experience Designer. The proportion of the four categories and the frequency of the key ideas were compared between the participant’s design experience, design background, and entrepreneurial activities.

5.3.4. Primary Research

The insights gained from the Interview and Survey were then compared with each other.

From the Interview, the data was categorized by the following:

- How is Design valued in startups by Designers and Non-Designers
  - The definition of design
  - The contribution of design and design founders
- What are the perceived and actual entrepreneurial activities of the Designer
- What are the perceived or actual motivations and barriers for Designers to become Founders

Whereas from the Survey,
- The entrepreneurial activities of Designers
- The perceived or actual motivations and barrier’s for Designers to become Founders
- How is User Experience valued in startups by Designers
  - Definition of User Experience Designer
Contributions of User Experience Designer as a Founder

Innovative Premium of Designers

As the research was redirected to focus on User Experience Design for the survey, the definition of design in the survey cannot be compared. However, the contribution of Designer as Founders was compared with User Experience Designer as Founders. In this, we are able to see the similarities and differences between Designers and User Experience Designers as Founders. From the Innovative Premium of Designers, we can see which aspect of Innovative Behaviors are more prevalent among designers, and compare these with the discussed contribution of Designers or User Experience Designer as founders.

The perceived and actual entrepreneurial activities, and the motivations and barriers for that, are both directly compared between the Interviews and Survey. The entrepreneurial intent reported by designers in the survey can be used to quantitatively support or contrast those mentioned in the Interviews.

All of these insights were then used to compare with the original hypotheses.

5.3.5. Secondary Research

The final analysis for this thesis is the comparison between Primary and Secondary research. As mentioned at the end of Chapter 4: User Experience Design, most of the discussed barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers are anecdotal. Therefore, this research aims to provide deeper insight into the barriers of entry to
entrepreneurship for designers, if any, by comparing those discussed in the secondary research with those discovered in the primary research.

The second objective of this thesis is for designers who want to become a founder, to help them understand how they may contribute and what they need to learn as a founder. Combining the insights from the primary research and discussions in secondary research will allow more substantial recommendations. Additionally, the Innovative Premium hopes to provide a quantitative study to support a contribution that design may provide to a startup.
5.4. Conclusion

The research was designed with the objective of understanding the barrier of entry to entrepreneurship for designers and helping designers understand how they may contribute and what they need to learn as a founder of a startup. The primary research used both qualitative interviews for open-ended exploration, and quantitative survey for numerical support.

In the next three chapters, the research findings for the Interviews and Survey will be discussed in detail. The first two chapters will discuss the findings from the interview, which are separated into findings from individual interview groups, and findings from comparing across interview groups. The following chapter will discuss the findings from the survey.
Chapter 6: Interview Findings: Individual Interview Group

6.1. Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, the design and analysis of the primary research conducted for this thesis were discussed.

In this chapter, the interview findings are reported by the three interview groups, Designer Founders, Startup Experts and Startup Experts with Design Background. The comparison across the three interview groups will be discussed in the next chapter.

The insights gathered from each individual interview group are categorized into the three main research questions:

1. How is Design valued in startups by Designers or Non-Designers
   a. Definition of Design and Designer Founders
   b. Contribution of Design and Designer Founders

2. What are the perceived or actual motivations and barriers for Designers to become Founders
6.2. Interview Group A: Designer Founders

6.2.1. Profiles of Designer Founders

3 full face-to-face interviews and 2 email interviews were conducted with 5 different Designer Founders. Their profiles are as follows:

**Full Interview**

- Design Founder A, founder of a gardening app.
- Design Founder B, founder of a design consultancy and song writing sharing community website.
- Design Founder C, founder of a design consultancy and design-critiquing community website.

**Email Interview**

- Design Founder D, co-founder of a design consultancy and email manager app.
- Design Founder E, co-founder of audio product company.

6.2.2. Perceived Definition of Design and Designer Founder

6.2.2.1. What is Design?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founder A</th>
<th>Design seems to be strictly about visual, but she thinks design goes further than that; the culture and tone of voice of the company is something that can be designed too. Design is constant problem solving, and &quot;if you don’t have a problem to solve... you’re doing it wrong.&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designer Founder B</td>
<td>Design is about communicating and solving a problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designer Founder C</td>
<td>Design is a loaded term and has different meanings to different people, depending on which discipline they are from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designer Founder E</td>
<td>Design is purposeful creation of ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Summary of “Definition of Design” by Designer Founders
Each interviewee has a different definition of design. One commonality among the definitions is that all agree that design is not solely about aesthetics, but has a greater purpose of solving problems.

Designer Founder C has a unique point of view that lean startup is a type of design thinking, whereas other designer founders relates design thinking as a buzzword. Designer Founder C had the most different path to entrepreneurship. (Refer to section 6.2.4.1. Path to Entrepreneurship for more details) He studied Business and Psychology prior to his design education, and upon graduation, he only worked as a design consultant through his own consultancy where he had startups as his clients. He tried founding both a startup and his consultancy at the same time, before ending his consultancy business and focusing on his startups. Throughout his past experience, he might have formed his unique perspective about design thinking that is different from other design founders.

6.2.2.2. What is a Designer Founder?

When asked to define a designer founder, the following are some of the qualities mentioned:

- Problem solver
- Generalist, or a ‘unicorn designer’, who is able to transcend different design disciplines
- Person with perspective based on the combination of people and subjective behavior, and the more practical, rational elements
• Designer with an overall general knowledge of business

All interviewees agreed that a designer founder has to be good at design, and not just restrict themselves to the roles of a designer. A designer founder is not only creative, but has an overall general knowledge of business, is able to communicate well, possess problem solving and decision making skills, and is disciplined enough to take action quickly without direction. The founder should also be capable of doing design, user experience, wire frames etc. Any designer who is at a founder level should understand the bigger picture, and not be held up by ‘pixel perfect’ mentality. This is consistent with the qualities of a UX designer mentioned in Chapter 4: User Experience Design.

6.2.3. Contributions of Designer Founders

6.2.3.1. Ways of Running a Company

Designer Founder B and C learned how to run businesses through running their own consultancy. Designer Founder B worked with another designer, while Designer Founder C worked alone. Both of them run their businesses by experimenting and iterating.

Designer Founder A had other partners that have business backgrounds to run the company. She admitted it is easy for her to slide into her comfort zone and not learn about business. But she also understands that in order to ensure that her decisions are valuable, she needs to learn about business.

A common theme across the way of running a company is the willingness to try
new solutions. All of them have the “desire to solve problems”, and that applies to every aspect of their company; design, operations, management, accounting, etc. They are willing to learn on the go, and not afraid of admitting that they made a bad decision and try to make a better one next time.

This quality is not listed as one of the advantages of a designer founder (as we will further discuss in the next section 6.2.3.2, Advantages of Design Founders), but as one of the motivations for entrepreneurship. This could likely mean that this iterative nature is an unknown or natural behavior to designer founders. **They have a great desire to learn through iteration, which is a behavior not typically encouraged in corporate settings.**

### 6.2.3.2. Advantages of Design Founders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founder A</th>
<th>Designer Founder B</th>
<th>Designer Founder C</th>
<th>Designer Founder D</th>
<th>Designer Founder E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional connection with users</td>
<td>Emotional connection with users</td>
<td>Emotional connection with users</td>
<td>Emotional connection with users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harder for business people to understand design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harder for business people to understand design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bootstrapping Advantage</td>
<td>Bootstrapping Advantage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Experts of design thinking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Summary of Perceived Advantages of Designers as Founders by Designer Founders
Table 5: Summary of Perceived Advantages of Designers as Founders by shows the 5 advantages of design founders perceived by each interviewee. Some used themselves as an example, while others mentioned it from a general perspective. All mentioned that having a new mindset for business is an advantage that design founders have. Great designers can be self-taught because of the lack of standard education. So they also believe the same for founders; great founders with no business mindset could come from a non-business person.

The second most commonly mentioned advantage is the ability to create emotional connections with users. This shows that there are perceived weaknesses of traditional business thinkers that design founders have advantage in.

6.2.3.3. Disadvantages of Design Founders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founder A</th>
<th>Designer Founder B</th>
<th>Designer Founder C</th>
<th>Designer Founder D</th>
<th>Designer Founder E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overly focused on design</td>
<td>Overly focused on design</td>
<td>Overly focused on design</td>
<td>Overly focused on design</td>
<td>Overly focused on design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designers don’t know about business</td>
<td>Designers don’t know about business</td>
<td>Designers don’t know about business</td>
<td>Designers don’t know about business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design cannot keep up with the speed of startups</td>
<td>Design cannot keep up with the speed of startups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Design alone is not enough for investors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Summary of Perceived Disadvantages of Designers as Founders by Designer Founders
All of the interviewees did not fail to mention that designers can be overly focused on design, costing time, money, and resources in a startup. The importance of a balance between design and business has been greatly emphasized as a quality that a designer founder should have, and this point shows that it may be harder than it seems when it comes to sacrificing design for business.

The second most common perceived disadvantage of a design founder is their inexperience in business. While having a new mindset of business is an advantage listed in the previous section, the lack of business experience is also a disadvantage. This shows that having enough business literacy is crucial to even having a new mindset for business.

Designer Founder C thinks that an entrepreneurial designer should know all of these, or they will eventually know through the hard way.

6.2.3.4. Are Designers good entrepreneurs?

None of the interviewees think that designers are not good entrepreneurs. The user-centered thinking of designers, when combined with business, is a very powerful tool to have. The prerequisite is business literacy, as mentioned repeatedly in the previous sections. The importance of designers building business literacy is so crucial, that Designer Founder B said that every good designer should learn about business. All designer founders know the importance of integrating business and design.
6.2.3.5. Summary

The overarching theme among the interviewees is that designer founders can be great entrepreneurs if they know how to balance between design and business. This means that they should not be overly focused on just the traditional definition of aesthetic design, but to apply their problem solving mindset to every aspect of the company.

While the interviewees believe that the lack of business education is actually an advantage that designers have, allowing them to take on business with a completely different mindset, having **basic business literacy is still required to be a good founder**.

The question then, is do designers who choose to pursue entrepreneurship already have business literacy or know the need to balance, or do they actually have to learn the hard way? Among these designer founders, the latter seems to be truer. This will be discussed in the next section.

6.2.4. Perceived or Actual Motivations and Barriers for Designers to become Founders

6.2.4.1. Path to Entrepreneurship

![Figure 18: Paths to Entrepreneurship of Designers with Formal Design Education](image)
The career paths leading to entrepreneurship of each interviewee have been analyzed, and Figure 8 shows the different paths each designer founder takes before they start their own startups. The thickness of the paths represents how common the path is through secondary research, and survey results, which will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The path to entrepreneurship by each interviewee will be shown in the next 5 figures.

**Figure 19**: Career Path leading to Entrepreneurship of Designer Founder A

**Figure 20**: Career Path leading to Entrepreneurship of Designer Founder B
Figure 21: Career Path leading to Entrepreneurship of Designer Founder C

Figure 22: Career Path leading to Entrepreneurship of Designer Founder D

Figure 23: Career Path leading to Entrepreneurship of Designer Founder E
When comparing the experiences of each designer founder, 3 of the 5 design founders had non-design related experiences prior to their design education. While they each have a varying amount of professional design experience, they worked an average of 13 months at each company.

3 of the 5 design founders, Designer Founder A, Designer Founder D, and Designer Founder E, made a transition from working with corporate/consultancy directly to starting their own company. All of them are working with non-design founders as their business partners.

On the other hand, Designer Founder B and C started their own consultancy before starting a startup. Designer Founder B started his consultancy and later a startup with another designer founder, while Designer Founder C has been the sole founder for his startup and his own design consultancy before founding his own startup.

6.2.4.2. Motivations for Entrepreneurship

Designer Founder A, B, and C never had the desire to become an entrepreneur when they graduated from design school. Designer Founder B never had any family members who are entrepreneurs, nor any desire to start a company. Designer Founder A even despised the word ‘entrepreneur’ as a buzzword. Designer Founder C only wanted to solve problems. All interviewees graduated from design school and started working for design consultancies or corporate in-house design departments, except for Designer Founder C who started his own consultancy. From this, I can infer that entrepreneurship was never taught as an option in design curriculum. Instead, designers are taught to be
agents or consultants. This could possibly be a barrier of entry.

Table 7: Summary of Motivations for Entrepreneurship by 
gives the summary of some reasons the designer founders have cited that made them diverge from a traditional design career.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founder A</th>
<th>Designer Founder B</th>
<th>Designer Founder C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past experiences prepared for independence</td>
<td>Past experiences prepared for independence</td>
<td>Past experiences prepared for independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to solve problems and taking opportunity to do it</td>
<td>Desire to solve problems and taking opportunity to do it</td>
<td>Desire to solve problems and taking opportunity to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike for loss of control in hierarchical corporations</td>
<td>Dislike for loss of control in hierarchical corporations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive Partners or Mentors</td>
<td>Supportive Partners or Mentors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to wear multiple hats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to avoid funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Summary of Motivations for Entrepreneurship by Designer Founders

When comparing across the design founders, all of them said, “Desire to solve problems and taking opportunity to do it” and “Past Experiences prepared for Independence” as the motivations to found their own startup.

The first reason explains that most design founders take on a personal responsibility to solve problems, and take on the opportunity to make the solution available to others. The second reason shows how they attribute their professional design experiences as a stepping-stone to better equip them for founding a startup. However, this does not mean that designers who worked for corporate or consultancies have a higher chance of becoming an entrepreneur. Rather, it shows that the interviewees were able to
apply their professional experience outside of their professional work into their startups. That is, they are designers who do not limit their “problem solving mentality” to only design.

The next most common factors include: “Dislike for loss of control in hierarchical corporations”, and “Supportive Partners or Mentors.” When either of these factors, or all, are present, the chance of the designer pursuing startups will be higher.

From here, I could infer that designer’s self-limitation for design is an important deterrence to a designer’s propensity to entrepreneurship.

6.2.4.3. Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founder A</th>
<th>Designer Founder B</th>
<th>Designer Founder C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outsourcing Problem</td>
<td>Outsourcing Problem</td>
<td>Outsourcing Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund Raising</td>
<td>Fund Raising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning from a Freelancer to a Business Owner</td>
<td>Transitioning from a Freelancer to a Business Owner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being the lone designer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not understanding Business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty is not the most important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not knowing the back-end design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack time and budget to execute design thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Summary of Perceived Challenges by Designer Founders

“Outsourcing problems” is listed as one of the most common problems faced by
the interviewees when running a startup. “Transitioning from a freelancer to Business” and “Fund Raising” are listed as the second most common.

Among the 9 challenges listed, only “Transitioning from a Freelancer to a Business Owner”, “Being the lone designer”, and “Not understanding Business” could be considered as barriers of entry to entrepreneurship for designers. The other challenges were faced after there is an intention for founding a startup. For these interviewees, their motivations to start a company are great enough to overcome these challenges. The next section will talk about how they overcome the challenges.

6.2.4.4. Strategies to cope with challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designer Founder A</th>
<th>Designer Founder B</th>
<th>Designer Founder C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning to balance between design and business</td>
<td>Learning to balance between design and business</td>
<td>Learning to balance between design and business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant learning and hard work</td>
<td>Constant learning and hard work</td>
<td>Constant learning and hard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to outsource</td>
<td>Learning to outsource</td>
<td>Learning to outsource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication within and outward</td>
<td>Communication within and outward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bootstrapping</td>
<td>Bootstrapping</td>
<td>Be a better sales person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a better sales person</td>
<td>Keeping a close community of like-minded people</td>
<td>Keeping a close community of like-minded people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overcoming Validation challenges</td>
<td>Overcoming Validation challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building the right team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Summary of Strategies to Cope with Challenges by Designer Founders
“Learning to balance between design and business” is mentioned again as one of the strategies to overcome the challenges. Some strategies include understanding that design is not always about making a portfolio piece. Design is not just to build things, but also to understand that there are consequences in every decision.

Designer Founder B admits that sometimes he has to do things for his company that he cringes from a design standpoint. He tries to overcome these by understanding the bigger picture of the constraints. Over the years, he understood the value that he can provide; that is in strategies and less about his actual design execution with software. Designer Founder A learns to balance between available resources, such as time, money, etc., and needs of users, their expectations and importance of each needs.

The interviewees also listed “Constant learning and hard work” and “Learning to outsource” as the most common strategy among them.

6.2.4.5. Summary

Among the interviewees, none of them had the intention of becoming an entrepreneur when they graduated from design school. All of them either went to work for a design consultancy, or a corporate. This could reflect that entrepreneurship was not taught as a career option when they were pursuing a design education. All of their motivations for entrepreneurship developed when one or more of the following conditions were present:

- Having the desire to solve problems
- Working Experiences made them realize the importance of branching out of
traditional design, and more control needed in order to truly execute what they believe

- Having supportive Partners or Mentors
- Dislike for hierarchal corporations

The challenges faced by the interviewees that could be barriers to entry for entrepreneurship were discussed. The three barriers were “Transitioning from a Freelancer to a Business Owner”, “Being the lone designer”, and “Not understanding Business.” The strategies taken by these interviewees to overcome them were “keeping a close community of like-minded people”, “learning to balance between design and business.” Once the interviewees understood the bigger picture, it was easier for them to understand that the real value does not lie in the portfolio piece.

Therefore, I can infer that having a strong desire to solve problems and the courage to branch out of the traditional definition of design are crucial to affect the propensity for entrepreneurship. Problem solving skills are inherent to good designers. Therefore, the difference is then how far are designers willing to apply the problem solving mentality out of the traditional sense of design.
6.3. Interview Group B: Startup Experts

6.3.1. Profiles of Startup Experts

3 face-to-face interviews were conducted with the following startup experts:

- **Expert A**, Marketing Manager at a tech startup and Program Coordinator at startup incubator
- **Expert B**, founder of a business consultancy and Program Manager at a commercialization office in a University
- **Expert C**, Executive Director at Entrepreneurship Center of a University, Entrepreneurship Educator

As all of the startup experts do not know many design founders personally, they will share their experience of designers in the startup community, as oppose to designer founders.

These interviewees were selected as a persona from the startup community. For example, Expert A is a young founder with a business background, and also a business consultant to other startups. He could represent both the voices of a founder with a business background and a business consultant to startups. Expert B is a veteran founder with technical background, but also very experienced as a mentor in the startup community. Expert C is a very experienced educator of entrepreneurship.
6.3.2. Perceived Definition of Design and Designer

6.3.2.1. What is Design?

The experts have differing perspectives of what is Design within themselves.

Figure 24: Visualization of How Design is Defined by Startup Experts

Expert A’s perception about design is that design is mostly about looks, and having design is a competitive advantage. On the other hand, Expert B and C both think that design should be about the combination of utility and craft, and that utility is more important than the looks.

A possible explanation for the differing opinions within this group of experts is that the background of the experts has an effect on the perception of design. Expert C
studied PhD in Organizational Design, and Expert B worked as a software engineer at a design research consultancy before his current job at Commercialization Office of a University. Both of them worked in their respective field for many years and had the chance to develop an understanding around design. Their perception of design is drastically different from Expert A, who is a young marketing analytics consultant.

While the three experts do not represent the majority of the startup’s perspective on Design, they do have the impression that most people in the startup community see design as solely about looks or presentation, and separated from UX Design or UX Research. This is more apparent among people without any background or perspective about design. This could be because these startup experts are all from Mid-West, where the startup scene is not as vibrant or developed as startup scenes in the West and East Coast.

There are several perceived reasons from the startup experts on why design is perceived as just about looks and craft in the startup scene.

1. The term ‘design’ has always been associated with just looks, and it is hard to change traditional perception

2. The design industry did not present itself well. Some designers are all about making things look pretty, and some designers are more about the usability of things. Most designers have the problem of presenting themselves as solely about looks and presentation. The fact is, there is not good way to differentiate between the two designers, and, thus, this doesn’t really help with the image of the design industry.

3. The lack of understanding from the business side is probably because there is a lack
of designers from the UX space approaching them to convince or educate them that they need design. Good designers are designers that know the balance of utility and craft. However, startups do not really have the money to hire good designers. There are also not enough good UX designers to work with startups, much less start a company.

6.3.2.2. Definition of Designer

Designers act with varying preference for either the utility side, or the craft side. Both Expert B and C think that in the startup world, the utility side is way more important than the craft side for a designer. According to Expert B, designers are supposed to know human behaviors, and know how to get data about human behaviors in an unbiased way when they are designing for utility. In a startup, a balance of individual designer ego, and ability to listen is the best.

In Expert A’s perception, designers play more of a marketing role. Expert B also agreed that designers that rely more on the craft side will be funneled into the marketing side, even though they may not want to.

However, Expert B said that there is a fundamental difference between marketing and designing. Marketing is often involved when you already know what the product is. But design, may not be. And that’s the difference: if design is all about making existing products look pretty, the value it brings about is all related to marketing.
6.3.2.3. Summary

The more experienced startup experts have the realization that design should be more than aesthetics. They attribute this to the problems of designers not presenting themselves as someone who values both utility and looks. **In fact, there is no good way to distinguish between the two from the non-designer’s perspective.**

There needs to be more good designers reaching out into the startup scene. Currently, there are trends like Lean UX, and Designer Fund, but still not enough are educating entrepreneurs about design. As Expert B suggested, designers need to learn “the art of making noise”, going out there to show what they can do.

Because of the way design is perceived, Expert B recommends UX designers to not call themselves designers, but experience strategists. They can still show off great skills a great designer has, but positioning themselves differently would help in overcoming the stereotype that design has. **Expert B also suggests that student designers should work more with startups, as it is a good learning experience for them, and startups can afford them.**
6.3.3. Contributions of Designer in Startup Community

6.3.3.1. Advantages of a Designer in a Startup

All three experts agreed that there is value that design can bring into a startup. However, none of the startup experts have similar views on the value of design. The following is a table summarizing the value of design by each startup expert.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert A</th>
<th>Expert B</th>
<th>Expert C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different way of Thinking</td>
<td>Aesthetics Quality</td>
<td>Different Way of Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics Quality</td>
<td>Creating Value out of a Product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Value out of a Product</td>
<td>Designing of Companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prototyping</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UX Research</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Summary of the Advantages of Designers in a Startup by each Interviewee

Expert B says, “If UX is included as part of a design, then it is definitely very useful to invite designers into the early stage of startups.” The UX design side is needed to manifest ideas quickly, but the business people will help to build a business around the idea. Most business entrepreneurs are biased in their research and only hear what they want to hear. Also, business people tend to prefer ‘push’ strategy; trying to convince people that they need that product instead of understanding if users really need it.

Designers on the other hand are trained to understand product utility and are able to conduct unbiased user research to understand users well. As such, designers and business people make a good match, as designers are able to find the real need of users and teaching business people how to do UX research, while business people can convince
people of the real need that they are unaware of.

Only Expert B understood UX research due to his previous working experience at a design research consultancy. Both Expert A and C did not mention research at all. Expert B also talks about storytelling and prototyping as ways at which design founders can contribute.

Expert B’s unique point of view about the contributions of designer founder may not be common among the startup community, but shows that it is possible for non-designers to understand design differently if they have experience related to design. This shows that there is a need for intervention to allow non-designers to learn more about design, just as designers need to know more about other fields.

6.3.3.2. Disadvantages of a Designer in Startup

When asked to describe about their perceived disadvantages of designers, only Expert B and C are able to provide some insights as Expert A admits to not having much experience with designers. The following are some aspects of designers that these experts think are problematic when working in a startup community:

1. Too User Driven
2. Lack of monetary value sense
3. Too detail oriented
4. Too much ego
6.3.3.3. Summary

All startup experts agree that there are advantages for having a designer as a founder, but only if the designer doesn’t focus solely on aesthetics but also the User Experience of the product. Additionally, when asked about the disadvantages of a designer, they reiterated again about the need to not only focus on users and making a perfect product, but also to understand how business and money works.

6.3.4. Perceived Barriers for Designers to Become Founders

All of the startup experts do not know many designers or design founders, therefore they do not have any examples of motivations for entrepreneurship. However, they provided some hypotheses on the low representation of designers in the startup community.

Designers have the option of joining the company as a founder or part of the founding team, or the option of designing as a consultant. Both options have its own problems for designers to be involved in the startup scene, as summarized into the following points:

- Startups have a bad reputation of not paying Designers
- Designers do not want to design the same thing endlessly
- Unwilling to give up design; a designer founder has to learn to ‘give up’ design control and balance between business and users
- Business people not understanding Design
6.4. Interview Group C: Startup Experts with Design Background

6.4.1. Profiles of Startup Experts with Design Background

3 face-to-face interviews were conducted with the following startup experts with design background (from now known as Design Experts):

- Design Expert A, design director social media company and coordinator at design startup incubator
- Design Expert B, Director of ideation lab at commercialization office of university
- Design Expert C, designer at a design consultancy that works with startup

6.4.2. Perceived Definition of Design and Designer Founders

6.4.2.1. Definition of Design

Design Expert A said, “The very definition of design is changing. Design and the word designer, is a very misunderstood term... When somebody defines themselves as a designer, typically it’s very hard to describe what they are doing.”

Both Design Expert A and B agreed that design is about using creativity and intuition to approach any problem, and not solely about the physical output of designed objects.

- “Design is more of a conduit to get to an end result, and the end result is something about change.”
- The actual craft of design, the ability to make things, is not the sole part of design.
- Design is essentially “creative problem solving”, it is the ability to see creatively.
However, both Design A and B dislike the term design thinking. Thinking is only half of the equation of design, the other half is doing. The startup design experts think that a lot of people think that design thinking is design, but design is not useful unless execution is involved. This misunderstanding of innovation and design, or design thinking, has led to many misuses.

Design Expert B believes that ‘Design Thinking’ is just a made up buzzword. Calling it ‘Design Thinking’ alienates most people, and makes designers think that they “own the concept of design thinking.” Most people do not understand design thinking, but they understand critical thinking, deductive reasoning, judgment and translational thinking. Design Expert A agrees that more people need to be aware about design, by not alienating others and presenting design like a ‘secret society.’

6.4.2.2. Definition of Designer Founders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Expert A</th>
<th>Designer founders may not be the one doing the actual design, also known as “pushing the pixels.” They are leaders with design-oriented qualities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design Expert B</td>
<td>Similar to Design Expert C’s definition, and further defines that on top of design skills, a designer founder is someone who “recognizes the ability to use design in its broad sense and create a plan.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Expert C</td>
<td>Designer founder is a founder that has design as a primary skillset, and not the only skillset.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Summary of Definition of Design Founders by Startup Experts with Design Background
All three experts agree that designer founders need not come from a design school. Design Expert A thinks that design-oriented qualities can be picked up from experience. A lot of designer founders did not graduate from college and design does not belong to an elite group of people who get a degree. Design Expert B and C both agreed that several best designers are also self-taught. The design school would provide the training, but an individual’s experience could also have developed those qualities.

Design Expert A believes that anyone can be a designer because creativity is something that is embedded within everyone; the only difference is how people develop their creativity through their own experiences. On the other hand, Design Expert B thinks that designers aren’t trained, but instead they are generally born. Certain personality and characteristics of a person defines their inclination towards being a designer. This explains why there are designers who can be self-taught, or non-designers who think like designers. The ability to design boils down to the ability to solve problems creatively, and this is not restricted to designers trained in design school.

Here are some qualities of good design founders. There are no good ways to evaluate them because these characteristics or skills are not solely developed through a design school. They include:

- Change Agent
- Executor
- Risk Learning
- Balance of analytics and creativity
- Observation
• Creativity
• Open-minded and humble
• Conviction to vision
• Big picture thinking or systems thinker

6.4.2.3. Summary

All experts describe design very broadly, as a creative process instead of something restricted to the end product. This thinking process can be applied across different disciplines, and not just traditional product design.

Due to their broad definition of design, designer founders are defined as people who possess the ability to not just design, but apply the concept and principles of design onto a bigger picture. The defining component is the mindset of a designer, instead of strictly about the output. Therefore, a designer founder is not defined by their design degree, but their mindset of not restricting themselves to traditional design.
6.4.3. Contributions of Designers or Design Founders in Startup Community

6.4.3.1. Advantages of Designer Founders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Expert A</th>
<th>Design Expert B</th>
<th>Design Expert C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems of non-designer founders</td>
<td>Problems of non-designer founders</td>
<td>Problems of non-designer founders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designer’s mindset to solve problems</td>
<td>Designer’s mindset to solve problems</td>
<td>Designer’s mindset to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good product experience</td>
<td>Good First Impression</td>
<td>UX Design is related to Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Summary of Advantages of Design Founders by Startup Experts with Design Background

All three Startup Design Experts mentioned the problems of non-designer founders as one of the advantages of a designer founder. The problems of the non-designer founders are:

- Lack empathy of users
- Lack creative mindset
- Linear Problem Solving
- Biased Research
- Trusting too much on Quantitative Data
- Devaluing Design due to lack of understanding of design

Another point at which the startup design experts agreed on is the mindset of designers to solve problems. They gave specific aspects of a designer’s mindset that is
different from traditional founders. Design is more than a craft; it is a mindset and approach. Design Expert A thinks that in order for us to solve the world’s problems, we need to “think like designers, feel like designers, and work like designers.” These qualities are valuable problem solving skills that includes:

- Systems Thinker or Big Picture Thinker
- New mindset of leadership
- Designing a company
- Risk Learning
- Observer

Design Expert C is the only practicing UX designer amongst the two experts. She thinks that UX Designers have all the tools to move into strategy and entrepreneurship. They have the ability to execute their ideas. This makes their skills as a professional inherently related to startups. Some of the skills include:

- Empathy for the users
- Bootstrapping -- the ability to start a company using existing resources
- Problem Solving

6.4.3.2. Disadvantages of Designers or Designer Founders

Some designers who graduated from design school, or learnt design themselves, may have ‘habits’ or ‘attitudes’ that may allow them to thrive as a designer, but not as a designer founder. Here are some of the problems faced by some typical designers, which
would be an issue if they are a designer founder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Expert A</th>
<th>Design Expert B</th>
<th>Design Expert C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited view about design</td>
<td>Limited view about design</td>
<td>Limited view about design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not observant</td>
<td>Not observant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not valuing research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding decisions and convergent</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to explain their design</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Summary of Disadvantages of Designers as Founders by Startup Experts with Design Background

Design Expert B has a lot more problems of designers listed than other two startup design experts. This could be because he has the longest design experience among them, and has experienced more problems than them.

All three experts agree that the limited view of designers is the main issue of a designer trying to be a founder.

6.4.3.3. Summary

As mentioned in their definition of a designer founder, all three experts think that the mindset of the designer would be an advantage of a designer founder over a non-designer founder. This is a great advantage only if the designer does not have a limited view about design and is able to see things from a bigger picture. However, not all designers are big picture thinkers, and therefore not all designers make good entrepreneurs.

However, Design Expert C specifically mentioned that UX designers already have
the skillsets needed to be an entrepreneur. This is consistent with Startup Expert B’s perception that UX design is very beneficial for a startup from the early stage.

6.4.4. Perceived Motivations and Barriers for Designers to Become Founders

6.4.4.1. Motivations for Entrepreneurship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Expert A</th>
<th>Design Expert B</th>
<th>Design Expert C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Models and/or Peer Inspiration</td>
<td>Role Models and/or Peer Inspiration</td>
<td>Role Models and/or Peer Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making an impact</td>
<td>Availability of non-traditional fundraising methods</td>
<td>Turning point in career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure to Startup Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More control than visual design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Summary of Motivations for Entrepreneurship by Startup Experts with Design Background

Design Expert A suggested the least number of motivations for entrepreneurship as she spends most of the interview talking about the impact of design founders. Both Design Expert B and C are able to share based on their personal experience.

Design Expert C is probably closest to understanding the motivations and barriers for entrepreneurship because she is currently actively working as a design consultant in the startup community, has vast interest in starting her own company, but has yet to pursue it due to several reasons.
6.4.4.2. Barriers of Entry for Entrepreneurship

The barriers of entry are greatly discussed by the three startup design experts. The barriers are categorized into Design, Personal, Startup Community, and General Public related.

- **Design related**
  - Lack of Strategic Experience
  - Self-limitation in the application of design
  - Lack of exposure to Business
  - Reliance on Feedback

- **Personal or non-professional related**
  - Not ready for commitment
  - Lack confidence in non-design related things
  - Money Issue
  - Uncertainty with the right Investor
  - Reluctance to deal with a different set of rules

- **Startup Community Related**
  - Startups don’t ‘get’ design
  - Not paying for design
  - Most VCs have different values

- **General Public**
  - Inertia of a big institution
Inertia of public view on startups and design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Expert A</th>
<th>Design Expert B</th>
<th>Design Expert C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-limitation in the application of design</td>
<td>Self-limitation in the application of design</td>
<td>Self-limitation in the application of design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack confidence in non-design related things</td>
<td>Lack confidence in non-design related things</td>
<td>Lack confidence in non-design related things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of exposure to Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Lack of exposure to Entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Issue</td>
<td>Money Issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inertia of public view on startups and design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inertia of a big institution</td>
<td>Lack of Strategic Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliance on Feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not ready for commitment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty with the right Investor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reluctance to deal with a different set of rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not paying for design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most VCs have different values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Summary of Barriers of Entry for Entrepreneurship by Startup Experts with Design Background

As mentioned in the previous section, Design Expert C was able to share deep insights about her personal barriers to entrepreneurship, and, thus, had several more barriers listed than the other two experts.
The following figure explains the vicious cycle of the top 5 barriers of entry.

The top two reasons that are mentioned by all experts are “Self-limitation in the application of design” and “Lack confidence in non-design related things.” Both are related to and reinforce each other.

A lot of designers limit themselves on the definition of design. They restrict their work to makers of artifacts. The industry celebrates the final artifacts rather than the process of getting there. The lack of recognition of intangible designs limits the potential of a designer to expand design into other realms, like leadership. Designers need to step up to become leaders and the confidence in oneself is the key to step into a different
realm of unfamiliarity. Design Expert B thinks that **most designers make good business people and leaders, but they lack the confidence to believe that they are able to handle the business aspects; finances, operations, customer service, etc.** For many designers, they see business and financial aspects as unappealing and uninteresting, or skills that they lack to handle. Most are actually better at business literacy than they give themselves credit for. The lack in confidence is caused by the intimidation of perceived difficulty of not-so-difficult things.

The next three reasons mentioned by both Design Expert B and Design Expert C are “Lack of exposure to Entrepreneurship”, “Money Issues”, and “Startups don’t ‘get’ design.” The first two reasons are again related to one another. Designers face difficulty overcoming a big fear of numbers, and are in a position of responsibility over profit and loss, payroll, etc. This perception leads to an avoidance of the money game that is needed in running a business. A lot of designers don’t get exposed to the more strategic aspect of business as traditional employers keep them away from it. Thus, designers never really discover how design can impact strategically. Design Expert B questions, “Do designers not make good entrepreneurs because they don’t think they are good entrepreneurs, or that they haven’t been exposed to some of the components of that?”
6.4.4.3. Summary

All experts think that the existence of a peer or role model is the main motivation for designers to found their own startup.

The barriers of entry speculated by the experts include designer’s limited view in design and their lack of confidence in non-design related areas, especially business or money related. This can also be resulted from their lack of exposure to entrepreneurship or business in general, which further reinforced the limited view of design.
6.5. Conclusion

This chapter highlights the big insights from the individual interview groups in how design is defined, how designer founders can contribute, and their perceived motivations or barriers to entrepreneurship. Design is defined differently across the different groups. However, all three groups seem to agree that designer founders need to move out of the traditional aesthetic view of design.

In the next chapter, the insights from the individual interview group will be compared with one another.
Chapter 7: Interview Findings: Comparison Across Interview Groups

In the previous chapter, insights have been gathered from the individual interview groups. This chapter will compare these insights across the interview groups, following the structure:

- How is Design valued in startups by Designers or Non-Designers
  - Definition of Design and Designer Founders
  - Contribution of Design and Designer Founders
- What are the perceived or actual motivations and barriers for Designers to become Founders

The three interview groups are categorized into acronyms in this section. They are as follows:

- Interview Group A: Designer Founders, known as DF
- Interview Group B: Startup Experts, known as SE
- Interview Group C: Startup Design Experts, known as SDE
7.1. Perceived Definition of Design and Design Founder

7.1.1. What is Design?

In the above figure, we can see how the understanding of design co-relates between each interview.

When comparing across the three different groups, SE typically understands that good design is seen as a balance of utility and visual, and that design that is heavy on the craft side is similar to marketing. The SE’s definition of design is much more output oriented than the definition provided by SDE and DF.

Both SDE and DF share similar viewpoints about design.
SDE described design more abstractly and theoretically, and more as a creative and artistic approach. They consider design as an approach, mindset, and a way of life. In their terms, “Design is creative problem solving.”

On the other hand, DF described design more as a process with an outcome in mind. They do not think design is discipline specific. When they are referring to design, the noun is about visual, while the verb design is about problem solving by iteration.

Therefore, the definitions by SE are the output of design, the DF then emphasized on the processes and purpose, and SDE emphasized more on the mindset and creative thinking.

When talking about the term ‘Design Thinking’, SE has two extreme positions: they either have not heard of it, or if they have, they think Design Thinking is common sense. SDE in general has a dislike for the term, and sees it as a buzzword. They think Design Thinking is just critical thinking or a term to alienate non-designers. DF generally doesn’t use the term when talking to non-designers, but when asked to ‘label’ their mindset or approach they would use the term ‘Design Thinking.’

The careful use of the term ‘design’ and ‘design thinking’ by DF shows that there is a difference in the definition of design between designers and non-designers in the startup realm. SDE, on the other hand, recognizes the broad applications of design, and therefore avoided defining design by the outcome, but by a mindset. SE, on the other hand, has a very narrow perspective of design which they think that designers are not doing a good job at educating them.
7.1.2. What is a Designer or Design Founder?

Due to the perceived definition of Design by the SE, they think that designers usually rely on a varying spectrum of preference for utility or craft. A designer founder in their opinion should be heavily utility oriented than craft oriented.

SDE and DF had more similar views on what a designer founder is. They both agree that designer founders should not confine their skillset to only design, but expand beyond traditional design. The DF specifically mentioned business as the most crucial knowledge for a designer founder to have, whereas SDE mentioned more general skills like leadership and plan creation.

7.1.3. Implications

The perceived definitions of design and designer or designer founder are fundamentally different for people with and without design backgrounds. While the more experienced SE ‘get’ that design is more than looks, the general trend of non-designers’ impression of design is still very look-oriented. If design is valued differently, or lower, by non-designers in the startup scene, conflicts would arise.

Both SDE and DF have repeatedly emphasized that Designer Founders have to be open to things outside of design, and specifically, they need to know more about business. This shows that there is a need to compromise between designer and non-designer in order for them to work together.

From this, I can infer that there is a conflict in the definition of design. One of my hypotheses is that the conflict in how design is perceived in the startup community is
a barrier of entry to entrepreneurship. **However, while there is a conflict in how design is perceived, this is not a barrier to entrepreneurship for designers.** In section 7.3.2, Barriers of Entry of this chapter, I will discuss other barriers to entrepreneurship in detail.
7.2. Contributions of Design Founders

7.2.1. Advantages of Design Founders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Startup Experts</th>
<th>Startup Design Experts</th>
<th>Design Founders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bootstrapping or Prototyping</td>
<td>Bootstrapping or Prototyping</td>
<td>Bootstrapping or Prototyping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Mindset in Running a Business</td>
<td>Different Mindset in Running a Business</td>
<td>Different Mindset in Running a Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing of Companies</td>
<td>Designing of Companies</td>
<td>Designing of Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good product experience or Creating Value out of a Product</td>
<td>Good product experience or Creating Value out of a Product</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good First Visual Impression or Aesthetic Qualities</td>
<td>Good First Visual Impression or Aesthetic Qualities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UX Research</td>
<td>Biased Research and Trusting too much on Quantitative Data by non-designer founder</td>
<td>Experts of design thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>System Thinking</td>
<td>Experts of design thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Risk Learning</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Problem Solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Emotional connection with users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Emotional connection with users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Harder for business people to understand design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Comparison of Advantages of Design Founders by Each Interview Group

When asked about what are the advantages of design founders, or how can design founders contribute, all three groups agreed that a designer founder gave a prototyping or bootstrapping advantage to the startup. Another point agreed by all three groups includes
the benefits of having a different mindset in running a business. They agreed that a
designer founder could also design a company.

DF feels that designers learning business literacy is easier than a business person
learning design. However, both SE and SDE feel that the difficulty is the same. The
difference in perception shows that DF is more confident of designers than SE and SDE.
This is likely because DF are designers who have embraced the business side, and have
witnessed the difficulty of business people understanding design, and therefore are more
optimistic about designers’ abilities.

Though SE mentioned that the designer’s way of thinking is different, they did
not explain how they are different. SDE further explained the specifics of a designer’s
mindset: being a system thinking, observing, risk learning, creative problem solving and
empathy. DF, however, only highlighted empathy and design thinking as a problem
solving approach. This reflects that SDE are more theoretical as compared to DF, and that
SE has a lesser understanding of design founders.

Both SDE and SE mentioned having good product experience and good first
visual impression as an advantage of having a designer founder. This is one of the first
reasons listed by both expert groups. DF, however, did not list this as an advantage.
There could be two possible reasons for DF to not mention it: they probably feel that 1)
having a designer founder does not guarantee a good product experience, or 2) having
good product experience is expected of a designer founder. Either way, this probably
means that DF sees that there are other important advantages of a designer founder, such
as empathy, bootstrapping, etc.
Another interesting advantage that is mentioned by SE is the ability to conduct UX research. SE explains that non-designer founders have the problem of conducting biased research, which is a point that is mentioned by SDE too. However, the viewpoint of designers knowing UX research is a unique viewpoint by only one of the Startup Expert, Expert B, who used to work at a design research consultancy. Despite so, he doesn’t believe that all designers know UX research. While SDE mentioned that non-designer founders conduct biased research, they did not specifically list conducting research as one of the advantages of a designer founder. DF also did not list research as an advantage, but they mentioned that “validation process is hard” and uncertain, and requires positive attitudes to keep going. In this sense, the DF did not see themselves better than other non-designer founders in terms of validating their startups. Also, SDE and DF likely share Startup Expert B’s view that not all designers know research.

Storytelling is another advantage that is only mentioned by Startup Expert B amongst the SE and DF also mentions it. The DF thinks that designers have the ability to communicate emotionally with people; whereas Startup Expert B thinks designers communicate visually, a skill that is lacking in other founders. While SDE did not mention communication or storytelling as an advantage, they did mention the ability to empathize with people, this could be an abstract form of advantage. Alternatively, the lack of mentioning of storytelling by SDE could mean that storytelling is a skill that they are unaware of that is an advantage of design founders.
7.2.2. Disadvantages of Design Founders

When mentioning the disadvantages of design founders, all three groups talked about the problems of typical designers as potential disadvantages when they are trying to become a founder. The following is an overview of how each of them relates to one another.

Table 17: Overview of the relationships between disadvantages of design founders by each interview group

166
Most of the disadvantages connected back to having a “limited view about design.” By limiting the view on design, designers are less likely to know about business, are overly user or ego driven, and overly focused on just design. This further branches out into more problems as illustrated in the figure above. I can infer that designer’s limited view in design or unwillingness to expand out of design can be a major problem should they wish to pursue entrepreneurship.

While SE thinks that designers can be too user driven, SDE thinks that some designers don’t value research enough. This is probably because SDE thinks that all designers should value research, but not every designer does, while SE thinks that those who do value research focus on the users too much and forgets about the other sides of running a startup.

SE thinks that designers have the problem of having too much ego, lack monetary sense, too detailed oriented and too user driven. SDE disagrees that designers lack business sense, but agree that some designers are too egoistic, and, therefore, not observant. SDEs think that some designers have a limited view of design or avoid convergence.

While SE thinks that designers lack monetary sense, SDE does not think so. In fact, all SDE believes that designers lack the confidence to pursue and learn about the business aspects, instead of lacking the ability to tackle business. Because of the avoidance of business, non-designers have formed the impression that designers are bad at businesses. On the other hand, DF acknowledged the importance of business literacy, and has put on an active effort learning to run their business. They tend to prefer
running a business the non-conventional way, stretching their creative muscles outside of the typical product or service design. Within the DF group, some are willing to play by the business rules if they were to raise funds from Venture Capitals or Angel Investors. Others bootstrapped their own business, going by their own rules and avoid the process of fundraising. **DF admits that they are not the best business people, but they are satisfied to run their business in a way they are comfortable with.** This humble self-assessment by the DF is consistent with SDE’s assessment that designers lack business confidence.

7.2.3. Implications

Startup Expert B’s unique point of view about the contributions of a designer founder is consistent with DF’s view. While his view may not be common among the startup community, it shows that it is possible for non-designers to understand design differently if they have experience related to design. **This shows that there is a need for intervention to allow non-designers to learn more about design, just as designers need to know more about other fields.**

SDE and Startup Expert B think that not all designers know research, and those who know can benefit the startup tremendously. DF never mentioned having the ability to research in all of the interviews. The only inference was through the mentioning of “having emotional connections with the users” or having “empathy”, where it can be assumed that some form of research was done to achieve that. The other closest association to research is the validation of a startup, of which the DF did not see
themselves better than other founders. Therefore, I can infer that having empathy does not mean better validation process, or being user driven is not the sole factor for the success of a company. While it is an advantage that a designer founder has, without business literacy, the founder will not be able to contribute or translate the insights into a business opportunity.

The lack of business literacy and designer’s limited view in design is a major disadvantage for designers who wish to pursue entrepreneurship.

It appears that there are more common viewpoints between SE and DF than between SDE and DF when it comes to disadvantages of design founders. However, there are more common views about design between SDE and DF. This could show that the DF is more aware of their shortcomings than what SE thinks. DF admits that designers tend to have those disadvantages listed; however, they think that a designer on a founder level should not have those problems.

In order for design founders to succeed, DF thinks that they have to know when to let go of their ego, learn about business, and learn to balance between the two. There is a possibility that new designer founders are quick to learn about the limitations of a designer and adapt to it, probably the hard way.

It seems that the type of designer that is suitable to be an entrepreneur should be user-driven yet balance between users and business, should venture out of the limited views of design yet still be able to do design, bootstrap, and prototype. This is what a good User Experience Designer should be, as I will later mention in 7.4. Conclusion.
7.3. Perceived or Actual Motivations and Barriers for Designers to become Founders

7.3.1. Motivations for Entrepreneurship

The following are the comparisons between the reasons for entrepreneurship shared by SDE and DF. Both reasons listed by SDE and DF are slightly different in terms of their wording, but they are referring to similar forms of motivations. This shows that the perceived motivations for entrepreneurship understood by SDE is mostly consistent with DF’s motivations for entrepreneurship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Startup Design Experts</strong></th>
<th><strong>Design Founders</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to Startup Industry</td>
<td>Past experiences prepared for independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making an impact</td>
<td>Desire to solve problems and taking the opportunity to do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Models and/or Peer Inspiration</td>
<td>Supportive Partners or Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More control than visual design</td>
<td>Dislike for loss of control in hierarchical corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of non-traditional fundraising methods</td>
<td>Ability to avoid funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning point in career</td>
<td>Desire to wear multiple hats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Comparison of perceived motivations of entrepreneurship by Startup Design Experts and Design Founders

“Roles Models and/or Peer Inspiration” is listed as the top motivation by SDE, but having “Supportive Partners or Mentors” is listed less than having “Past experiences prepared for independence” and “Desire to solve problems and taking opportunity to do it.” When evaluating the path to entrepreneurship of the DF, none of them graduated from design school wanting to be an entrepreneur. They mostly found the motivation internally.
to move out of the traditional design career. **This shows that SDE perceives that the greatest motivation is external, while DF’s actual motivations for entrepreneurship are mostly internal.**

### 7.3.2. Barriers of Entry

The SE and SDE were asked their perceived understanding of the barrier of entries for entrepreneurship specifically for designers. The SE does not have much experience, but they made their best guess. SDE, on the other hand has a long list of their perceived barrier of entries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Startup Experts</th>
<th>Startup Design Experts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling to give up design</td>
<td>Self-limitation in the application of design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reluctance to deal with a different set of rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling to give up design</td>
<td>Lack confidence in non-design related things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of exposure to Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Strategic Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business people not understanding Design</td>
<td>Startups don’t ‘get’ design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most VCs have different values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty with the right Investor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inertia of public view on startups and design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inertia of a big institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliance on Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not ready for commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startups have bad reputations of paying Designers</td>
<td>Not paying for design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing the same thing endlessly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Comparison of Perceived Barriers of Entry by Startup Experts and Startup Design Experts
Instead of asking about the barriers of entry to entrepreneurship, the DF was asked the challenges they faced when they were pursuing entrepreneurship. Among the 9 challenges faced by the DF, only “Transitioning from a Freelancer to a Business Owner”, “Being the lone designer”, and “Not understanding business” are considered challenges that could be barriers of entry. The rest are challenges that occur after pursuing entrepreneurship.

Most of the barriers listed by SE are also mentioned by SDE, except for “Designing the same thing endlessly.” When looking through the challenges listed by DF, none of them mentioned anything along that line.

Several of the strategies used by DF to overcome challenges are ‘solutions’ to the perceived barriers of entry by SDE and SE, showing that DF are typically willing to overcome these barriers with their own way.

DF acknowledged the importance of business literacy, and has put on an active effort learning to run their business. They tend to prefer running a business the non-conventional way, stretching their creative muscles outside of the typical product or service design. Within the DF group, some are willing to play by the business rules if they were to raise funds from Venture Capitals or Angel Investors. Others bootstrapped their own business, going by their own rules and avoid the process of fundraising. DF admits that they are not the best business people, but they are satisfied to run their business in a way they are comfortable with. This humble self-assessment by the DF is consistent with SED’s assessment that designers lack business confidence.
### Table 20: Comparison of the Perceived Barriers of Entry, and the Strategies used by Design Founders to overcome Challenges (Blue is Internal Barriers of Entry)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers of Entry</th>
<th>Strategies of Design Founders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-limitation in the application of design</td>
<td>Learning to balance between design and business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack confidence in non-design related things</td>
<td>Keeping a close community of like-minded people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to deal with different set of rules</td>
<td>Constant learning and hard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of exposure to Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Building the right team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Strategic Experience</td>
<td>Communication within and outward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money Issue</td>
<td>Overcoming Validation challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Startups don't &quot;get&quot; design</td>
<td>Bootstrapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most VCs have different values</td>
<td>Be a better sales person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty with the right Investor</td>
<td>Learning to outsource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inertia of public view on startups and design</td>
<td>Keeping a close community of like-minded people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inertia of a big institution</td>
<td>Communication within and outward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliance on Feedback</td>
<td>Learning to balance between design and business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ready for commitment</td>
<td>Communication within and outward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not paying for design</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(The more they should be the founder themselves instead of a consulting designer of a startup)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If DF’s internal motivation is strong, regardless of the external conditions, they will still pursue entrepreneurship. However, if there were stronger external support to cultivate stronger inner motivations, the designers would have greater motivation moving into entrepreneurship.

**Therefore, it is worth investigating the internal barrier of entry for entrepreneurship that are specific to designers, while trying to provide sufficient external support to encourage entrepreneurship among designers.** The three main internal barriers of entry are “Self limitation of Design”, “Lack Confidence in non-design
related things (specifically business and money)”, and “Not ready for commitment”. The last barrier is a psychological barrier that may not be designer specific; anybody may not be “ready for commitment to entrepreneurship”. The first two are crucial barriers that should be addressed through increasing external support to reduce designer specific barriers of entry.

7.3.3. Implications

There are designer-specific internal barriers of entry perceived by SDE that cannot be verified with the interview with SE and DF. This will have to be compared with the survey results.

SDE perceive that the greatest motivation for entrepreneurship is external, while DF’s actual motivation for entrepreneurship is mostly internal. This shows that there needs to be greater external support to influence designers’ internal motivation for entrepreneurship, and overcome the top two internal barriers of entry: “Self limitation of Design”, and “Lack Confidence in non-design related things.”

As mentioned earlier, one of the hypotheses for a barrier of entry is that startups don’t value design as well as designers. However, the top two internal barriers of entry listed by SDE and SE does not include startups don’t value design. This shows that the hypothesis is not true. In fact, some designers actually share the same limited view as startups about how design can contribute. These designers are the ones who will be providing design as consultants to startups instead of becoming a founder themselves.
Tracing back to the causes for these internal barriers, I hypothesize that the way design education is taught has limited the view of design, and that the general education has affected the perception that creatives may not be good at numbers.
7.4. Conclusion

Startups definitely need design, but not all designers are suitable for startups. Some of the qualities required of a designer founder include the ability to be champion for users, but at the same time balance between business objectives, and to break out of traditional product-oriented design and apply design mindset broadly. However, not all designers know research, even though they are mostly seen as people with great empathy with users. Having empathy does not mean better validation processes, or being user driven is not the sole factor for the success of a company. While empathy is an advantage that a designer founder has, without business literacy, the founder will not be able to contribute or translate the insights into business opportunity. Therefore, building business literacy is important.

The main barriers to entrepreneurship that are specific to designers are designer’s limited view in design and lack of confidence to venture out of traditional design. Having a “limited view about design” and not having business literacy is detrimental, even for a designer who is not going to be a founder. Today every design should have a purpose, and being completely user driven and not understanding business would not make practical design. As Designer Founder B mentioned, “everywhere a designer work involved a business. A good designer needs to break out of their comfort zone and learn about business.” If designers don’t understand business, or business people don’t understand design, the difference between the two will only get bigger. Therefore, all designers should build their business literacy, and more so for designer founders. There is a need for intervention to allow non-designers to learn more about design, and
one of the ways is through design’s involvement as a designer founder instead of an employee. In order to build a more design friendly culture in the business world, design needs startup as the platform for designers to participate as founders, and also for designers to build their business literacy.

It appears that all three interview groups are referring to a type of designer that have the skill sets that are transferable to entrepreneur. Design Expert C from SDE talked about User Experience Designer having all the tools, Startup Expert B from SE talked about how User Experience is important to early stage startup, and Designer Founder B from DF talked about how designers don’t need a lot to start a business. After compiling the qualities that is required of a designer founder discussed by the three interview groups, and comparing to that of a UX designer, I discovered the similarities between UX Designers and Entrepreneurs. The type of designer that the interviewees were talking about, the designer with the skill sets transferable to an entrepreneur is actually a UX Designer.

This discovery of the parallels in the skill sets between a User Experience Designer and an Entrepreneur showed that there is great potential for designers to be a founder. This led me to conduct deeper research on User Experience Designers. The competencies of a User Experience Designer discussed in Chapter 4: User Experience Design showed a changing and expanding definition for the role. The second part of the primary research, the survey, will focus on how User Experience Design is perceived by the designers. In the next chapter, I will share the findings from the survey.
Chapter 8: Survey Finding

8.1. Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I discussed the discovery of the similarities between the qualities of a UX designer and that required of a Designer Founder. The definition and competencies of a UX designer is further discussed through the secondary research, as motioned in Chapter 4: User Experience Design. This discovery has led me to redirect the survey research to focus on how UX Design is perceived by designers in general.

Additionally, there are barriers to entrepreneurship specific to designers, which are the designer’s limited view in design and a lack of confidence to pursue non-design related things (specifically business).

This survey was designed to validate or invalidate the discoveries of the interviews. The respondents were asked about their perception in the following topics:

- Their self-reported entrepreneurial activities and the causes for their activities
- The perceived definition of UX Design
- The perceived contribution of UX Designers as Founders
- The Innovative Premium of Designers in relation to their entrepreneurial activities

The survey was posted onto several online platforms on the 2nd of April 2014 and 56 responses were collected by the 26th of April 2014. The online platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Quora, etc., were design or startups related; thus, all participants
who took the survey were interested in the topic of design and startups to a certain extend.

8.2. Demographics of Survey Participants

![Background of Survey Participants](image)

Figure 27: Background of Survey Participants

Of the 55 participants, 47 of them are designers, of which 8 of them listed themselves as a designer that has other roles. This question did not allow survey participants to select multiple answers. Thus, participants intentionally selected the option “Others”, and typed their other role besides being a designer.
48% of the survey participants are within the age range of 30-40.
Figure 29: Background of Survey Participants across different age group

There were consistently 1-2 designers who listed themselves with other roles across all age groups.
Figure 30: Number of years of Design Experience for Designers

Participants who selected their background as Designers were asked to report their years of professional design experience. The participants have a fairly even spread in their design experience.
The largest Age Group of 30-40 has the most diverse range of design experience, ranging from less than 2 years to more than 15 years of design experience.
29 of the 39 Designers listed “User Experience” as one of the things that they design.
Figure 33: Types of Design Work Done by User Experience Designers

55% of all User Experience Designers listed User Interface and User Interaction as one of the other things they design, while 34% listed User Interface, User Interaction and Visual Communications/Graphics.

This shows that majority of the UX designers know more than just “User Experience” and are mostly well verse also in User Interface, User Interaction, or Visual Communications/Graphics.
8.3. Entrepreneurial Activities of Survey Participants

As there were only 8 non-designers in the survey participants, this analysis focuses only on the entrepreneurial activities of the 47 designers.

8.3.1. Designers with Original Ideas that could be a Business

Figure 34: Breakdown of Entrepreneurial Activities of Designers

Of the 47 designers, 39 of them had an original idea that could be a business, of which only 17 pursued and started their company based on their own idea. These 17 started an average of 1.82 companies.

Among the 22 who did not start a business around their own idea, all but 1 said they had thought of starting but did not. They have an average of 2.31 ideas that were not pursued.

Of the 22 that had idea but did not pursue, 7 started some kind of business, either as a co-founder of companies that are based on other’s idea, or design consultancies.
Figure 35: Entrepreneurial Activities of Designers in relation to Original Ideas

92% of designers that started any kind of business had at least one original idea that could be a business.

Among the 15 designers who had an original idea but did not start any business, only 3 had ever had the opportunity to start a business, of which 1 never thought of pursuing his own idea.

Of the 8 that did not have an idea for business, 2 started their own design consultancies.
8.3.2. Designers who started any Business

Figure 36: Proportion of Designers that started businesses

55% of all 47 participants started some kind of business that could be based on their own original idea, or based on other’s idea, or design consultancies.
Figure 37: Type of Businesses founded by Designers

73% of the designers that started any type of business started a design consultancy, while 65% started based on their own idea, and 42% started based on other’s idea. 69% started more than one business, 34% started both a design consultancy and startups based on their own idea, the most common type of business owner among the designers. Second most common (15%) are designers who only founded design consultancies. Designers are more likely to start a design consultancy, than to start a startup based on their idea, and are least likely to co-found a company based on other people’s idea. Designers who have either started a design consultancy, or a startup based on their idea, are more likely to start the other.
Designers cited “Personal Challenge/Growth” such as learning, taking on challenges and establishing credibility as the most common reason to found a company. The second most common reasons are for “Individual Control of Work” and “Creation of Own Idea/Vision.” The top reasons are mostly internal, of which, “Individual Control for Work” is a designer-specific motivation.

8.3.3. Designers who never started any Business

Figure 38: Entrepreneurial Intent of Designers Who Never Started Any Business

190
Of the 47 Designers, 21 never started any business.

57% of the 21 designers had original ideas, they have thought of starting but did not pursue their idea, and they never had the opportunity to start other companies. This represents 25% of all 47 designers.

24% never had any original business idea, and never had the opportunity to start one, constituting to 10% of all 47 designers.

Figure 39: Proportion of Designers who had the Opportunity to Start Business but Never Started One

33% of the designers had the opportunity to start a company, but choose not to pursue them.
Interestingly, the survey participants are interested in the topic of design and startups, but 45% did not start any business, not even a design consultancy. Majority of them thought of starting, but never had the opportunity to start any businesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top reasons for not starting company</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Internal or External Barriers</th>
<th>Designer-Specific?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Problems</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Yet</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>Internal &amp; External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough personal interest in idea</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of or bad Experience</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Internal &amp; External</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice for Startup Life</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid of Risk</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Skills</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Internal &amp; External</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack Resources</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Phobia</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Top Reasons for Designers to Not Start a Company

Lacking resources such as money and time, and not having the right partnership are the top reasons among designers for not starting a business. 5 of those who have not started said that they are still planning or building a prototype.

Among these, only “Lack of or bad Experience”, “Lack of Skills”, and “Fundraising Phobia” may be considered designer specific barriers of entry.
Everyone above age 40 has started some kind of business. Only 1 in the age group of 40-50 started only design consultancies.

Among the age group of 30-40, 15 (65%) started businesses, of which 9 (39%) were original startups. 2 started only design consultancies.

Of the 8 aged 26-30, only 1 founded a design consultancy.

Of the 8 aged 18-25, only 2 founded a startup, and both designers are active in the startup scene.
Figure 41: Type of Startups Founded by Designers by Age Group

Majority of the design founders are among the age group of 30 – 40. There are more designers who are founding startups based on their own idea, than co-founding based on someone else’s idea. I could conclude that designers older than 30 years old are more likely to found a startup based on their own idea, or co-founded a company based on other’s idea that are younger than 30. Among those older than 30 years old, the younger design founders are more likely to have founded any type of startup (based on own idea, other’s idea, or both), whereas the older design founders are more likely to have only found startups based on their own idea.
Considering that the startup trend began approximately 15 years ago, the older and more experienced designers now were then at their “turning point in career”, or already have sufficient design experience, or are already running a design consultancy. Therefore, when deciding to found a startup, they are probably more confident to start their own idea, than to found based on someone else’s idea.

8.3.5. Entrepreneurial Intent by Professional Experience

![Proportion of Designers Founding Businesses by Design Experience](image)

Figure 42: Proportion of Designers Founding Businesses by Design Experience

Everyone but one with professional design experience of more than 10 years started some kind of business. Among these, 3 started only design consultancies.

The number of years of design experience reflects the same trend as the age: the more design experience, the higher likelihood of founding a business.
8.3.6. Summary

As designers are older or more experienced, the tendency to start a business gets higher.

On the other hand, the entrepreneurial activities of designers younger than 30 are almost non-existent, short of 3 designers, of which one founded a design consultancy, and the other two founded startups based on someone else’s idea. The two young designer founders do not face the “turning point in career” that was faced by the older and more experienced designers. Upon investigating their path to entrepreneurship, they simply have the exposure to entrepreneurship almost upon graduation from the design school,
and are both currently very active in the startup community. I have also conducted an informal interview with one of them as a follow up to understand his motivations for entrepreneurship. There were a few things that have influenced him to entrepreneurship: 1) His exposure to startup weekend during his undergrad, 2) His work at Commercialization Office at a University, and 3) His desire create things. I can conclude that the early exposure of entrepreneurship was the main change.

Design founders older than 30 years old are more likely to found a startup based on their own idea, or co-founded a company based on other’s idea, whereas design founders younger than 30 are more likely to have first co-founded a company based on other’s idea. Co-founding a company based on someone else’s idea is more common among the younger designers than older designers. This is likely because younger designers are less confident of pursuing their own idea. However, without the exposure to entrepreneurship, they will not have the desire to even co-found a company.

The most common business owners are designers who founded startups based on their own idea, and also design consultancies. Designers are more likely to start a design consultancy than to start a startup based on their idea, and are least likely to co-founded a company based on other people’s idea. Designers who have either started a design consultancy, or a startup based on their idea, are more likely to start the other. This could mean that the barriers of entry for starting a business are greatly lowered when the designer founds either a startup or a design consultancy. The most common entrepreneurial path of a designer would be to start a design consultancy, before starting a company based on their own idea.
Designers cited “Personal Challenge/Growth” such as learning, taking on challenges and establishing credibility as the most common reasons to found a company. The second most common reasons are for “Individual Control of Work” and “Creation of Own Idea/Vision.” The top reasons are mostly internal, of which, “Individual Control for Work” is a designer-specific motivation.

Lacking resources such as money and time, and not having the right partnership are the top reasons among designers for not starting a business. 5 of those who have not started said that they are still planning or building a prototype. Among these, only “Lack of or bad Experience”, “Lack of Skills”, and “Fundraising Phobia” may be considered designer specific barriers of entry. Some possible suggestions to help designers overcome these designer-specific barriers of entry are to provide support for or exposure to entrepreneur.
8.4. Perception of UX Design

8.4.1. Definition of a User Experience designer

There are a total of 44 entries from designers, of which 26 designers listed User Experience as one of the things they design.

Upon analyzing the qualitative entries of the question, UX design is typically defined by 4 ways: What it does, by what method, for what purpose and for whom.

![Percentage of Methods Used to Define UX](image)

Figure 44: Percentage of Methods Used to Define User Experience

90% of the entries used “Does What” method to define UX.

Each entry is analyzed into keywords and categorized into one of the four ways to define. A total of 195 keywords were counted from all entries, each entry has an average of 4.3 keywords.
Figure 45: Proportion of Keywords in Each Method to Define User Experience

41% of the keywords fall into the “Does What” category.
The top 5 keywords from each category are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does What</th>
<th>By What</th>
<th>For What</th>
<th>For Whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience Design (19%)</td>
<td>User Research (16%)</td>
<td>Positive/Meaningful/Emotional Exp (16%)</td>
<td>Users (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products/Service Design (15%)</td>
<td>Balance of different factors (14%)</td>
<td>Usability of Product (16%)</td>
<td>Company/Business (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Design (13%)</td>
<td>Design (12%)</td>
<td>Enhancement (14%)</td>
<td>Development Teams (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions (9%)</td>
<td>Research (12%)</td>
<td>Business Goals/Values (11%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator/Facilitator (8%)</td>
<td>Understanding Business Requirements (10%)</td>
<td>New/Future/Change (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prompting/Influencing (9%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Top 5 Keywords Used in Each Method to Define User Experience

In summary, UX designers are perceived to design experience of products/services and interaction, by conducing user research and balancing different factors, for the purpose of providing positive/meaningful/emotional experiences and good product usability and enhancement, mainly for users and secondarily for companies/businesses.
None of the designers think UX designers do not make good entrepreneurs.

Most of the reasons cited that UX designers have the skillset inherently needed in a startup, including being user driven, the ability to balance between user’s needs and business’s needs, managing multiple facets of a project, etc.

However, among the 34% who said “Maybe”, majority explained that there are more skills than Design needed to be an entrepreneur or founder, such as understanding profit and loss, business model etc.
8.4.3. How can UX Designer Contribute

The top 5 ways a UX designer can contribute to a startup as a founder are “Make a product useful”, “Human-centered design”, “Generate or facilitate generation of innovative ideas”, “Big picture thinking”, and “Storytelling & Presentation.”

Some of these are listed as reasons why a UX designer makes for a good entrepreneur.
8.4.4. What UX Designer needs to learn when they are a Founder

Figure 48: Percentage of Things to Learn by a User Experience Designer to be a Founder

When asked about what UX designers need to learn as a founder, “Business Model/Revenue” ranked a high number one, the other top four includes “Leadership Skills”, Finance”, “Business Management”, and “Market Validation.”
8.4.5. Summary

UX designers are perceived to design experience through products/services and interaction design, by conducting user research and balancing different factors, for the purpose of providing positive/meaningful/emotional experiences and good product usability and enhancement, mainly for users and secondarily for companies/businesses.

UX designers are aware that they need to balance between different factors, including, but not exclusive to, business, users, strategies, technical requirements etc. On the other hand, non-UX designers think that designers need to balance between business and users specifically.

When asked to explain why UX designers make good entrepreneurs, “User Research” done by UX designers is considered a form of “Market Validation.” However, “Market Validation” is ranked no. 5 in things that UX designers need to learn as a founder, and “User Research (Qualitative)” ranked no. 6 in things that UX designers can contribute. A possible explanation would be that UX designers tend to value qualitative research more, but Business people tend to value quantitative data more. A validated market or product fit should be based on both qualitative and quantitative research.
8.5. Innovative Premium

This test was conducted on CEOs and Managers that are considered innovative leaders, and Dyer et al. reported an average of 5.07 across 4 behaviors (J. H. Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen 2008).

Designers in the survey reported an average of 5.44. They excel in skills of Observing and Experimenting, but significantly lesser in Idea Networking. This shows that designers are innovative in general.
Figure 50: Comparison of Average Innovative Premium Across Age Group

Figure 51: Comparison of Average Innovative Premium Across Design Experience
The innovative premium is highest among the older and more experienced designers. The trend reflects a drop in innovative premium from the younger and less experienced designers to the mid-years of design experience.

![Innovative Premium by Entrepreneurial Activities](image)

**Figure 52:** Comparison of the Four Behavioral Traits of Innovative Premium by Entrepreneurial Activities

Designers who started a startup based on their original idea are generally more innovative than those who did not. Their “Idea Networking” and “Observing” skills are significantly higher than other designers. When comparing between designers who had

208
ideas but did not start and designers who have started based on their own idea, both had relatively high “Observing” skills but the latter have significantly higher “Idea Networking” behavioral traits.

In fact, as illustrated in the table below, designers who have not started any form of businesses have the lowest Innovative Premium on average among designers, and the same trend is reflected for their “Idea Networking” skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Innovative Premium</th>
<th>Questioning</th>
<th>Observing</th>
<th>Idea Networking</th>
<th>Experimenting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reported on Article</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designers (47)</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started (17)</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>5.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>started any biz (26)</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had idea (39)</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not started but has ideas (15)</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>5.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not started any (21)</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: Innovative Premium of Designers by Entrepreneurial Activities

This could imply a positive correlation between entrepreneurial activities and innovative premium, and more specifically, between “Idea Networking” and entrepreneurial propensity.
When comparing between UX designers and Non-UX designers, there are no significant differences in their innovative premium on average. However, UX designers tend to have higher “Idea Networking” skills.

8.5.1. Summary

The Innovative Premium of designers showed that designers are innovative. The Innovative Premium among designers with entrepreneurial activities is much higher than designers without. One of the motivations for entrepreneurship by the interviewees was the desire to solve problems. Having high innovative premium means high observation skills, which allows them to spot problems.
There is a positive correlation between “idea networking” skills, innovative premium and entrepreneurial activities. While Innovative Premium does not reflect entrepreneurial propensity, it is a good indicator that designers with higher innovative premium, and specifically “idea networking” skills, have entrepreneurial potential.

If an individual with a high innovative premium were to lead a company, the overall innovative premium of the company would be higher, leading to a higher chance of success, according to Dyer et al. The higher in management the innovative people are, the more innovative influence they have on the company. Since designers are generally with high innovative premium, their influence on the innovative premium of a company would be greater if they are higher in management within the company. As a founder, designers will be able to influence a company innovatively.
8.6. Conclusion

UX designers are perceived to design experience through products/services and interaction design, by conducting user research and balancing different factors, for the purpose of providing positive/meaningful/emotional experiences and good product usability and enhancement, mainly for users and secondarily for companies/businesses. This is similar to the competencies of the UX designers discussed in Chapter 4: User Experience Design. This validates the hypothesis that good UX designers have similar competencies required of an entrepreneur.

However, UX designers need to learn how to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve true market validation. They also need to avoid being overly user-driven. The survey shows that UX designers need to learn about business/revenue models, profit and loss, finance, and leadership skills. A respondent cited, “UX designers make good product managers, but a business is not only about product.” Therefore, while UX designers have similar skill sets needed of an entrepreneur, they still need to build their business literacy.

Higher Innovative Premiums, specifically “Idea Networking” skills, are found among designers who have started any business ventures, and designers who have started a startup based on their own idea have the highest. This showed a positive co-relation between “Idea Networking” skills and Entrepreneurial Activities. Interestingly, UX designers have higher “Idea Networking” skills than non-UX designers.

The exposure to entrepreneurship is likely to be the key influence to the entrepreneurial propensity for designers. The older and more experienced designers are
more likely to start a business venture, as they have reached a “turning point in their career” and gave them enough confidence to become business owners, either by starting a design consultancy or by their own ideas. However, if they never had the opportunity, nor was exposed to entrepreneurship, the chances of setting up a business would remain as “thought of pursuing but didn’t.” Based on the finding that “Idea Networking” skills have a positive correlation with entrepreneurial activities, “Idea Networking” skills may be the key to increase exposure to entrepreneurship among designers.

In the next chapter, I will be comparing the findings between the two primary researches and secondary research to draw a final conclusion for my thesis.
Chapter 9: Research Conclusion

9.1. Chapter Overview

In the last three chapters, the findings from the Interviews and Survey have been discussed.

From the interviews, we have learned that there is value for designers to learn about business, even if they are not aspiring to be founders. Good designers cannot have a limited view about design and its contributions. This limited view about design and lack of confidence to business are the main internal designer-specific barriers to entrepreneurship. This is multiplied by the lack of business knowledge and the unwillingness to overcome the differences in the startup world. Designers with ‘empathy’ may be advantageous for a founder; however, that is not sufficient. They need to learn how to balance between business and design. Designers at a founder level should be able to do so, and these are competencies that are similar to those of a UX designer.

The surveys showed that designers agree that UX designers have the potential to be good entrepreneurs. While UX designers are known to be able to validate the market with user research, there is a need for UX designers to use both qualitative and quantitative research, instead of preferring one over the other. Additionally, business literacy is also significantly emphasized as what a UX designer needs to learn to be a founder. According to the innovative premium test, designers are innovative in general. The higher the innovative premium, specifically “Idea Networking” behavioral traits, the
greater for the designer to potentially become an entrepreneur. The survey also showed that the absence of exposure to entrepreneurship has an impact on designer’s entrepreneurial propensity, and improving “Idea Networking” behaviors might be a way to increase entrepreneurial exposure.

In this chapter, the research conclusions will be categorized into three sections: Contributions of Designers as Founders, What Designer Needs to Learn as a Founder and Motivations and Barriers to Entrepreneurship. The conclusions will be drawn from the secondary research discussed in the earlier part of this thesis, followed by the findings from the interviews and survey.

The chapter will end with the proposals recommended based on the findings, and the implications of Why Design Needs Startups.
9.2. Contributions of Designers as Founders

9.2.1. Meeting Market Demand

As discussed in the secondary research, Chapter 2: Startups and Design, startups need design to have a competitive edge. According to Steve Blank, who is a serial entrepreneur and Stanford consulting professor, the ideal startup team consists of a hustler, a hacker and a designer. The traditional combination of a hustler and hacker is no longer sufficient.

Consumer expectation has risen very much, as compared to the first time we use dialed-up connection for the Internet. Today, consumers will not expect a web page to load more than 7 seconds. Everything is trying to capture consumers’ attention, and the quality of products just keeps getting higher and higher. Since the majority of startups have products that are fully or partly digital, design has become an important differentiator in the competitive market.

9.2.2. Champion for Users

User engagement is the key to product success today, and good designers have the ability to champion for users. Both interviews and survey supported this.

The interviewees listed “emotional connection with users”, having “empathy” and ability to create “good product experience or value” as the advantage of a designer founder. Additionally, the survey showed that “Making a product useful” and “human-centered design” are the top 2 contributions of a User Experience designer as a founder.
9.2.3. Different mindset for business

A study showed that over the last 15 years, design-centric companies yield 228% more returns than non-design centric companies. Designers have a “different mindset in running business”, as shown from the interview, thus giving them an advantage to creatively “design a company” from management to culture.

The innovative premium test showed that designers are innovative. If an individual with a high innovative premium were to lead a company, the overall innovative premium of the company would be higher, leading to a higher chance of success, according to Dyer et al. The higher in management the innovative people are, the more innovative influence they have on the company. Since designers are generally with high innovative premium, their influence on the innovative premium of a company would be greater if they are higher in management within the company. As a founder, designers will be able to influence a company innovatively. Additionally, the survey ranked “facilitate the generation of innovative ideas” as one of the top 3 contributions of a UX designer can contribute.

9.2.4. Bootstrap and Prototype

Designer are also known to have the ability to bootstrap and prototype, according to both interviews and survey. This means that having a founder or co-founder that is a designer would benefit the startup financially while not sacrificing product quality. This is especially important to a startup at the early stage.
However, not all designers are suitable to be founders. In the next section, the competencies required of a designer founder will be discussed.
9.3. What Designer Needs to Learn as a Founder

9.3.1. Champion of Users is not Enough

Having empathy does not mean better validation process, or being user driven is not the sole factor for the success of a company. While empathy is an advantage that a designer founder has, without understanding the business side, the founder will not be able to contribute or translate the insights into business opportunity. The lack of understanding in business and designer’s limited view in design is a major disadvantage for designers who wish to pursue entrepreneurship. In order for design founders to succeed, they have to know when to let go of their ego, learn business literacy, and learn to balance between the two.

9.3.2. Learn the skills of User Experience Designer

In the previous section, knowing how to be champion of users is one of the contributions of a designer founder. However, the interview shows that not all designers know research, even though they are mostly seen as people with great empathy with users.

In Chapter 3: Designer Founders, we have discussed that there are certain qualities that are required of a designer founder, and not all designers are suitable to be founders. A designer founder needs to champion for users, but still able to balance between business objectives, needs to see a bigger picture, and does not limit their knowledge to just design. This is also reflected in the interviews. Interestingly, these
qualities required of a designer founder are also found in a good User Experience Designer.

The survey further validated this discovery of the parallel skill sets between a User Experience Designer and an Entrepreneur. Survey respondents defined User Experience Designers as a designer who designs experience through products/services and interaction design, by conducting user research and balancing different factors, for the purpose of providing positive/meaningful/emotional experiences and good product usability and enhancement, mainly for users and secondarily for companies/businesses. This is similar to the competencies of the User Experience Designers discussed in Chapter 4: User Experience Design, and the qualities required of a designer founder.

Therefore, designers who are aspiring founders should learn the skills of a UX Designer.

9.3.3. Build Business Literacy

However, UX designers need to learn how to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve true market validation. They also need to avoid being overly user-driven. The survey shows that UX designers need to learn about business/revenue models, profit and loss, finance, and leadership skills. A respondent cited, “UX designers make good product managers, but a business is not only about product.” Therefore, while UX designers have similar skill sets needed of an entrepreneur, they still need to build their business literacy.
9.3.4. Cultivate Idea Networking Behavior

Higher Innovative Premiums, specifically “Idea Networking” skills, are found among designers who have started any business ventures, and designers who have started a startup based on their own idea have the highest. This showed a positive co-relation between “Idea Networking” skills and Entrepreneurial Activities. Interestingly, UX designers have higher “Idea Networking” skills than non-UX designers. While correlation does not equal to causation, “Idea Networking” skills is still an important skill for designers who want to be founders.

According to Dyer et al., ways to cultivate “Idea Networking” include expanding the diversity of network (not limiting to just design), attending networking events, and cross-pollinating ideas with different types of experts.
9.4. Motivations and Barriers to Entrepreneurship

From the interviews, the main barriers to entrepreneurship that are specific to designers are designer’s limited view in design and lack of confidence to venture out of traditional design. On the other hand, the survey showed that the lack of exposure to entrepreneurship is the key influence to the entrepreneurial propensity for designers. The interviews concluded internal barriers, while the survey concluded an external barrier. I would conclude that both barriers are related.

“Limited view in design” and “lack of confidence to venture out of traditional design” are both internal barriers that could be a result of the “lack of exposure to entrepreneurship” or other external factors such as design education. From the interviews with the designer founders, none of them wanted to be an entrepreneur when they have graduated from design school. Their motivations came from their “desire to solve problems” and realization that they needed “more control to do good design.” The survey also listed “Individual Control for Work” and “Creation of Own Idea/Vision” as one of the most common reasons for starting a business.

However, a designer will more likely develop this desire for “Individual Control” after working for a corporate or design consultancy. Both survey and interview showed that designers are more likely to start a business after they have started working. The survey showed that designers who are older or more experienced, their tendency to start a business gets higher. Additionally, older designer founders are more likely to found a company based on their own idea. This is likely because younger designers are less confident of pursuing their own idea, as shown from the interview that designers “lack
confidence to venture out of traditional design.” However, without the exposure to entrepreneurship, designers will not have the desire to even co-found a company, whether it is based on other people’s idea or their own idea. They would more likely start a design consultancy based on their desire for “Individual Control.”

Therefore, I could infer that designers are trained to have a limited view in design, and that general education has affected the perception that curatives may not be good at numbers. The exposure to entrepreneurship is, thus, vital to the expanding designer’s limited view about design.

In the next section, I will discuss the recommendations based on my research findings.
9.5. Proposal

Based on my findings that User Experience Designers have similar skill sets as entrepreneurs, my first proposal will be to encourage designers from any background to become more like UX designers, to think and act more like them in terms of their ability to handle different aspects while still being champion of users, to know how to conduct research to support their design, to think strategically, and design from a bigger perspective.

Today, good design is no longer limited to just the product. At a strategic level, the ecosystem of the channels that connect the company and their consumers are considered. Everything is intentionally designed strategically to make a holistic ecosystem. Therefore, learning to design from a bigger picture is beneficial even if the designer is not pursuing entrepreneurship. For designers who do choose to pursue entrepreneurship, learning to be more like a User Experience designer is important, as those are the skill sets that designers need to become a founder. This would also mean to cultivate better “Idea Networking” skills to broaden one’s perspective about design, as proposed in section 9.3.4, Cultivate Idea Networking Behavior.

User experience designers have the advantage of transferring their skill sets to entrepreneurship, but they still need to learn how to create business revenues/models. This leads to my second proposal, which is to encourage all designers to learn basic business literacy. Designer Founder B from my interviewees said, “Everywhere you work; it’s always a business, even a design consultancy. It’s definitely beneficial for a designer to learn about business even if they don’t want to set up a company.”
Understanding basic business literacy would be beneficial to all designers to become a better designer, or UX designer, even if they do not want to pursue entrepreneurship. Additionally, building business literacy will also assist in “Idea Networking” activities.

Thirdly, I would propose to utilize startups as a platform to build business literacy. Business classes are foundations to theories of business, but insufficient to truly understand the decisions needed to put a product in the market. In addition, designers learn through hands-on experiences. Therefore, working with startups are a great way to experience the process of putting a product in the market.

This partnership can be done in several ways:

- Class collaboration with real-world startups (A course-credit for student designers to be paired up with startups in accelerator programs)
- Workshops or meetups programs pairing student and professional designers with startup founders
- Design internships at startups

All of these are examples of trying to bring more exposure of entrepreneurship to designers, so that they are aware that this is an option. Even if they choose not to pursue entrepreneurship after the experience, it would have been a great platform to understand real-world product development process, and also have a portfolio piece that is developed for the market.
9.6. Why Design Needs Startups

Having a “limited view about design” and not knowing business literacy are detrimental even for a designer who is not going to be a founder. Design Expert A from my interview said, “The very definition of design is changing. Design and the word designer, is a very misunderstood term… When somebody defines themselves as a designer, (but) it’s very hard to describe what you are doing. We (Designers) bring great things to live, but what does that really mean? We (try to use) artefacts to define what we are all about, but the definition of design is not about it at all. Design is about change. Designer is about being a facilitator, a negotiator… Design is more of a conduit to get to an end result, and the end result is something about change … and designers enable change to happen. It’s not about making an artifact. (Design is) a mindset and approach, rather than a craft. The craft, the ability to make things, is part of it.”

Today, every design should have a purpose, and being completely user driven and not understanding business would not make practical design, much less impactful change that is advocated by Design Expert A. Designer Founder B also mentioned, “Everywhere a designer’s work involved a business. A good designer needs to break out of their comfort zone and learn about business.” If designers don’t understand business, or business people don’t understand design, the difference between the two will only get bigger. Therefore, all designers should learn basic business literacy, and more so for designer founders.

Having more design-centric businesses would definitely benefit designers, as they are being better appreciated in these companies. However, it is not easy to make business
people to think like designers. Allen Enrique, formerly a designer at 500 startups, and currently a founder of designer fund, a VC that invests in startups with designer founders, said after realizing how thinking like a designer could benefit businesses, he tried to conduct workshops for business people to think more like designers. It only led him to frustrations because it’s not easy to change someone’s fundamental mindset. He found out that it’s easier to teach and encourage designers to become entrepreneurs instead, and, therefore, founded Designer Fund.

There is a need for intervention to allow non-designers to learn more about design, and one of the ways is through design’s involvement as a designer founder instead of an employee. Instead of waiting for non-designers to understand design, the initiative should be taken by designers to advocate for a more design-friendly culture. As Startup Expert B from my interview said, “Designers should learn ‘the art of making noise’.” In order to build a more design-friendly culture in the business world, design needs startup as the platform for designers to participate as founders, and also for designers to build their business literacy.

Startups are great platforms to learn about business literacy and entrepreneurship in the shortest time, due to their fast product shipping cycle. This is beneficial on multiple points:

- Designers are able to understand the different factors needed to ship a product.
- Designers get the real hands-on experience they needed to be exposed to entrepreneurship.
• Thus, giving them the opportunity to evaluate their propensity/potential for entrepreneurship.

• Startups also have the opportunity to learn about design through this collaboration with designers

In addition, Demirkaya speculated that by 2020, there will be more entrepreneurs than employees (Demirkaya 2014). Entrepreneurs in this case refer to any business owners, freelancers, and even contractors. While Demirkaya’s definition of entrepreneur differs from the definition used in this thesis, the overarching trend is that people will take charge of their own career even more. Therefore, learning about business literacy and entrepreneurship would definitely benefit designers.
Chapter 10: Next Steps

The research conducted in this study may not represent the design or startup communities throughout the United States. Certain communities, like the Silicon Valley or New York City have much more vibrant startup community as compared to Mid-West Columbus, Ohio. As such, the relationship between the design and startup community may be significantly different across the different communities. This would also mean that designers may experience different barriers or motivations for entrepreneurship depending on the maturity of the startup community. Regardless, the conclusion that startups and design need each other still applies regardless of the community. A potential future study in this topic could be a more specific study based on a startup community.

The primary research has significantly lesser non-designers than designers as participants. While more secondary research is conducted to fill the gap, the results concluded from this thesis may be biased. In addition, the number of interviewees and survey respondents may not be statistically significant. Thus, a larger and more balanced study can be conducted.

The Innovative Premium Test that was used in this thesis is based on the preliminary test developed in 2008 (J. H. Dyer, Gregersen, and Christensen 2008). The Innovative Premium Test today is much more refined and advanced. Therefore, the Innovative Premium reported in this thesis may not be as accurate. The conclusions drawn from this thesis still showed potential for deeper investigation. Just two months
ago, in September 2014, Christensen published his fourth book in the Innovators series – *Innovator’s Method: Bringing the Lean Start-up into Your Organization* (Furr, Dyer, and Christensen 2014). This showed the connection between innovation and startup. A future study could be to collaborate with the authors of the Innovators series on the connection between innovation, design and startup.
Last Words

As the thesis comes to an end, the realization of what I have learned and how much more I need to learn makes me really excited. The journey has just only started for me. I hope this thesis has sparked an interest in entrepreneurship for designers. Thank you.
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Appendix A: Interview Transcriptions

Designer Founder A

How did you come up with the idea of your app?

I came up with the idea in school, and it kind of just stuck with me. I was, you know, I had been gardening for a couple of years and I tend not to take gardening too seriously, their kind of just like experiments and if I fail I'm like eh. But I was looking for something like my app, this would have been three and a half years ago now, and there were and there still are gardening apps out there, but they're just kind of lame. Some of them are actually, just like they link you to Wikipedia. I'm like well that's cheating, you're not doing the research yourself. So I kind of just kept thinking about it and started sketching, approached my professor, who liked the idea and it just you know design comps happened and people started getting interested. I graduated with that project, and that was the main piece of my portfolio and everybody really gravitated toward it, so we started talking to business people.

What led you to the top of entrepreneurship?

Yeah, like I said it was, I had an idea, people gravitated towards it. I think I was also really good at. Before I went to design school, I actually worked in sales. I did like fashion merchandising and visual displays for years, and so I think I already have liked a good sense of like, sales for products and relevant products and experiences.

So when you're doing something like a gardening app, I just kept thinking about, so if we're doing the planting pieces, why can't we also get people to write products that they need throughout this entire process. Whether it's the seeds, or the tools, and I think that when I started to really build out that idea and explore ways to monetize through the app. That's when I got other entrepreneurs interested in the idea, and then with the partnership that we formed.

I just kind of like, I never thought that I would have my own company, I never though, I kind of despised the word entrepreneur, because people use it so much, like really despise the word startup, because it's just you know, so trendy right now, and it just sort of fell on my lap. I don't regret anything, I love it, it's fun.

I kind of wish I had a couple more years of actual design agency experience before this happened. You know, I went to design school when I was a little older, and it was a really quick transition, from four years of design school, graduation, and I had a job at a large agency here in town. I was only there for fourteen months, and I quit to do my app, and I just feel like, I am doing things really fast, and I feel like I might have missed out on some experiences, like learning from other people at the agency. I mean it was fine, what I did, it was great, but I tend to work really well with other people and learning from them, and I feel like I could have used a couple more years of that. You know, if that makes any sense at all, like I'm totally fine to get things done, but it's, yeah, it's really fast.

So, how did you start the partnership with your co-founders?

The partnership, it was a pretty easy decision to make because my co-founder heavily supported the idea. He was responsible for introducing me to the other partners. And then the other two partners really, really...
and it's funny because I actually pitched to my other two partners and they denied us. But then they kept
thinking about the idea. Like I said, the app is a really sticky idea. People like keep thinking about it. And
they came back to us and they were like "maybe there's another way we could work this around and, you
know, we don't really feel comfortable investing in your app but let's help you out." But then those two,
both (my business partners), were responsible for getting me in touch with (a huge gardening company).
So, with that relationship, and them establishing that, and their support, the four of us all just kind of
created the partnership together. And really it was just like because they were so passionate about it. And
you know they were responsible for the (huge gardening company) portion, which was so far our only
source of funding right now.

**So, how has your background as a designer affected you in your decision to start your company.**

Background as a designer. I think that it's... I'm trying to think and formulate my thoughts. I'm really, really
good and it's because of my formal design education is thinking things all the way through to the end and
planning ahead.

And all designers are wonderful with deadlines. You know that, right? So, that's a really great quality to
have because you, start-ups you have to establish your own deadlines. And if you don't, it's very easy to let
things start to pile up and then things slip through the cracks, so it's very much like, you have to constantly
stay busy and monitor yourself. I don't really have that problem. I'm actually really good at. I avoid
deadlines by getting things done early. [laughs] Which is another good trait of a designer.

But when you're working with people that are mostly business focused and who constantly think blue sky.
Being a designer, you have to think about what is actually attainable and what's real. And I feel like
between the blue sky talk and me being like "Guys, we have to think about it this way." Or you're way
too ahead, we meet at a spot where we can actually still be innovative but get stuff done. And it is nice to
have control over the branding of course and the design. Like, I do all of it. And with that also, you know,
so the guys that focus on business, and talking to them and figuring out marketing strategies and stuff like
that which I also do now. So, [laughs] yeah.

**So do you think there is a certain advantage or disadvantage for your background as a graphic designer,
if, when you want to start your own business?**

Yeah, there is. I have zero business experience. Getting in a room with a bunch of people who talk about
VC, angel investors, equity, all of those business conversations. It's very intimidating. I'm still learning.
You just have to ask a lot of questions. Actually, I haven't even been that good about that lately and I need
to start doing that more. I probably just need to pick up a business book, too. Like, "Business for
Dummies" [laughs] It is really easy just to avoid that stuff, too. And that's not the best option, I found out.
Because you have to constantly be in touch with the business side, and what they're doing, and what they're
planning or sometimes ideas don't align.

**Is there a special, is there, do you think that the way you run the company is kind of different from other
entrepreneurs?**

I don't know. I haven't really been involved with too many other like, on-site start-ups. And from what I
gather it's pretty much how you, how it works with start-ups is that you just constantly get stuff done. Like,
you can work any hours of the day and just as long as you get stuff done. That's how we roll. I prefer a
casual environment and culture in the office. So far, the team that I've built, I have one full time employee,
she was actually my friend, I got to hire her. We have three interns now and it's just a culture of getting
stuff done and being casual and I think that's what most startups are like too, from what I gather.
What do you think if there's a designer who wants to actually start up their own company, what do you think would be the thing that they need to learn, the first thing?

Are we talking strictly about a startup product-based? I would do research into the business side first and foremost. It's something that I know in design school and usually if you do art agencies, you're not really attached to that portion either.

There's a lot of stuff that you need to learn about partnerships and equity and board members and it's very easy to get thrown in your face. Before you know it, you're sitting in a room with an advisory board that your CEO put together and you look across the table and you're like "These are all old white men, what do they have to do with my app?" I wasn't involved with that process and so I didn't have any influence about who those advisors were going to be, so there's things like that that you need to think about and make sure that you're influencing the right decisions so you don't end up sitting at a table where you're the only girl with a bunch of old white men. Does that make sense? I don't know if you want to put that in your thesis or not.

If you have an idea and it's solid and there are people there that will support you, by all means, pursue. It's a great experience, if anything. I don't want to - tone it down by just saying that the ride of a startup is awesome and I feel very fortunate and I'd like other people to experience that too. So yeah, you just have to be on the business stuff.

mainly it's learning more about business. How about the technical side of it, the engineering side?

You need to learn how to build the right team, you need to bring on the right people. We've gone through a couple developers. There's also - part of the business thing is that you have to establish rules. I do design strategy, creative strategy. We have a chief technology officer and he is the liaison for the developers, he keeps the developers happy. We have another project manager who works between, so it's me and Leah and Leah is my copy writer. Well, she's like content, research, everything. He helps bridge the gap between our work and the developer's work. So, it's the right team. It's not always perfect.

A really good point about startups that a lot of people don't consider is that you can get things done very quickly. It's me, I'm making the decision, I say "Do this" and then the developer does it. There's no level hierarchy of approval process. We can get it done very quickly, which is really nice and I think getting a team that is able to do that and participate that way is solid.

So you were saying that you outsource a developer or do you have -

We cannot afford to bring one on-board right now, but we do have several dedicated developers that we actually contract through another company.

What do you think would be the advantage of having either designer or developer on-board as part of the founding team?

It's always better to have full time, committed people. I've worked on projects that outsourced development and it's very difficult, especially with them being halfway around the world. And, just, being able to have a room of people working together, and being able to bounce ideas off of each other constantly, and having more of an agile work environment is the best way for a startup. It's like the only way for a startup. Because if I had to wait three months for a turnaround on an update to the app, that would not be a good time.

And as for design, I think it would probably work the same. If you're going to bring a designer in, you really need to bring somebody in who's close to the brand, who at least understands the brand. It's very
easy to—especially with gardening. . . The gardening—most of the stuff out there about gardening isn’t very
trendy or hip or . . . They still cater to like the 50 year olds. I mean, outside of like Martha Stewart and like
Real Simple and there’s a couple good brands like that that do have a gardening aspect about them, and it’s
really easy to dive into this cheesy gardening thing. So, for example, we had a PR agency doing all of our
social media stuff for us, and they were creating assets and posting it on Facebook for me and my company.
And they just had it wrong. There were all these cheesy sayings and like, you know, pictures of like flowers
and plaques, and just like, I was like—My 58 year old mom would love this. My app is for younger people.
Like, I want younger people in college to start gardening. And so, if they don’t understand the brand and
the message and the tone and the overall general vision of the company, it can lead to stuff like that. And
then you end up with no one’s on your Facebook page, and you have to yell at people [laughs].

So how do you aligned this misalignment between, you know, the brand and your- Because, at a stage,
the startup needs to outsource a lot of things. So, what would be your strategy in this?

I would get as much information out there (to my consultants) as possible. I would do a clear direct line of
‘Yes’s and ‘No’s. Do this, do not do this. The more straightforward, you know, a lot of people don’t like
that kind of messaging upfront, especially if you bring someone aboard, you’re ‘do this, don’t do this.’ It’s
really just, you don’t want to have to do things twice. And . . . I’m trying to think what else. And, if you do
see something that’s not aligned to your vision, just immediately adjust it. Otherwise, it will build, and
then- Yeah, part of the startup culture is that like you really have to be open and honest and very fast. And
sometimes that means you just have to tell people ‘No.’

So you also mentioned that your main role is on the design strategy part. Could you describe more about
that, like what you do?

Yeah, so, I say design strategy and not just creative- I’m sorry. I say creative strategy and not necessarily
design strategy because there’s so much more than that. Like, you wear so many hats [laughs]. Currently,
what I do is any UX updates to the app. Or, you know, next week we’re launching our iPhone app. . . It’s,
anything that you see visual on the app, I did it. It was me. I also, you know, I’m responsible for the
photography. Any of the social things that you see out there: if it’s posts on Facebook, if it’s the Facebook
cover photo, if it’s the blog images, email templates, all of that. So that’s just all the visual facing stuff, but
it’s also the strategy of- I truly believe content first, so the creative strategy involves working with my
copywriter, coming up with a strategy, that she then writes the copy. I support her copy with images. And
it’s kind of the sloop of all things creative for a product, that’s what I do. We just came up with, you know,
a really great campaign to kind of support a lot of our social media efforts for the next two months. And,
you know, that’s like coming up with a new tagline and a new hashtag, and…A marketing campaign where
it gets-

I mean, if you would have asked me a couple years ago, before we really started building the company, I
would still say ‘creative strategy,’ because even at that point, where I was with the product after graduation,
I did all the UX work, figured out how it would work. And a lot of that we’re still using today, which is
awesome. Like, the strategy of how the plants would like interact and behave with you and what kind of
messaging you would get at the right times. Like, that’s all still very much a part of the app, and that was
like the original just like core functionality foundation of the app- was all me. The whole brand. Yeah. It’s
the whole brand. You have to look directly at the tone of voice. And, yeah.

And your alternative is to work creative strategy instead of design strategy, because-

Because, yeah. (Creative Strategy)It’s all encompassing. Yeah. I also write blog posts. So, you know, it’s,
yeah. Maybe brand strategy is probably a little common term for it. But, because . . . I think of my brand
more as the app not the actual logo and stuff like that. It’s the product, so that’s why I call it creative.
because there is a preconception of what is a brand and what is design. Could you just give a brief
definition of what you think design is and what you think brand is and what you think creative is?

So, I would actually put creative and brand together, because it’s the overarching umbrella with everything
underneath of it. The brand, the logo, the products, the UX experience, the tone of voice, and all of that.

The design strategy would be strictly visual. I think in my head, that’s how I focus it. I may be totally
wrong about that. But I’m not just a designer . . . [laughs] At all. Sometimes I go a week without touching
Photoshop, which makes me sad because I really like Photoshop, but- [laughs].

But have you used any of your like process, the design process you learned in school? Or any skills you
learned in school, and you apply it onto things outside of design?

Yeah, I mean, it’s weird, so like when I went to my undergrad I knew that I wanted to focus on things
like digital design, and their undergrad program doesn’t really do that. So that’s when I became friends
with my professor/co-founder, because I had talked myself into getting into some of his graduate courses
[laughs].

Actually, I had an interned nationwide, and learned a lot from them and their organization skills to execute
digital. And I used a lot of the stuff that I learned from there which is very methodical, very slow. I take
their process, and I speed it up 20 percent. And, you know, the organization, the thought process, you
know, listing everything out, weighing the options.

So when startups are based on milestones So you set up milestones which are just like deadlines for certain
completions. And, you know, weighing in what it’ll take to complete this? Is it worth it? Is it worth our
time? What are our users asking for? What are they expecting? Which is, the whole user acknowledgement
and testing thing is probably more what I learned from graduate courses, not necessarily- It applies to the
undergrad too when it comes to usability and accessibility, with like type and like being able to read things.
Yeah, all of that comes into play.

I don’t think a self-taught designer would be able to do what I do. And there are many self-taught
designers. My husband is one of them. He can probably do what I do but he’s been doing it for 15 years.
But, having to juggle and balance all the different creative things that you have to do . . . I’m definitely
thankful for my experience in school.

you think it would be a difference between the kind of like bigger picture strategy that you can apply

I don’t know. It really just depends on the person. I know some self-taught designers who have a very
narrow focus. And that’s totally fine. They’ve found what they want to do and roll with it. You can’t have
that narrow focus.

You kind of have to - I talk about it with some of my friends who are professionals and there's this concept
of a unicorn designer, a very rare person who can wear multiple hats, who's a great designer, who
understands UX design, who understands usability factors, who can design a beautiful website but also do
the wireframes, who possibly could even jump into coding. I don’t code but I understand it enough that I get
along with developers really well, that's, the type of person that does really well in a startup.

Do you think that if you want to be a startup founder, you have to be more towards that unicorn type
than the design agency type of design?
I think so, definitely. If you're going to be a founder in a startup and all you can do is design, I don't think you're going to get very far. Obviously you can learn and you're learning through experiences and that's fine but that's something that you - I don't think that there could be any design founder who only just does design. Unless they have this amazing team that can do everything else. If you're a designer, you do design, you don't do wireframing, you don't do any of that other stuff, you would have to bring in that information architect, you would have to bring in a content strategy person, you'd have to bring in a marketing person. If you have the money, do it. I don't know too many startups that launch that way with that little of money.

**How often do you see design founders like yourself?**

I know of one designer founder, I've never met her. I can't really think of anybody else. Have you met a lot of people in your process?

**Yeah, it's more of the bigger companies. When I read up about design founders, I know Pinterest, Square, the more famous ones. I'm just curious about how often you can find one**

It's interesting. Designers are going to take over the world if they keep putting out amazing products.

I like your topic and I like the fact that there is - people are finally realizing that designers deserve more than just sitting behind the computer designing all day, that we actually think and we're smart and are already kind of running your lifestyle because somebody designed everything around you, but it's just putting them more in the front of the company is nice. We think differently too, than most people.

**Why do you think designers have this kind of advantage?**

It's because of how we think. When it's very much related to - design is constant problem solving and if you don't have a problem to solve I think that you're doing it wrong. I think that's a quote somewhere from someone. You go from somebody who, on the business side, who is focused just on making money, you have to think about "Okay, our problem is that we need to make money. How, as a designer, in my abilities, do I contribute to that?" It's the problem solving capabilities of designers that make us awesome at running businesses.

I also think that people, human interaction and understanding plays really well in both the product that you're developing, because a lot of people don't really have that ability to really understand accessibility and human interaction. But also, I think it creates a really good work environment too when you have a grasp on that kind of stuff.

**Would you say that it would be applying what you have learned as a designer onto every other aspect, not just strictly -**

Yeah. Simple stuff. Like, the office I worked at was freezing and we spent a couple of days figuring out how to make the room warmer. It was like, "Alright, attach a fan to the light, bring in this thing and get the air circulating more." It's casual and it's fun and you just figure stuff out.

**Would you say that designers make good entrepreneurs?**

The right designer, the right mindset, you can't ever narrow your focus, so anybody who thinks more in restrictions instead of possibilities I feel like wouldn't be able to make it.

**In design school, they teach you to think of more possibilities, like blue sky, but it turns out that some designers want to narrow their focus so it conflicts with what they were taught.**
I know a lot of designers who - I don't know a lot of designers, strike that, and the people I'm talking about are older, but when you get used to doing the same thing over and over again, that's bad. It narrows your scope.

The blue sky thing is tricky because you have to be careful talking to investors when you're blue skying. I like to have more concrete ideas. I'd rather present one really doable, amazing idea than spend an hour blue skying with somebody who's possibly going to be interested investing in my company because I also, at the same time, like to make sure I can deliver what I can. I hate it when agencies and people over-promise and you cannot do that in startups. But sometimes things just don't work out and you're like "Oh man, we can't do that." That's fine, but that's the process of blue skying and narrowing it down.

**Do you think designers can do this blue skying thing and narrowing it down into certain things - do you think that it's something that is kind of missing from the business people?**

I think so and it depends on the person. My CEO is really good at blue skying, that just means that he talks a lot though. Honestly, I don't like to just talk, I like to do things and get stuff done. If you blue sky all day and don't actually accomplish anything, there's no point.

**So the ""doing"" element is probably the most important part at a startup. What kind of startups do you think designers are more suitable or likely to startup.**

It would have to be the product-based startups. Like the app is my product, it's an actual product delivery. But it also can be a physical product, a physical good product. I'm trying to think of what else. That's exactly what all of those larger startups with design founders have, they have a really good product. It's nest and all of that stuff, they were all designers and created great products. I can't really think of any other startups that would actually fill in that blank.

There's more conceptual ideas. In Columbus medical startups are really big right now, like medical software. But I don't think a designer is really needed for a founder of a medical - they'll eventually need a designer on their staff, but.

**That is because it's a little too technical?**

I think that generally those kind of startups are started by people who have business backgrounds. Unless the startup - it depends on your idea. I think I really need to go and talk to more startups because I don't really know how they're structured, where they're farming their work or anything like that.

**From my research, it shows that there are a lot of different ways you can get an idea, so it could be a random problem that is based on your everyday life or it could be an insight that you get because you're certain in the industry for several years and you get some very special insight. Or it could be somebody who intentionally started to look out for an idea to startup, so those are people who wants to startup.**

And look for ideas, or they just start off brainstorming what other possible ideas are out there and start listing them down. So depending on this, maybe designers are more suited for something that requires less of an expertise, more general education.

**Have you heard of the design executive officer?**

It's a term that is coined by this author and the title of the book is ""The Rise of the DEO,"" design executive officer. She's essentially proposing this new style of leadership and using the design process and design thinking into the whole process(?)
Where would this design executive officer fit in the ranks of CEO, CTO?

She feels that it is still a CEO but it's more of the style of leading, it's more of a designer. What do you think when you hear the word DEO, what's the first thing that you think of?

The first thing I think is I always think that labels are BS. I know that they're necessary for the formality portions of it, but although I do have to say that I was really excited to get to put "co-founder" next to my name on something. To me, the co-founder portion was a lot more fun than VP or anything like that.

My goal would be to work and create at the office a culture where labels don't matter. I know people who work like that. It's unfortunate because some people are like "Well, I've been doing the same thing for a long time," that's the one downfall of ignoring labels. Instead of you being a senior designer, now you're an art director. If everybody is equal, then...

So you're thinking that labels, being the same type of expertise doesn't matter, all designers are designers kind of thing?

I would like to work in an environment like that. I know that there are reasons why companies have to keep people under certain buckets, whether it's like pay bands or just the hierarchy of how stuff works. But I do like the idea of a design executive officer, DEO.

What do you think about the term "design"? When you think of the label design executive officer, do you have a preconception of what the term design actually means?

I would consider that to be - if I'm just lifting design out of that, it would be the visual brand and the design and the culture and the tone of voice of it, because design goes further than what we think of design. Design is also you're designing a company and all of that.

So, if you want to summarize, like what is the main thing that designers can contribute to startup?

I think the main thing is, in my situation, it’s problem solving skills, and very quick turnaround, and decision making, and deliverables. And also, what we were talking about, somebody who’s capable of doing design, doing UX experiences, able to do the wire frames, and also communicate with the rest of the team efficiently.

A lot of designers aren’t very- Developers are worse. But designers can get really just, like, in their head all the time, and you have to- you can’t do that, at all. You have to be very, you have to communicate, and you have to know where everything is and what people are doing.

So basically, not live in their own world of what design is, but to be flexible.

Yeah, I mean yeah. It’s flexible. If I didn’t know exactly what Leah, my copywriter was working on, she and I wouldn’t get anything done. Because she would be working on something, and I would be working on something, and several points would be overlapped. Maybe it’s just like the- you have to be really great at working with a team too. Some designers are not good at that either.

Work in a team that doesn’t consist of just designers?

Right. Yeah. . . You have to know how to talk to everybody.

So are you- Did you actually are somebody who can work with people, or did you learn to become like that?
I’ve always preferred teamwork better. I really like collaboration, and I think that if you have the right people in the room, you can have better ideas, and you have better work. I did freelance for like three weeks, right after graduation, and I just hated it. I was like, ‘I don’t know if I like this.’ I didn’t have anybody around me to ask. It was like- [laughs] Yeah, so.

... a salesperson. And, you have to kind of sell yourself a little bit and your idea better. I don’t know, I’m just rambling at this point. But I don’t know why there’s not more designers in startups. Have you talked to anybody in San Francisco about all of this? Any of the smaller-

But I’ve talked to some people like from Tech Columbus, and they were saying that they need designers in their startup team, because you want to implement design right at the starting.

But apparently there are not a lot of this design founders.

There are a lot of reasons, like people are evaluating. Like, why? Some of them are saying that because designers don’t want to associate themselves with that quality work at the beginning. Because of that. And another thing would be like they just want to do ‘design’ design, and a startup environment can’t do that.

Exactly. Yeah. I’m kind of like- I’m preparing myself for the day where I have to distance myself from Sprout to take on leader responsibilities. I’m totally going to have, like, separation anxiety. The day someone’s like, ‘OK Sarah, we’re replacing you with a designer. You have to be more of a leadership role in the company now.’ I’m going to be like, ‘But I miss Sprout!’ [laughs] But it’s fine. I mean, that’s something you have to consider in a startup, so-

But yeah, you do get separation anxiety when you’re a designer, and you get promoted, and now you’re having meetings all day. My husband is going through that right now, and he’s like, ‘I’m afraid I’m going to lose all my skills.’ And I’m like, ‘You are right. But, you’re going to develop new ones.’

Separation anxiety.

Yeah. Separation anxiety from a product [laughs]. You know, it’s really possible because I’ve been doing this for a year and a half, full-time, and you know- I guess I graduated in 2011? And started it February of 2011. So it’s been with me for a long time. It’s like a baby.
Designer Founder B

My job as a designer today...It’s the same thing, but the client may not like my work. I have to understand that that’s not personal, you know. So that’s carried over and it’s really the reason why we probably made it this far, you know. Its hard work.

**So what are the advantages or disadvantages that you have as a designer when you want to start your own business?**

I think the biggest advantage as a designer is the fact that you don’t need a whole lot. Like, when I started my consultancy it was me, a laptop, a hard drive, and a monitor. The monitor I still use today which is kind of cool, but I didn’t- I already kind of had everything, you know. What I- it was just a matter of me going out and finding the clients. So, your overhead is really low. That overhead starts to get higher the more you take on clients and have them invest in other things. And, you know, file systems, storage systems, software, contractor’s skill’ you know, education to get things done. But to get started its very minimal. Now, the disadvantage of being a designer starting your business is a lot of designers’ a lot of design curriculum isn’t structured around creating a business. It’s how to become a better designer and that’s where that’s kind of- where I’ve been spending lot of my time. And lately, I’m trying to do is blend these worlds of web design means from a - from the craft. But, also, what it means from the industry and how’how do you, you know, how do these two world come together. ‘Cause when I left as I said when I left my undergrad there was no’ there was no desire to create, you know, a business. And, there was no business classes. Because it- it just wasn’t ‘ those two worlds were separate. But, I think now they kind of bleed together a little bit more’and, and’ its- you don’t -as designers we don’t- we don’t get to the -we don’t get to have the, I guess the privilege to possibly, you know, learn some of the business things that we should. And, when we- and when we should have, I guess.

**Why do you think that is important, like learning about business?**

Yeah, ‘cause I- I think that there’s a part of every business that’s the same, you know. Like there’s the basic principle that applies to a hotdog stand or a ‘ you know, are the same principles that apply to what I do every day from a- from a business standpoint. The only difference generally, is in what that person is selling. So, if I’m selling a website, or you know somebody is selling hair cuts down the road, or somebody’s selling, you know, a SASAP, you know’ there’s -there’s a lot of similarities, you know. It’s just the thing you’re selling, I guess, is different, you know. But, you have to make sure that’ what does it mean to manage a team. And, how do you know that it’s the right time to hire, and how do you hire, and what’s the- what’s the risks of certain decisions. How do you structure proposals so people buy it, and how do you make sure your numbers aren’t, you know ‘ how do you make sure sustaining- that you’re actually earning a living plus handling all the other expenses that come along with it that. You’re not charging too little, you know. Those are things that you don’t really learn as a designer just kind of like- most people don’t even know what they should be charging as an hourly rate when it comes to taking on a side project so’ It’s hard to stay over that.

**So could you talk more about’ when you are talking about blending design and business, like, what are your strategies or what- what are the common things that are found on all the different things that you found out about the two worlds?**

Yeah, so, the’. In order to be a good designer I feel like- and I think that design; whether a webs designer, a product designer, a architect’ you have to- every- every design decision you make has a ‘ an effect. You know, when you, when you get out of school or you get in the real world. Not just an effect on the business- the company you’re working for, you- like, are you going to stay and budget if you decide to do it this way, you know. But, design is there to produce results and I think it’s easy to miss that"
**Why don’t you tell me more about the two startups that you have done?**

Yeah. So, my design consultancy, 07 end of 2007 beginning of 2008, officially it was like, we did all the paperwork in 2008 but when I graduated from college I merely started to workout a really large global design firm where I got to, it’s kind of a secret swim type of environment because it was so big you kind of have to able to come in there and just start working. I worked there for about two years and it was an enormous amount because of the environment and yeah it was kind of even to this day I’m like thrilled by that experience because I think there wasn’t for a bad experience I wouldn’t have the confidence to kind of move forward and then create the design consultancy and that just stand out first my need to take and my desire to wear a bunch of different hats, when you are in the industry and not particular environment you are allow to flex your creative muscles and things along that line but you also, you kind of stuck in a particular role because I just do so much work I mean obviously you have first specific needs. So, some of that desire to try on other hats like what it would be like to manage clients directly, what it would be like to create these proposals? Doing some of the more I guess administrative/higher level work that you don’t get to do day-to-day and when you are just kind of cast that the designer on a project.

So, that’s what kind of got the wheel spinning and then around that same time I was looking to just kind of try some different things. I at that time freelancing, four companies were really a great place, great thing to do, it seem like that was me where everybody was learning a lot because when you stuck in a role it’s hard to learn, you have to kind of force yourself to learn things and you have to do on own time. So, it waters with contracting with some other freelance like other agencies in town.

And then eventually I kind of scooped up a client and that’s kind of what, kind of pushed me over the edge, it was one client, she was in need of a branding, new brand of website she was getting ready to go out on her own. I quit a steady income you have’

It was kind of bizarre and I remember telling my wife that, ‘I’m gonna do this and it will be fine but when you take a leap like that you are just kind of, you hope everything plays out.’ It obviously did but when I left that type of that stability I guess for my design studio which eventually became a design studio I didn’t know at the time obviously it’s like, I didn’t really sat out to say I was gonna create a design studio it was more or less I was gonna take on some projects and make a living and then one thing that lead to the next I started at my apartment and then my little corner kind of bled into dinning room and then into the kitchen and then required I have to make some decisions about do we scale this outside of our home and we ended up moving into a condor that time and that’s when things started really boom when me and My wife started taking on web because at the time it was just branding more or less I didn’t have a ‘I have a very little web experience.

She didn’t have a, a very structured web I guess a class it was kind of an elective. So, what I learned it’s kind of on my own and if you have to like jump in at any point feel free.

**So, you say that you would actually left stability like you chose to leave stability for your own company like to do your own work because you have to desire to wear like different hats to play different roles.**

Yeah, yeah. I had a burning desire actually to not just wearing like the business side of being into the design industry but to really just give back my knowledge at that level to smaller businesses because that’s kind of what I first set a clients where I mean when I decided to quit this and working fulltime and create My design studio it was right when the economy was crashing.

Again, it’s something I did know what’s going to happen but that happened like months after.

So, I’m sitting and reading … other sub-shop like watching the news as the stocks are promoting and wondering if we were gonna be able to survive but I also know deep down that if I could make it through
that storm I can make it through just about anything when it came to business. So, I knew there was potential there too because unfortunately, a lot of people were being like go in their positions and they were starting to create their own businesses and that’s kind of when we scooped in and kind of made a name for ourselves around helping establish brands and web presences for a lot of small business that was just getting of the ground.

**So, you kind of seeing that, you kind of see that as an opportunity for you to survive yourself and also to help other small businesses to actually grow?**

Yeah, yeah.

**So, for the second startup that you have how did you came out of the idea?**

Yeah, yeah. So, that started, we are heading up a year mark and mid June.

So, that started again kind of very and in similar way where I wanna to build a product online that took a love that I had which is music which I still have which is music and song writing kind of a passion that I kind of put aside for design for years. So, this was my way of blending what I do this is what I love. So, I’m thinking of some needs like within the song writing space and obviously feedback is one big area of that, you can never have enough or I created the startup as a way to provide song writers with a collaborative environment online no matter where you are because a lot of cities don’t have song writing organizations. So, we have kind of stepped up and become that one stop area kind of exclusive to just getting feedback on songs before you go under a studio and record them and you find them. It’s being growing steadily maybe in a month we are constantly on the climb, we are working out with an online app and an app like that and an online community it’s always that chuckling I guess you have to have the music on there.

In order to drive the engagements so we are constantly working on ways to increase engagement and looking always to monetize and stuff like that but purely came out of a desire to wanna build something and take what I know and put in another area that we can eventually help and we are doing it everyday.

**yeah were there any difficulties or challenges when you are starting?**

Yeah, there were a lot of challenges. [Chuckle] One we sat out and we said, ‘Okay, how we are gonna build this?’ One its new category but at the same time we knew we have the ability to do it, we will obviously thinking and wanna go out and get investment because we are still proving the idea. So, the biggest challenge was deciding when you start building something.

So, we did a lot of testing early on, its ___ pages just to see what the engagement level was? So, we knew that we were going to invest our time and money into something that may not had much of a market. So, the biggest struggle was really the technical aspects of pointing together which My wife’s abilities as a developer, we just been able to keep most of it under house but the My design studio but I would say beyond technology it was was I be, would we be accepted into the space of song writers because that’s a whole another place we didn’t really fully’ As a designer I’m comfortable going to any designer and talking about design but going into another area of expertise or another I guess category like song writers, musicians, how they will accept us and oddly enough I mean we have been accepted at Nashville and we have got a lot of great connections in New York and we have been accepted surprisingly well. So, it’s been kind of increasing’
But it's hard...yeah, it's hard to ask for...I was nervous about asking for help, persay - you know, from, from them - cause you just don't know how to react. They're very secretive as I understood, so that's good.

*So, what do you mean when you say that you're nervous about asking for help? Like what kind of help?*

In that case it was just - you know - advice, you know because it was a new untraveled area for us. You know, it's like you want to make sure you're building the right thing for them. But you also don't want to, I don't ever go into a situation assuming I know everything and I'm always trying to be open minded to pulling - you know - insight and ideas from other areas, but in this case I had nowhere to start. I just had an idea - you know - but to go in there and say, "Hey, I have this idea. What do you guys think?" And - you know - we've had some really great organizations here in Columbus that's helped us out and allowed us to really just open up to their songwriters and their organizations, kind of on our - what do you want to call it - kind of a partnership, more or less. You know, they understand what we're building for them and why we're building it, so they're very transparent and open to giving us ideas. But, the fear is - you know - will you get laughed away and saying that this isn't going to be something that anybody would use. You know, [mumbles].

*Okay, so the help you are referring to is basically like market validation. You don't really know the market.....as well as your own profession and therefore you were - kind of - facing some difficulties in getting market validation.*

Yeah, yeah, that's right.

*So, what about the other business side of things? Who are your founders and what are their background? Do, do you have - like - business people you can review to?*

No, we, me and my wife keep it really simple. Like with my design studio, it's me and her. We have, and even with the startup it's me and her primarily and then we contract a lot of people in. So, we had a studio and an office a couple of years ago downtown and loved we loved it. The clients loved it. It was great, but at the same time, it was a model that we felt...strapped us, I guess? Like, tied our hands together, because we could never flex our strengths where we needed to. So like, for my design studio the model was really simple. You know, we're, me and her are the main parts of it, but then we have contractors that we bring in to help based on the project's needs to help pull it together. And it's the same thing with my startup. Like, so, for the last four months we've hired a songwriter who has a great entrepreneurial background who's helped us kind of get out there and been kind of a face for us and while we've been working on features, he's been out there building relationships with songwriters and spreading the word about what we do. So, it's kind of a...we scale as we need it.

*Oh, okay. So, when you're talking about contractors that includes...that includes a lot of things. So, how do you manage...how do you actually manage these kind of contract relationships?*

Yeah, so, that's...that's kind of fun actually. We have a handful of them all over. So, we have - you know - kind of tiered contractors. Like, we have the type of contractors that we know are going to be on our top level of pay, that we know, that are going to do the job and don't need a lot of handholding. You know? But those aren't always great we've found for when it comes to doing task work that - you know - it's just, it's not enjoyable for anybody. So, for, like, some of the smaller mundane tasks we do. Like, for instance some of the blog posts that we write on my startup have been outsourced. So, we just go through a desk or tap our network for more - I don't want to call them cheap labor, because that's not the way to put it, but - less skilled...what's the better way to put it?

*It's more mundane kind of...*
Yeah, more...easily to say, "Here's the task, just do it," versus, like those moments when you need to kinda be in the same room and building, collaborating or really getting into high level things that are hard, we've found, to just pass off to somebody or some of that smaller skilled type stuff. Like even production work for photo retouching and stuff is much easier to move it along, to use a contractor to - you know - batch it up than spending your time to do it.

Just say, "Here's a hundred images, just go at it." You know? So...

so basically, like, did you actually face any difficulties working with contractors in ensuring your brand vision or anything? Like'

That is probably the hardest thing about, you know, any time you bring somebody into your’ your world. There’s nobody’ I’ve found that nobody will fully get the picture as much as you do, and that it’s hard to’ and it kind of sounds mean, but a lot of times they don’t care about it as much as you do. So we found early on that although we think, you know’ we thought anybody who we’re going to pay is going to be in it 100 percent and going to believe everything we, you know’ they’re going to have the same passions. They don’t. Like they’re’ we found they’re protecting their livelihood and they’re making sure that their businesses are running smooth, so we found the best thing to do is accept that, know that. You know, these are just partners. They’re not co-founders or they’re not’ they don’t have any stake in our business, so it allows us to kind of keep somewhat of a distance, and we use tools like HipChat and, you know, Basecamp, Harvest and stuff like that to kind of manage’ I use Flow as well to manage the communication. You know, I’m trying to stay in front of them but’ because as soon as our communication starts breaking down, you know, like I said, you think’ you think they would have all the pieces in place, but they don’t. And we’ even me and My wife sometimes have to, you know, sync back up, you know, because what may be in my head or what may be in her head and what I may think she thinks, I guess, or knows, or assume she knows and vice versa, you know, sometimes it’s not the same thing. You know, it’s kind of like color, you know, like some people see, you know, a different shade of red when you say ‘red’, you know, so’

So how would you describe’ how do you split your job between you and your co-founder? How do you split, like how’ what’s your role and what’s your co-founder’s role?

Okay, yeah, so with the design studio, really simple. It’s kind of been carved out, so my wife handles all of the development and kind of that tech side of things. She also designs, so like, when it comes to, like, any given project, usually it’s me and her, we get together, brainstorm a solution. I usually work on the design strategy presentations, sales, higher level roles where I’m comfortable and my strengths are. And then move the project along and it usually gets to a point where it’s just kind of in implementation mode, so if it’s a website it’s just building out a website; you know, that usually is just My wife working directly with the client and just, I become more of a support role to her, making sure that she has what she needs to keep moving along. But it’s really a clear, like’ I guess clear roles there that have been just defined by our skill sets. Occasionally I’ll get into code, but usually it’s that whole thing ‘you know, you utilize what your strengths are because you’ll get much further along. And then with the startup, it’s kind of the same way. Being that, you know, my wife’s just kind of’ she’s’ this has kind of been more of a passion for me, to be a songwriter. my wife enjoys music and she’s there to kind of help build this thing out and help the vision come forward but you know, it’s generally it’s been me kind of leading and shaping where this goes, but she’s more of always been comfortable sitting in the’ in the trenches and utilizing her speed and her efficiency to get things done, so’

So I can see that you have a developer, and you yourself is a designer, and you kind of hand’ you are the person’ Are the both of you actually handling the business aspect together, or are you the one that is handling more’ most of the business aspect?

Well it’ again, it’s’ being that it’s’ we’re husband and wife, it kind if blends together. Obviously it blends together at home as well, but so’ a lot of times, like, the books and that aspect of the business is’ is kind of
what my wife does, in the sense that she makes sure that things like that are being, you know, established, and things are coming in on time, because oftentimes, you know, especially when we’re busy, I may be out in meetings or out selling. It’s hard for me to keep an eye on all the little tiny little things, but you know, she takes some time out of the month to make sure everything like that is kind of being watched at ‘you know, making sure those numbers aren’t’ they’re growing and they’re not going down. And then we’ll come together and we’ll’ we’ll sync up on things and changes we may need to make and ideas for, you know, increasing, you know, revenue or where we need to’ you know, just as much as it is important to increase revenue, a lot of times it’s important to, you know, thin down where you can as well, so we’re always kind of evaluating those things, but it’s kind of split.”

*There is somebody handling the accounting and the finance part which is’. And the business part.*

Yeah, and it is great because by nature I’m the, we are like it’s’ I’m more like, ‘Hey, we have to spend money to make money that’s the mentality.’ Like, ‘Let’s invest in this new management system over here or this new contact here but my wife is kind of that check that I need so that we make sure that we are not going below, burning the budgets in areas that we don’t really honestly new too.’ It’s gonna be a lot of pressure on us I guess in some ways because of that but we have a clear understanding like that business I like and everything else kind of separate.

*So, how do you think how has your background as a designer affected your decision to start a company?*

I think for myself I don’t have anybody in my family who is like an entrepreneur, it still like kind of a strange I think in some ways because when I graduated I had no desire to start a company.

I was just gonna work for a company, do the best designer could ever do but then I found in order for me to do the best designer and have the full control over the end products, I have to step out and take control of all those hats, I have to make sure that I have the budget rather than the industry or oh budget we can’t do this or we don’t have the budget we can’t do this or you don’t really know how to step into ends up and finally we would say, ‘Yeah, we can do this.’ So, it really just came out necessity for me to wanna do better work and control my own destiny but that’s not for everybody I wouldn’t say lot of people are just comfortable, just working and there is nothing along with that, there is nothing wrong with anybody who is willing to sit there and create work and have that security because that’s probably the biggest differences going out on your own and you just never know, how you enter, you are in charge of your own insurance, you are in charge of all of the things that companies for you.

But really being a designer for me it was creating the best work I could do and then at that time I had to go out of my own to do it, I did it, but it’s not’ I guess there is also that level of is it about the work you are doing or even what and I guess that’s gotta be separated from what you believe and stuff like that what’s your destiny is? Like the work I was doing at that company was great work I mean I can’t, I mean a great team of people that pushed each other I mean there was nothing about it but the work wasn’t there, it is just more less and I desires to wanna minimize the amount of red tape through the process I guess.

*bascially you wanna have more control?*

Yeah, yeah because I feel that’s the only way that anybody can fully breach their goals.

*Have you ever learned anything in your design education that you can actually apply in your school’ In your business?*

Yeah, the biggest thing that I have been able to pull into what I do on a day-to-day is really just didn’t, it’s my college in that environment it’s about working hard and having the dedication, the determination to reach the finish line. And that has cared through if I’To create a business whatever it is it requires a lot of
work and a lot of just checks and balances and lot of late nights and a lot of sweat and being a designer when I was in my undergrad and through that process you have to have going, you have to be okay with, in that case somebody not liking your work but when you are.

My job as a designer today, it’s the same thing but the client may not like my work. I have to understand that that’s not personal, you know? So that’s carried over and it’s really the reason why we’ve probably made it this far, you know? It’s that hard work.

You know, we'll think that it's just about creating that best, you know, product, or whatever it is. But it should move the needle somewhere in your business, and in your client's business as well. Usually you want that to be up, you know. So, with the business of design, I feel that it is just understanding that when a client is coming to you, they are not coming to you with an endless amount of cash, you know. I really used to believe, you know, it's, you know, we just build stuff. People love it, you know, it's just what I did when I was at school. There's consequences, and there's a certain way you have to talk to clients so that you truly genuinely can respect what you do as a designer and understand that what you are creating is more than just a picture, or you know, a design. It's really something that someone has invested money on to improve their business and that has to be looked at through a different lense. You know, so what I may believe, is a certain right decision based on a design trend, you know, it isn't what is always neccesarily right for that client, you know.

I need you to be aware of that stuff. So I think there is that aspect of understanding a business, but I think that it is just understand that you're one piece of a bigger picture in a company, you know. You're just...you're not just the sole designer, so you by, by understanding that, you know, you're contributing to a bigger picture of, you know, about a company's goals, what they're paying you has value to it. It is more than just a paycheck, it is actually there for more reasons, you know.

You can't always do good design because not doing all me, me designs means it's beneficial for the clients.

That's exactly it, you're right. Some of the best solutions are not always the best designs, you know.

And I think it's easy for companies in other scenarios for companies to come to us and say, hey we need a website, you know. Well do you really need a website or is that a problem they're trying to solve, but the problem usually runs deeper, they just think that a website is the solution, but a lot of times it may be just running more targeted Facebook ads and that could start turning the needle. But until you understand that it is not just about creating things that are just pretty, you can make those decisions a little bit better, you know, and have the trust that you can put solutions together.

Ok, so you think that it's not just about making it pretty, so how would you define design?

To me, I think it's just very, very similar to what I've said already. It's about communicating and solving a problem.

Design is that method that gets you there. And just as I am willing to help a client say hey I am the right person for this, I'm just as able to tell them hey I'm not the right person for this and this is exactly what you need.

So do you think that the way you run the company is different from other entrepreneur that come from a different background from you?

I'm sure there's people who run it a lot better.
Probably, you know like I said, who have, you know I guess I should say like well I used to there was like this magic formula. I used to think, well obviously once you get to a year, or two years you feel good, but it really, running a business you're learning something new everyday. Like we are constantly finding new processes. We've nailed kind of a few things down regarding proposals and we know where we need to be for certain things but each project is different. Each proposal is different. Nothing is as systematic as I thought, you know.

There's things you can, you know, put in place around process and efficiency within your team, but generally I run it based on what I see we need today. Yes I have goals, you know, that I want to hit, milestones that I want to hit, but if you can't get through today, or this week, or this month. Those things are just there as benchmarks, I guess."

A lot of times and I think maybe what I don’t know about the formal aspects of business may be in some cases a blessing. You know? Just because’

Why?

Well, I think sometimes when you know too much you start tying your own hands. You start second guessing, but I think just like good designers who have never taken a formal design education can still be great designers because they didn’t understand what the grid was. They just started designing and you know they break the grid and you kind of stumble across certain solutions. It’s that same thing with business. I think if we all stuck to the same processes, where would we all be? We’d be all doing the same thing, so if anything I am fortunate that I can kind of fly from the hip to some degree and with guidance and you know I have advisors. I mean, I have people I can go to or wingmen, I guess you could say, I go to for certain things but generally we play it as we need it.

So it’s the fact about being flexible and adapting to what’s the situation instead of just playing it off of your experience.

Yeah, and it’s marching to your own beat and that’s where early on in and you know we were chasing a lot of things we were we really felt like you know once we hit if we got an awesome office space and we started scaling up people we were just gonna be able to crank out better work, but that created its own set of struggles and now we’re creating, we have better relationships with our clients today than we did then and we are creating better work, because we are not focused on the things that don’t matter. We are actually now focusing on the things that do matter you know making sure that there’s client fit and there’s chemistry right from the beginning. Making sure that ‘hey this me trying to help you reach your goals. I am honored you want to work with us, but we’re a team and we are going to build things that work well for your company.’ and its fair on each side.

So what about fundraising process like venture capitalist and [inaudible] investors they are actually more traditional and therefore you might need more kind of a traditional experience to that.

Yeah, I love talking about it because I am honored and super excited that everything I have built. I built based it’s been boot strapped. We have taken no money, it’s our money that we have created and put into our business which then we were able to put into my startup and build it out, so we haven’t had to have to take money.

Yeah there’s days I feel like, and I think, that’s the beauty of creating a design firm and like I said you don’t need a whole lot and like there’s days I think about my startup that I do think about ‘hey what would it be like if we turned the needle up on this thing and got out there and tried to get some funding to push this further and saturate the market’, but then I look back at to what my true values are and to me it’s about connecting with everyone. So like just like I run [inaudible] I run my startup its about me knowing each of
those people that walk through there and building relationships and building trust, so I don’t have any huge desires to go down that road simply just because it may not be a fit just like you said. You know they have certain models and things they need to see. Which I totally understand why. They are putting out a lot of money and a lot things need to come together in the end and it takes business plans and stuff like that to make that happen, but for us we like to we just haven’t had the need so we have stayed away from it.

Yeah, it’s freeing, because we know what we are going to be able to do next tomorrow

**So, would you call yourself a design founder?**

Yeah, yeah.

**What actually constitutes a design founder?**

I guess for me, it’s as much as I love to design, I love building things more and I love teaching, sharing my knowledge. So the design is I guess just that thing that helps me pull this together but I really truly love building things. You know so, I struggling even like really putting a title on myself I guess because I like to design, I like to help people, I like to build and I like, you know, I just like the whole process. I like to being in control of what happens and where I guess. Not in a bad way, like, it’s not about me controlling like not like a control freak but you just like to swim in the trenches I guess. You like to see things come from a little idea and turn in to reality and branch out and grow so it’s fun to have your hands in all of it where you can.

**So would you, so how would you define like other design founders? Do they need to have a design background or do they need to go through a design school?**

Yeah, I think the design world is really great because you don’t need formal education. And I think I just think it there is so much out there and so many people willing to help and if you can work hard and you know, what you want, you could you could make it happen. You know there is plenty of money and there is plenty of clients that are ready for great solutions and there is plenty of companies who are willing to hire great designers. I never once have showed my resume or my cover letter to an employer. My initial portfolio yes, but they never asked you know hey where is your degree? You know. It was never it’s well I did I did show my resume but it’s always been about the work. If you can produce great work and build a network of people who value you, the work is there just ready for you to accept what’s right for you. But yeah, I don’t think formal education means a ton. You know obviously you got to have the basics covered and stuff like that but if a designer came up to me tomorrow and said ‘hey I haven’t stepped foot in a design classroom but here is my portfolio’ and it rocks my socks off, I mean I would hire him you know. Cause I can teach the other stuff you know. What you can’t teach is the hard work and the dedication that that’s in somebody. If they are willing to kind of cut their teeth on stuff on their own, and learn and grow as a designer independently they obviously have what it takes to work hard and they have a desire so

**So how often do you see designer founders like yourself?**

Oh, I try to communicate with them daily you know. I have a huge network of designers. We are all the same you know. You know And, you’ve met Andy. He’s a close friend of mine and I have other people who are doing web work that you know we do the same thing. I mean I feel like that’s the only way you can survive is surround yourself with either a it’s the people that you strive to be like you know because they are going kind of push you along help you out along the way. And it’s just you know I’m always surrounding myself with smarter people than me.

**So for you, you actually see a lot of design founders basically?**
Yeah, I do. I try to I wish I can do more of it, but I do try to like keep in touch with people or like have some Skype calls and stuff like that.

**So how often do you actually see designers becoming or starting out companies?**

I think there’s more designers willing to and wanting to do the freelance rout. But I think the void is ‘How do I go from’ they don’t they don’t know when to make that switch from ‘I’m a freelancer to a like a studio. And that’s kind of the similar things I am hoping to address later on with some of the things I’m working on like I want to releasing a few books. I’m releasing a book on for designers about kind of essentially everything that you don’t learn in school that you should know. And I want to do the same thing around you know taking that transition from a designer to a freelancer and then beyond because"

There’s ‘There's this moment where it's how you accept what you're doing. Like, yes i started off first the initial plunge was a freelancer but there's not a whole lot different between being a freelancer and running a business. it's just on how you position yourself and how you, what your goals and dreams are. Not saying you have to run a business you know you can always just be a single freelancer but i think a lot of times there's a lot of people taking that first leap but taking that second leap i think is a bit more scary. You know?

**Did you ever have the anxiety that you will do less design because you start doing, you start taking on too many other hats?**

Yes. Yea everybody fears that like’ that moment where you do less design. Nobody says it but what it becomes is the fear of trying to maintain your, what you believe in your work. you know? So for us to initial hire our first freelancer and kinda turn over some of that design control over to a freelancer was really tough because it was me accepting the fact that i can trust somebody else to do my work. I think its a lot easier to, and thats why we only outsource certain tasks to certain people, but when it comes to like writing code yes there's a there's a level of like craft to that and how you do it. But a lot of times that can be easily outsourced because it just is kind of the implementation part but when it comes to the larger ideas and stuff it's tough and what it's allowed me to accept, this idea of like stepping back from design is the fact that i do believe my value isn't in my design it's in my ideas its in my strategy its in my the value that i bring beyond how well i use a certain program to execute an idea. it took years for me to accept that yk and really honestly recognize that cause when you're a young designer you're, you think your value is in wow look how great i can use this program i can render things like you wouldn't believe or look how awesome i am at Photoshop but those are all things that, that's just cause thats how your graded in school. how well did you cut this photo out or how well did you come up, but in the real world, and thats that whole business aspect i was talking about is, it's all in how well you come up with ideas. the money is in the ideas not always the execution.

**So what do you think makes a good entrepreneur?**

Just the ability to work hard, stay open minded, ask for help when needed and let go of things that don't matter.

**Would you say that designers make good entrepreneurs?**

I think’ i think we do. i think we have a lot of room to grow because it really does take sometimes accepting the fact that it's not about the prettiest. i don't mean that to insult designers but i think a lot of times we put too much on this idea that every bit of design has to be pixel perfect because you have to have the projects that keep your’ you have to have those projects that aren't always the prettiest and never will see the light of day. in the sense that they won't be a portfolio piece but those are the ones that may allow
you to stay afloat when you can’t find those ones that you love and dream of haven’t come by your way in a little while.

**What kind of start ups do you think designers are suitable to start?**

I think we tend to start with what we’ve got, what we know. A lot of times it’s just gonna be hey i’m gonna start building websites on my own or doing logos on my own and i think that eventually transitions, if your in the webspace into wanting to build the product. I think now there’s a big movement around teaching.

I think it’s because there’s so much knowledge that we’ve all, like, been cooped up with that we want to start giving back, you know? So I think in some ways you can even consider that a product, you know? But ultimately it’s, I think that first step is what we’re most comfortable with.

**Cool, so what would you advise a designer if he or she wants to start their own company, what would be the first thing they would need to learn?**

Learn the, I mean, they’ll have the equipment they need so that’s not the issue. The biggest thing is knowing, it’s that whole idea of dress for the job you want, you know, not for the one you have. If you've ever heard of that saying, it’s the same thing. Don't assume that you have to be, you have to be the cheapest one and you just have to have some, you know, you have to be cheap in order to survive and win projects, you know? You don't have to always look at things as a portfolio piece, you know? Go out there with knowing what you want and what type of clients you want and immediately start there. Yes, you won't get them all right away and you never win them all, you know? But by at least position, positioning yourself, you give yourself a better chance at landing some of those projects that are more lucrative. But at the same time that's not to be confused with shooting too far above what your comfort level is either and I think those are two different things, you know? Be confident but play where your strengths are, you know? I'd never try to sell anything that I know that I can't complete because that's the worst stretch you could have. If you're not a web designer or you're not really comfortable in print, don't do it, you know? Stick to what you know and if that means all you are is really good at just creating logos, be really good at just creating logos. Either A, for other companies who need them, you know, need that service or for clients and, but just charge what you really feel you deserve for that skill.

**What do you think would be the advantage of having either, having a designer as part of the founding team? Product based start-ups, what do you think is the advantage?**

I think, I think that would actually be pretty awesome because I think where companies shoot themselves in the foot is not putting together that image right, you know? Like, you’ll see, I have no desire ever helping developers, you know, with design, because developers by nature, they don't get design, you know? And this is the same thing, I think, with other industries, you know? So if you had a designer a part of your core team you’ve eliminated a huge barrier that consumers or potential clients are going to have, which is how does your brand look? Do you feel trusting? Are you legitimate? Are you going to be around next week, you know? I think a lot of times that becomes costs that they have to put in elsewhere. Plus, I think, designers tend to be a little bit more accepting of new technology so that allows you to infuse a lot of great-Forward thinking mentality into your marketing campaigns as well as your team.

**But there will be a disadvantage of having a designer too like?**

Yes, there is always a disadvantage of having a designer because I feel like depending like Speed.

If Speed is name of the game a designer is not always best for that. So, like if you need to get something up and move and speed is what you have to do. So, I don’t have an example right now but designers tend to be
very, you like to think things will be like abstract, we will be like to execute across the plan, if that doesn’t go very well for that type of business I need to shoot from the hip a whole lot.

It just doesn’t how we are wired. So, then in that case I wouldn’t have a designer on your core team because you maybe always frustrated in some ways. [Chuckle]

**How do you cope with that? Do your businesses actually need you to be, to keep out of the Speed?**

Yeah, that’s true and it’s time that I would have to really do some things in my business that I cringe from a design standpoint. But even with my personal brand like just I mean but it’s never, nothing is ever perfect.

But I always, I have to look at the big picture, what I have to like say, ‘Okay. Well, just because I did wasn’t able to design at this way for myself because an A. It was a time strain or technical challenge that we could know overcome.’ There is always a plan B and I can always find later but I feel it needed too I mean I think we can make a lot of assumptions that you need to make something perfect today but you mainly nothing beyond go down the road so you always took a lot of time. So, I think its just knowing where to choose and pick those barrels. it’s like when this design matter and when it doesn’t matter like I guess at the back checking balance.

**And do you have a good strategy for that knowing new matter?**

Yeah, like I think if me knowing generally whom I talking to so like and what I’m building.

If I’m building something for the design community obviously design matters and the value is there but if I’m building something for a, I’m trying to think of what would be the most like years ago I build this like it was like whole sale like [03:05] type of website and this was early days green line and it didn’t really designed and really matter to me at that point because it was a simple type of B2B like the relation, they just needed something to serve the job of, ‘Hey, these are what’s available today.’ There was nothing a consumer facing aspect to this it was just really down and dirty internal type of used tool.

So, like for something like that I mean for me to show every bit of design it just stress so it’s not needed because it’s never gonna see that, it’s never gonna go past those internal [03:50]. So, as long as it’s functional I guess it’s that idea for me it’s always about function over the design sometimes and that was a good case where I’m like, ‘Well, I can sit here and stress about this layout or I can just make sure that it does the job that they needed to do.’
Designer Founder C

Why did you choose to start up your own company? What led you to entrepreneurship?

I don't think it's really - it wasn't really a choice. It's just wanting to do - I just wanted to do something that I feel a problem, and I wanted to solve it. I don't think - I don't think, at least for me, it wasn't the case where I wake up and said, 'I want to be an entrepreneur.'

Or, 'Hey, ya know, I'm trying to get into (???)' or anything like that. That's not the way it works for most people. It's just seeing a problem and wanting to solve it. And that's - and then you just kind of get into the ... and next thing, you're living the life of an entrepreneur.

so you decided to pursue this because you see a problem that you want to solve?

Yeah.

So as a designer, what are some of the challenges that you face when starting a company?

Well, for me specifically, if you're a designer and you don't necessarily have a code, that is one challenge. A lot of people say that is a challenge. So that's definitely challenge number one.

Then there's various challenges entrepreneurs face, and a lot of us say the same ones, like trying to get funding or trying to get your idea to take off. The biggest challenge aside from execution is validation, so that's always something that everyone tries to get passed. Or sometimes, just ignore it. I think in some cases, I ignore it. I just go off of gut instinct, and sometimes it can be a right move but sometimes you are wrong or it changes along the way. So for me the biggest challenge is development. Everything based on execution. I'm the type of person who can just, who can go get, or get shit done kind of mentality. There's not - there's challenges, but they're challenges you overcome. So in some ways you welcome them. It's welcomed challenges, like ya know, user adoption, or validation, or fundraising. All great challenges to have and all great challenges to face. But a true challenge, I think, one that you don't want as an entrepreneur, is being in a situation where you can't really create or cot yourself. That's definitely a challenge that I face. From my point of view, that's the only challenge I face. Because the other challenges compared to that, is - they're not even challenges. It's kind of like that.

How do you cope with these challenges?

Yeah, I think the sort of development one, I outsource to developers in Poland, or Montreal, or India. Because finding a good developer is hard, and if you do find one, they're expensive. So that's how you into the challenges you face in terms of fundraising or getting money to execute your product or your start-up idea. (Unclear, audio breaking up 3:58 - 4:02)

I especially think the best solution is, and a lot of people go to (?? 4:10) if it makes sense. I think the best idea as an entrepreneur to take, in terms of executing your product.

do you think designers make good entrepreneurs?

I think we're getting better at it. But, I mean, that's a loaded question. There's proven situations of designers being good entrepreneurs. Not necessarily me, but there are European designers who are entrepreneurs; The guys at Designer Fund It, they're entrepreneurs. Who else is? E. Mahar is an entrepreneur designer. So, designers can be entrepreneurs. In fact, they can be some of the best entrepreneurs, but it requires an overlap of business thinking and design thinking.
I think majority of cases, it's where designers are more design thinking than business thinking. I think in my situation, especially more along the lines of design because I was an entrepreneur you have to know how to sell. And given that designer is a lineage from artists and artists are ones selling themselves, that trait exists amongst designers where the key to more products and design as opposed to selling their products, it's not necessarily something we're good at right? If you look at a lot of the designers who are building, who are entrepreneurs of building products, quite often they're building it for an audience they're extremely familiar with whether it's the tech audience or the design audience right. Case in point, I'm a designer and I did Honey and its intended audience is for designers. It's a little bit weird to sell to designers when it's an audience you relate to because really it's selling to yourself, it's easier to do that with let's see you go into a space where it's men, the designers and entrepreneurs of that space will be speaking to people we don't understand. But I just think designers can be good entrepreneurs, there are cases where they are good entrepreneurs, but being a good entrepreneur isn't really something that favors designers or business makers, I don't think it works like that, it's the ability to overlap these two different disciplines that would make you a good entrepreneur.

**So what would be the advantages or disadvantages when you have a designer as a factor?**

Well the advantage clearly would be if you have a product you design first, design driven, that's a huge advantage. That allows you to create a better product, a better brand, a better experience for users. Which all in all should help fast track the growth and development of your product or your company. The downside? I don't know if there's a downside. There are a few but it's more of a case by case situation. Some of the downsides could be where designers are more focused on being a perfectionist and that can slow down the product because the idea is to get it out there and test it as soon as possible in Italy. I notice and I suffer from this, this is a problem I am constantly facing where you're trying to find a balance between putting a good product out there as soon as possible, you're just constantly trying to find that balance. Designers wouldn't want to put something out there that's shitty, but you're supposed to put something out there as fast as possible, so it's an internal battle that a designer could say could be a downside to a company. That being said, any designer who is a funder level is a designer who would understand and notice, so I don't even think that it is something that would happen because the fact that you're a funder doesn't mean that you're a junior designer who doesn't have experience with this or doesn't understand this. Those can be downsides but I can't imagine a situation where it is a huge downside and if it is the CEO would do something about it unless the CEO is the designer and then in that case, you know, the product will just keep moving slow and that would be a bitch situation for the product or company."

**who would you consider a designer?**

Someone who is able to solve problems. Yeah, I mean, it's really simple. Anyone can. It depends on what you mean designer. I think, designer is a loaded term and has different meanings to different people. It's a discipline that's broken into many different fields. When you say designer do you mean U.S. designer, product designer, visual designer, but on an entrepreneurial level a designer is someone who is able to, solve a problem, and they do it, they would do that potentially with, you know, the ability to apply design thinking to it. The process of the visual design, or anything like that, I think it transcends where you are trying to balance all the different disciplines of design whether it be using your experience whether it be product design, visual design, branding, kind of balance all these things to apply to your product. I think as a designer its not necessary... I think that's an entrepreneurial type of designer? More like a generalist, as opposed to a specialist. The different types of designers.

**you mentioned a few times about the ability to apply design thinking. So, how would you define design thinking?**

Well, yeah, design thinking is not, in my mind its not on any surface level. It's always trying to go deeper to understand the problem that you're trying to solve. And you're really trying to get to the core of the problem. You see, getting to the core of the problem is never easy, there's a lot of noise, there's a lot of
things that you have to get past to get to the core of that problem, right? Because usually no matter what, you do surveys, you do interviews, you test, you test, you test, but users they say one thing and they do something else. So design thinking is really, you know, whatever your process may be, because everyone's gonna have a different process, so there is no specific process, that's why it's design thinking. There's no process there, there's just whatever you do that facilitates or gets you to the core of the problem that you're trying to solve, then that's, then that's design thinking, because once you get there everything like sort of goes around it and, you know, you can apply branding, you can try and use your experience in product or visual design to the core of that problem and it's gonna be more accurate because you understand the problem. So, yeah, that's what I think design thinking is. It has nothing to do with one thing in specific like visual design or product design or use your experiences on it, it has nothing to do with the specifics of it, it's more like a general approach. Because your objective is getting to the core of the problem you are trying to solve - and we all think that we know the problem we're trying to solve, we're like 'Oh, the problem is, you know, a, b or c' and you think that's the problem but if you apply design thinking and you actually apply some process. Right? But it's your own process, what if you apply a process that allows you to get to the core of it, you realize that the initial idea, the initial pop of the problem isn't what it was. Right? It's something else. I mean, it's similar and the same thing, but it just changes in a way that you never really expect. So, yeah, you don't always know the problem. You have an idea of the problem. But design thinking allows you to get to the core of what the problem is, which can change all the time.

**do you think design thinking can be applied to a start up?**

Oh, it's applied to start ups all the time, every time. Yeah, that's part of the... all the time. It's strange... It's a term coined by some crowd. And more and more startups here are beginning to apply to the company because yeah it is useful and there is lot of, I think there is a lot of versions or a lot of variations like design or these startup methodologies, these are all great designs and processes, alright and that’s why I said earlier there is no specific process which is down, they are more like methodologies, right but it’s the lead design to be a product or you apply or you decides to do these startup methodologies to IVS. So, it’s a great design thinking process in each or method or each has their own applications in different situation. So, yeah it’s like calling on whatever methods you want to always thinks that’s how again getting the problem. So, if you think about the lead design for example, right, if the probably now pick it out before the problem and now you are trying to resolve that design, right. So, you have to apply with your experience and all these kind of things but [Inaudible] and the iterating what you found, right. So, again what you are doing is trying to get to the quarter of the problem, it’s like you always have to do because surely you have assigning that you can truly ___

**do most startups actually share the same view and it’s like how design thinking can be apply to a startup like based on your experience where you see like most startups actually get it or they don’t?**

Well, most startups don’t. Most startups don’t get pretty far yet. Mostly it’s, I haven’t really got an opportunity to work at startup at stage one that’s really more open to other startups and they don’t really, yeah, they don’t apply or think about design thinking and they don’t even think about the fact that actually well product design is generally like a product design is first design thinking, the product design is something that a lot of startups don’t really understand to really get applying. So, it’s pretty awesome design thinking. It’s really, companies like Father or IDEO and these types of agencies that they are one who design a lot because they work with large companies and it requires a different process and different things. And what happens with the design thinking is it requires time so this is the problem startups has in common. So, it’s something that startups happening luxury to employ the IDEO or Father and agencies or whatever this is where we least product methodology comes in and it is the design thinking, right. It’s just specially designed for startups, since they don’t have time and we have to move fast. So, again like I said it’s a different versions of ___ that they can’t find and do startups agree with duty startup I would say, yeah it’s always okay and kind of agree with that approach to building a startup for a company. And this was [Inaudible] so if you see them like the entrepreneurs and employees but ultimately it makes sense and it
works so it works and it brings results and I think it’s something that entrepreneurs can see the...to know kind of language.

**How often do you see design founders?**

There is quite a bit of design founders in my group design founders something like and yeah I see them all the time. There's a lot of designers who start stuff, but there's a difference between projects, a difference between projects and startups. There's a lot of designers that do projects, not as much designers that start companies. But there's quite a few out there and they're doing really well. [unclear] There are a lot of designer funders out there.

**Why do you think this reflects the trend?**

I think the trend of design funders..I'm not sure. But I think the trend kind of started when accelerators started looking for funders. I think that's what ultimately started the trend or made it official. Should there be more or less design funders? It's good to have a design funder on the team. My principle or philosophy is that it's not necessarily about having a design funder connect the wheel. That's the wrong way of looking at it. It's almost like saying there should be an engineer funder on the team. It's not about that. It's really about the necessary people on the team that can execute flawlessly or near flawless on the product or the idea. That's what the whole trend of design funders.. that's not what they're getting at; that's not what they were trying to say. Oh "You should have a design funder on the team." Because that's not it. They don't have design funders on the team because they don't employ design, they don't employ design culture, they don't employ design thinking. So, it's bad. The ideas [noun, unclear] had, which is primarily what I see in 500 startups, the [noun, unclear] start looking at pushing design in their company. They're responsible for the trend of design funders. I could be wrong, I'm not sure. That's not what they were saying. They're not saying "Have a design funder." That's not the story that we're trying to tell. The story we're trying to tell is try to get people on the team that can execute. It's that simple. And since design has become centerstage and people see the value in design, then maybe you should have a design funder. Five years ago, ten years ago, it was "You need to execute [technical/specific talk, unclear]." Oh, so maybe you should have an engineer on the team. It's kind of like [unclear], then design. That's what everyone is. It comes down to execution. And if you have to choose experience in business or design, it's just design. Engineering can actually get the product out the door. Yes, it's a trend."

You know, designers has a thing that we're God's gift to products, to products, or things in that product, but we're not. We're just part of the puzzle. A piece of, you know, of the entire thing. We're not, we're not it. Design founders doesn't change anything. It doesn't do anything remarkably different if the other two pieces are missing. Okay? It's a trend. It's a shitty trend, but that's how, that's how society works I think and that's not good when it becomes a trend, but trends are not bad. That's not what I'm saying. Trends are, trends are good. It's an indication of training, but the problem with, with trend is that people interpret it the wrong way. And the wrong way being like, "Oh, if you have a design founder then your company's gonna be good, right? Or you have designs, you have good designs at your company." Which is not necessarily the case. You can have a design founder and have the shittiest culture in design or you can have, have a design founder and have, you know, poorly designed product. It's, so it's not about the title of design founder means that you're saved from, you know, your company failing or you having a shitty product. That doesn't mean anything. So, you know, case and point, case and point, would be me. I'm like a good, a good example of that. I am a, I'm a founder. I'm a single founder. I don't have an engineer, right? But I'm a designer. If I can think and design a good product in thinking and all that, but I don't have an engineer and that considerably slows my process down. It prevents me from raising money because on CCs(?) and investors look for, you know, the technical side of the team, right?

So design founders is a simple trend and people are misinterpreting it. It doesn't do anything. It's nothing special. That's, that's my opinion of it. There's nothing special about having a design founder. It's simply a trend. And part of it is trying to encourage companies to have more designers as a field, you know, at the
(?!) table and that's a good thing. Should there be more designers at the (?) table? Yes, definitely and that's what the trend needs to encourage and advocate, but it doesn't advocate that your company is the shit because you have a design founder.

**What would be the advice that you would give to any designer who is trying to become a founder?**

Learn the code. That would be my first one. I learned that the painful way. Learn the code. Let's, let's say you're, you know the code and you're, you're a good designer, then be humble and understand that and listen. Just apply a lot of conscious listening and you, it'll love you and help you get, understand and get to the problem a little faster. Yeah and iterate. That's test(?) These are, these are all things I think people know based on various design methodologies, design-thinking(?) methodologies that we talked about earlier.”
What's your experience with startups? What do you do?

I am the co-founder and CEO of an email start-up, which has angel funding and we are planning to launch our first product in a few months. I have also been an employee at three start-ups with millions of users, at various stages of growth. I am also friends with founders and employees of many startups.

What do you think makes a good entrepreneur?

I don’t believe there is a single profile. I also think there are people that succeed through sheer timing and work ethic rather than any specific advantage or attribute. That being said, people with above-average experience, confidence, intelligence, motivation, and problem-solving skills are obviously helpful traits.

Who would you consider a "design founder"?

Steve Jobs. Jack Dorsey. The AirBnB founders. Anyone whose perspective is based as much on people and subjective behaviour as the more practical, rational elements… usually in combination.

How often do you see design founders? Why do you think this reflects this trend?

(Design Founders)They are appearing more and more. It is more of a “new school” background for a business founder. I think it is a combination of investors realizing that designers have valuable business insights, the internet causing design to be a key factor in any type of web/app business, and the threshold to be a designer becoming very low (compared to 20 years ago) — there are just a lot more designers now.

How do you think designers are different or similar to other types of founders?

I think the difference between any “type” of founder and another is the way they frame the world. Although, for the record, I don’t agree with using “typology” for people… we are all on spectrums behaviour, not in categories.

Designers tend to see products and services from the outside in, whereas business and technical people see them from the inside out. Designers focus on how it looks, feels, and the reactions created in the customers, whereas the business and technical people see things in terms of performance, efficiency, cost, resources, and so on.

When a designer is combined with a technical person cooperatively, the result can be a very productive, but opposite, set of perspectives on the systems needed for business: Distribution, company structure, culture, pricing, marketing, operations, etc.

What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages when you have a designer as a founder?

I am very biased on this one. I am also not sure if my opinion represents “designers” as a whole, because I am a particularly analytical UX designer. Designers often create what people want, based on their own vision. That sounds simple, but most people can’t do it very well. It’s a big advantage for certain types of products and services.

Designers focus less on money and more on the affect of being a customer. That is a huge advantage when done well.
Similarly, the disadvantage of a designer is that they may ignore critical factors of the business or the technical aspects of the product because they are chasing their vision instead. When a designer creates solely to make themselves happy they can create beautiful things that drive the whole project into the ground.

**What kind of startups do you think are designers suitable or likely to setup?**

When the selling points or the appeal of a business are less-than-tangible, or when their value is based on perception rather than literal market value (data, sense of community, aesthetics, premium-ness), a designer has a more intuitive level of insight than many other “types” of people.

These things give the designer the power to create value from nothing, or insights into the emotional/irrational reasons that people will buy something. For example, before TypeKit was founded, many investors thought it was crazy to pay for a font, because there is no rational value “on paper” for one typeface over another. But to a designer, it is the difference between a Fortune 500 company and a lemonade stand.

Other examples would be anything social, experiential, status-based, or where the target audience will appreciate how the product looks/feels as much as the functional or utility of it.

**What do designers today need to learn to be a founder? Why?**

For many designers, design in “real life” is fairly superficial. They decide how it looks and feels, but it has very little to do with the way a company is grown, money is handled, leadership, innovation, or creating real value in the world. Those things usually aren’t taught in school, and aren’t discussed with designers at work until you are already fairly experienced (so you meet directly with clients).

Designers spend a lot of their time arguing about whether Subjective Thing A is better than Subjective Thing B, when neither of them are inherently “better”.

But many things in business are a lot more rational and purposeful than that, so a designer must learn to create a vision based on business goals and real-life restrictions… otherwise they will be making things that are hard to build, too expensive to operate, technically unrealistic, or useless.
What do you think constitute a design founder? When you hear someone calling him/herself a design founder, what qualities or skills do you think he/she possess?

"Design Founder" seems a bit loose of a title. The way it is worded it seems that a design founder is a person who could either have founded a company as a designer, founded a design-oriented company, or could either be a "founder" of design itself!, ha.. Not really, but I think a better term is design entrepreneur - or "designpreneur".

I think that person is not only creative, but has an overall general knowledge of business, is able to talk to people and communicate well, and is disciplined enough to take action on items without direction.

What is design? What is good design?

Design is simply the purposeful creation of ideas. It's a broad description, because design is broad. You can "design" a car, but also "design" the way that you stack your plates and cups in the kitchen. Both have different goals, but both were done with a specific purpose in mind.

Do you know a lot of design founders? Why do you think reflect this trend?

Everything on this site and book: http://www.kernandburn.com

I know many myself. They reflect the trend because now more than ever in history do creative people have more access to things that help them create their ideas. Create a website in seconds. Get a prototype printed in minutes. Constant access to new inspiration. Advertise to millions of people instantly.

What constitute a good entrepreneur? Do you think a designer makes a good entrepreneur? How do you think designers are different or similar to other types of founders?

Great entrepreneurs know how to not just have a vision, but get everyone around them to rally behind that vision to in order to make something happen. Designers have the potential to become great entrepreneurs because they fundamentally are able to draw pieces from multiple experiences to come up with something completely new. And completely new and good ideas form the foundation of great businesses.

You can teach a designer to be a great businessman, but it's hard to teach a businessman to be a great designer.

What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages when you have a designer as a founder?

Advantages:

- Seeing new ideas in old things
- Being able to tell a story, both visually and verbally.
- Having empathy towards your end customer

Disadvantages:

- Sometimes becoming too focused on creative vs forming a successful business
- What makes sense for business doesn't always make sense creatively.
- Never being able to "clock out"

What kind of startups do you think are designers suitable or likely to setup?

Depends on the industry, but in this day and age there is no limit. Product designers have designed great digital products (founder of Airbnb), while graphic designers have made great products (founder of fieldnotes brand of notebooks). The main thing is that they have a general understanding of how to make things work better and look better, and they have the tools to make it happen.

What do you think a designer can contribute in a startup, and what he/she needs to learn to be a founder?

The obvious answer is that a designer can bring emotion and storytelling into a sometimes black and white business world. Being able to communicate your ideas is more than half the battle toward getting them accomplished. Once a designer learns the business fundamentals of any given industry they are working in, they are poised to become a founder themselves. They hold the key.
So I originally started my company strength find, and we were able to get some angle investors to come on at one point. Then when they found out that we had this manufacturing hurdle, they dropped out. So.. that’s the start and fail over time, you learn from it.

So then I got… involved in the university’s the entrepreneurship center. And he set me up with a company called GrandThunder. And they develop kind of web browser feed, main jet ads from web browser feed. I did some consulting for them, and some with a professor at Tech. Then I got involved in the startup like 10X kind of stuff.

When u talk about consulting, what’s the job scope?

I’m best at Marketing in data driven kind of stuff. I just started at Sproutit for 2-3 weeks now, and we have increased download by 60% in a week, and that mainly comes from a lot of.. finding what the users are searching for, and pushing all of your ad budget toward those search terms.

So how did you land to where u r now?

I would contribute a lot of where I am now to a professor in my college. When I was there, I was in his accelerator class. He has never taught it before, and he just taught it for that one quarter, and that’s where I met him, and that’s when I networked with him and things just kind of spread from there. A lot of where I am right now is cause of that guy.

What’s your major?

I was financial planning with entrepreneurship minor. I used none of that. I used absolutely zero.

Based on your experience and startup, what were the typical background of entrepreneurs? Or does it even matter.

I would say… I would use the 10X as an example. I really just varies. You know, how we thought of the product that we created… how Sproutit started, how Brandthunder started… it’s people finding and solving problems that they either have, or a large market has, and throwing that void with a solution. It’s all about pain point identification, and value proposition that fixes that pain point. So it really.. Entrepreneurs can come from anywhere.

10X for example.. we have.. Last Size and Digital Keys. For instance Patrick from Last Size, he used to be in banking, then he opened his own Boutique store. He saw this problem, in his backend inventory management, so he found Last Size. Then digital keys, really don’t know Steve… I had a hard time believing a lot of stuff that Steve says… but he claimed he thought of this when he was living in apartment complex. And he constantly loses keys.. or something.. so he thought of this idea. Then Connect2home, he owns a coffee shop. He’s just a community guy, so he found his connect2home thing. Oye’s Natasha, she works at a Hispanic branding agency. She saw this need for social media metrics for brands, and Oye. It keeps going on and on. The imagery guys, and pantamicon. They are doing very well, they just raised 100 thousand in Columbus. They are all huge gamers. They saw this fraud going on in the game, and they developed a tool to fixed it. The same story going over and over again. People in whatever area they are in, they just saw the problem, and they just capitalize.

What would be the type of startups a designer would be more likely to start?
It’s pretty rare. Designers are extremely important. Sproutit has the best design staff I have seen, coz it’s founded by designers. There is this huge benefit for having these skilled designers on staff, coz instantly…. If you make something that is clean, elegant and crisp looking, it’s an immediate turn on for those users. So they are immediately intrigue by the clean design, as opposed to something that is really poorly designed, and it’s an immediate turn off and they go away. So having that design element is very very very vital, and it’s one of those things that going forward in the accelerator model, we are gonna have a designers there all the time. Coz having that clean crisp design, that first impression, is so important. But it’s pretty rare, to see a design founder, in my opinion.

That’s only because you see a lot of the designer coming out of the straight product side. Mainly it’s all tech companies, online based companies. You a ton of people on Kickstarter doing their own products. You know, have a billion funding. Then u have websites like quirky. If you have a random idea, sketch it out and send it to quirky. The community votes it, and it gets upvoted completely, quirky will make it for you, and you will collect royalties. I have done it a few times.

**When you say tech startup, what does it mean?**

Internet based. Apps, mobile. Website, consumer website. technology based too. It’s so broad I guess.

**Design Founders are rare, why?**

I don’t know. That’s a good question. I don’t have a good answer for that. I’m not a design founder. It really depends.

**How designers can contribute as a founder?**

Anybody can learn to do anything if they want to. You could have… You can learn to do, adwords etc. You are the front end person, and you are also the back end person that knows how to drive that front end stuffs. It is really powerful. It’s good for designers to know more stuffs to communicate.

If you want to, you could do it. Anybody can. It’s about whether you want to spend the time to do it.

**Similarities or Differences between Design Founders and other types of founders?**

The difference in entrepreneur in general is that ability to take that risk and jump. I don’t really know if that’s a good question. Because I was interviewing with TechStars. They are kind of X10 with all over the country with a lot of money. They asked me what are these traits that you pick up on for entrepreneurs. It’s kind of a hard thing. You can’t pick up on it on an interview. You need multiple interactions to figure out what drives that person. So… I don’t know… I’d say risk taking is key. But it’s also inherit drive that people have. It’s kind of.. I always use “hustle” a lot.

**Why do you think these are required to be an entrepreneur?**

Coz as an entrepreneur you create your own success, you create your own destiny. So you know, entrepreneurs don’t really need that stability, it’s nice to have for a peace of mind, I’d say most of them don’t really require that. When are you gonna get the next money from to pay your rent? I have some money saved up, I’m not those kind of people that need stability. I don’t like the hierarchy of the corporate environment, I like the control to do my own stuffs and make my own destiny. It comes back to hustle. Ability to take things and be really flexible, and react.

When you are creating this product.. back to what I’m doing. We thought we were creating for home fitness, we didn’t get a lot of outpour for that. And we started looking to other places. It’s listening to the
biggest painpoint in the market and filling that with your value. Again, that’s just part of it. It’s an interesting kind of thing.

**When you are working with your designer partner, did you find any difficulties working with him?**

I can say what good design looks like, I know how it makes me feel, but I can’t create it. Sarah Bush, she makes really cool stuffs. I can tell that’s awesome, or that I don’t really like that. But that’s as far as it goes for me. But I can’t do that.

**What is your definition of Design Founder?**

My friend, he has that entrepreneurial drive and design skills. That is the sweet spot. To deliver that end product. He thinks differently. Some people… they don’t want to listen to what the market is telling you. You have a lot of people that will just force a product. It’s more of a push strategy than a pull strategy. The ability to listen is a good skill an entrepreneurial should have.

**How do you communicate as a consultant to the startups?**

The only difference is, is how I’m paid. That’s the only difference. You are hired out vs. as a contract based. That contract can be hourly, but I refuse to do it. I work on a monthly retainer, as I always gonna put in more hours. I don’t know if it’s just... it could be kind of dumb on my part, I could be making more money. I’m in that monthly… some weeks I may not work as much as the other week. So having that monthly money coming in is nice.

Most startups do something called vesting equity. All 10X companies do this too, if they are gonna bring on another person. Based on how long the contract is.

**What makes a startup successful? What’s the make and break for a startup?**

I’m finding more and more.. so this community in Columbus, there’s a lot a lot a lot of money in Columbus. More than Cincinnati, probably more than Cleveland. But the startup community in Cincinnati is much better, because people understand what it takes, and the funds that it needs to make this community that makes jobs for these cities that all these startups are in. they understand it in Columbus, they don’t really understand it here. There’s more money here, but people in this community are not stepping up at where it should be. It depends on… so you have, the best idea, for instance just Imagery. People here did not want to fund them, they went back home, and they are raising 2 million dollars. It depends a lot on your location. It really does where you have capital… people willing to step up and fund these startups. I mean there is no difference between companies starting here, and companies starting in Silicon Valley. They are both solving problems, they are both creating value. They are both niche products filling this void. The difference is, Silicon Valley is great at hyping up everything they invest in. Coz it’s always… one of the pet project of mine is the dollar value money out west, or here in New York. Say the same company starts in Columbus, in Silicon Valley, they might get funded for 2 million. That 2 million out there is probably worth, they can probably do the same things with 2 million out there, they could do for like 500,000 here. It will get them just as far, but that dollar money, that price tag of 500 as oppose to 2million is much sexier out there. Because that 2 million price tag looks so much better. Even though that 2 million, 500,00 here will get them just as far, just as the amount of customers, just amount of everything. But everybody is attracted to the big dollar value. That’s why you see everybody going out west.

I mean, this is kind of a side tangent there… what makes it successful. You have to have the right team. It’s so vital, so vital. You have to have everybody that knows… right team that is moving in the same direction, everybody knows their place, the value they create. And they are all moving towards that one goal. That’s team, number one. And access to capital will be number two.
Summary of what a designer needs to learn to become a founder?

Designers’ role is mainly like a marketing role, I would think? Usually, I work very close to Sarah and Leia. Leia is the copy writer, Sarah is the designer that makes things look pretty. If you could have a designer that is data driven, back-end, and know how to manage that and what to do with that content, where to push it, how to advertise it, what metrics drive your users, all that kind of stuff, and tailor with the design skills, that’s… you’re director of marketing, you know…

Coz you are doing both, coz you’re a whole package. Might not sleep a lot…
So what I do, so here at Commercialization office my role is the program manager of the software prototyping center. And, what that kind of means, is I help oversee and help look at all the software and copyrighted IT coming out of the colleges. They come into our office and I help the team, the licensing teams. We have a Life Sciences licensing team, an engineering or physical sciences licensing team understand the value of the software and understand the potential of it. In either a sort of direct license way or in a start-up way.

So the role is kind of it's different in the sense that I have to look at the technology, help understand where it's at in its progression like is it totally an abstract, is it just an idea meaning there's nothing there to actually kind of know what it is or maybe they have research. Or maybe they have a prototype or maybe it's actually done. Or maybe they've been using it in the university for some amount of time. So just understanding where it is on the timeline and then helping the team here understand you know how like awesome it is. It's like, oh well this is kind of maybe not really ready yet, it needs a lot more work. Or this is really great but at the same time also be really critical of it and say it's really great however we don't have any data, or however it doesn't really work, or however we need more validation of it, because we're always thinking about, you know, our end user is somebody on the outside of the university who wants to buy it to take it up and then we create that revenue that goes back to the colleges, and back to the inventors that made it. So we're always thinking about the opportunity in regards to the IT.

What I really spend most of my time in is strategy. I spend probably 90% of my time is in that strategy space, which is looking at a piece of software and saying. And remember it's not just looking at the software, it's really looking at what did the inventor intend to do with the software, what problem was the inventor trying to fix, the solution that they've made, how for lack of a better word well what I would say is how tasty is it. Is it well it's kind of a small cake or is it ‘Wow super really good’. And then what did they do to really ensure that what they've made is really attractive and tasty. So that might be, for example, research. So for example they tackle a problem, they build a software prototype, and then they did ton of research around that prototype and then refined it. And made it better. So those are different aspects and trying to figure out often usually the inventor knows exactly who wants it.

So then we really talk to the inventor and then we go over why we made this. And here's the problem and these people really want it. That's great, tell me about those people that really want it and I try to go and help structure a deal. Or help tee it out as a company.

Teeing it out as a company as a start-up is a lot harder. You're kind of inventing everything. You're like OK. The one thing you don't want to invent is a customer that doesn't exist. That's the hard part. But you kind of would and a lot of the technology, especially in software are very I would say kind of belief driven in some sense.

There's a belief around, I guess, a construct of what the trends in the industry are sure to support. So for example, when you look at something like, let's talk about apps. If you look at apps like something like a snapchat, why would anyone ever want to take a picture and then delete it. It's like it's a weird metaphor for us to understand but if you think about the infrastructure, the trends, and the audience and the context of how people use mobile devices, it makes tons of sense. But if you try to take that idea ten years back in time, even though some of the technology maybe. Let's take 2009, it would have been hard for people to really completely grasp just because like the momentum of the whole scene hasn't been there yet.

So software is a really cool place for people to try lots of crazy ideas and some of them stick and some of them don't. And the cool thing about software is that the journey to make those ideas from a cost standpoint is super radically low. It's no longer I need $100,000 to make software. Nowadays, you can probably build 90% of it almost free online, just using free resources and tools if you're skilled. And then from there you're
real cost is the marketing and you're real cost is in the UX And you're real cost is actually in closing that gap in belief of the customers and hoping they buy it.

So yeah, I’d say on any given - we kind of work in quarters here for the most part, so we have focus where we're always working on deals. Right now my deal board is blank at the moment, but typically there's probably five things I'm working on. I'm trying to get them more situated. I'm pretty close, I've got a person who's interested in technology, and I've got an inventor who has the technology and I'm in the middle, trying to help them see the big picture.

The way I look at it is, to me, prototyping is really about creating belief. If I can create belief around technology, if I code a prototype, that's okay, if I completely fake the prototype, that's okay. Meaning, if I stitch together all the screens and make them all click through and you sit down and you walk through it and you go "'Yeah, I like this,'" that's a prototype that worked. If it's actually coded and it actually works, that also is good. But you don't necessarily have to have it finalized in code because the prototype for me and for what I think we're trying to do here at our office, it's about using the prototype as a vehicle for research. The prototype's goal is to get in between a person, the two stakeholders, the person who wants to sell the product and the person who maybe will buy it, to have a conversation. The customer will say "'I kind of like this''' or "'I don't like this.'" The startup understands and tries to get that data.

**Basically, in summary, your job is to help the inventor actually find value in the invention? Do you actually conduct the research yourself or do you suggest certain research models and the inventor has to do themselves?**

A lot of it (the research) is ad hoc, it's not full on research. Remember, sometimes the inventor will think they have value. It's really about "'Can we create value that a person on the outside understands?'" So you might say "'I made this pen, it doesn't really write, but it's a really cool product. It's a pen that you don't write with. A ton of people would love that.'" I would say "'Okay, well help me out, because most pens you can write with and I just want to understand - '" You're always kind of like the dumbest person in the room, user experience. You're kind of like "'Really? Well tell me more about that pen that doesn't write, why do people like that?'" You have to kind of be the user experience researcher there, kind of doing the contextual inquiry and trying to get that data. The inventor may or may not have the equation that you need. What you need to do as this office is to basically help tee up the understanding of that and then frame that in a narrative where then you can go talk to investors and then you can go and talk to startup people about it.

It is kind of marketing but it's multiple - it's not marketing in the sense that, you know a lot of times, marketing comes in once you really know what your product is. The problem is that most of the ideas that we have, they're not finished. It's like walking into someone's house and seeing their management system for organizing their videotapes on a wall and saying "'Let's commercialize that idea.'" You kind of have to take all those pieces and digest them and then you want to reinterpret them in a new commercial and scaleable light and then you want to brand it.

We do everything, we brand it, we try to package it up and try to make it look presentable. Then we try to prop it up like it's a - have you ever seen in the ghost towns where they would show how it looks like a building but behind it there's no building, it's just been propped up. But from a distance you go "'Oh yeah, that's a store.'" That's what we're trying to do. When people say "'Oh this is a store, I love stores, I'd love to go in there.'" Great, now we have the conversation where we can talk about how good that story could be, even though we know full well, but behind that facade it may not be complete because you're just trying to create that initial belief. Of course when there's a license, when the person says "'Okay, I actually want the product.'" now that conversation of really understanding the true value of it fluctuates because the product may not be complete yet. So then you're negotiating.

I personally really believe that when investors are coming to Ohio State, they're looking for two things. They're looking for a really good idea, an intangible piece of validated intellectual property. They're
looking for a really smart mind behind the IP. So I want to license it from Joe, like I love Joe's product and I loved his app and I love what he was trying to solve, but we're also really intimately curious about what Joe's going to do next. So it's about and sort of investing in some of that future too, so that's really…

and you see it, and of course start-ups are infectious. Just licensing in general it’s a crazy sort of passion trade, right? Because one you're talking about money, and any time you talk about money there's people that have emotions around that, you're also building things that never existed before, I mean you're on the ground floor of creating something brand new so there’s a lot of cool passions, there you’re often exposing, you’re often going after a brand new category or you’re destructing a legacy, alright so you have like a legacy product that they’ve been doing it this way for the last you know 40 years and you're walking in the door and saying yeah you’ve done it this way for 40 years we’re going to do it this way and it’ll be like a thousand times cheaper, you know? And of course they want to protect the fact that you’re disrupting them, right, but you’re like I’m going to disrupt you, and that’s what’s great about the start-up scene now, right?

You know, you're seeing students get together on a weekend and try to build their own bank, right, why do they know about banking, well, they know the software, they’ve got a couple experts to tell them about the financial system, and then they just come up with their own bank, and the crazy thing is is there is an investor over there going ‘well let’s do that’ and so the disruptions happens and they may or may not succeed, but that effort of trying and the audacity to do is an infectious thing, it’s a cool thing to be a part of that.

And I think that our role here is to sort of help the inventors and the faculty and the staff members understand that potential but then shield them from the ramifications of it, right? Because while it can be really exciting to build things, not, you know, a thousand people try to build things and only four of them succeed, right? So there’s a lot of people who get crushed, right? And no one likes the stories of crushed but they’re really, they’re actually huge learning points, it’s great to study things that failed because you can understand why they failed and then apply those learnings to begin a project soon

what are the typical backgrounds of the entrepreneurs you see?

Most of those entrepreneurs are, they kind of break down their… some of them are seasoned, so these are seasoned individuals, that have, you know, are on their second or third or fourth business, so they’ve had a lot of experience doing that. They have a lot of scars, a lot of people talk about their scars; they like to talk about deals that went bad, they like to talk about’ and they're some of them can be pretty cold and tactical: ‘this is exactly how I want to do it, just like that [snaps] I’m out, right so they’re…

Others are pretty more flexible, a lot of it kind of depends on what medium of IP you're talking about. You know, if it’s software they understand the rules of software, they know they’re not going to get something complete, they understand how it could go. If it’s more tangible, or you know physical sciences or something like that, they have huge costs up front that they have to address so they’re really going to be hampering on you for making it really affordable for them to take out. So, you know, there’s going to be different questions in there.

Columbus is kind of small enough that you kind of know of all the start-ups’ entrepreneurs; you know if you spend some time in the scene, you kind of meet the 300 or so people, and then that’s it. Right?

And then everyone else, there’s an emergence, what I would say, the hustler’s way. So the hustlers are sort of the new people who are trying to build their first company, they’re looking for state help; actually, there’re entrepreneurs that would never come to our university, they would stay at a cafe and build their own idea, they would create their own Facebook, they would chase down their own dream of what.

For a lot of the software people, it doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to come to the university for that kind of idea because they could sit in a cafe and dream up an idea, dole out an app and go. Now they have the same reality of succeed or failing, but they don’t necessarily are drawn to here. So we have to do things to
drag them in; we have to do events, we have to do things that say ‘yeah come on down, and look at our IP, we do have something for (you)’. So we actively have to seek them out and that’s a constant demand for us is to seek them out because the university sits on a wealth of IP, just a ton of it. And that’s what’s cool about, I think, the hustlers and the people, because not everybody has it.

But I think one of the cool skillsets of a designer, in my opinion, is the ability to look at what the context is, and then, and then think in the scenarios for the opportunity around it. For example when you give an artist a pen and a piece of paper, they see it as an open canvas to draw just about anything. For some people that’s paralyzing. They feel like, ‘What you want me to draw?’ The fact that I had to tell you what to draw means that you don’t, you may not know, right.

So, the same things applies to entrepreneurship, there is people who love the constraints of that by a sheet the paper because they will create a company in a week, like this weekend, coming up to startup weekend.

There’s gonna be people walking in there, they are gonna pitch it completely in some idea or so an idea they really believe in. And what’s cool about that is that on Friday night that was a word, and on Sunday it’s a business and you are just manifesting.

So, the whole startup scene is really about, is really a celebration of creativity. Now, it may not be a business, I don’t know, but that celebration of creativity is a ton of fun.

**Designers come in and then they can actually start thinking about other scenario set around the product?**

Because they (designers) are trained to kind of rundup to sort of, to really study. The object and photo so if you look at the problem.

And of course it’s always that thing about what designers design for themselves, that’s not good because they should be thinking about users. I remember how those discussions all the time with my brother Chris about, and you can say the same thing about entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs that basically in a vacuum outside of customers probably have a no success rate, I agree with that.

But the crazy thing is that in the software and internet world I think (thinking about users) is less true because I guess I feel I think there is a lot of, I always feel like you are brain is always processing and picking up trends and analyzing things, why you are shy and why you are sleeping… So, while you are a customer of one and when you are designing in a vacuum, you are actually computing all those patterns that you are experiencing.

And what’s cool about designers, is the designers can manifest their own thing, the designer can sit down and takes a piece of paper, they concept of a narrative, a story about why it should be, now is it full ego absolutely they are calling all the shots in the creation, really no different than the startup entrepreneur was right?

But in some ways the business entrepreneur doesn’t know actually how to tell the narrative. The business entrepreneur doesn’t really know how to actually manifest it, they doesn’t know how to make them come together. So, it wholly dependent on another person to help them. But a designer can do all that.

The problem that designer could do though are they can get that far and then the customer says, ‘I don’t get it’, they will be like “whatever”. You know what I mean?

That’s the problem with the designer part, is that designer can get to and love with your creation. And you see that with the inventors too: “I love my pen that can’t write. What do you mean you don’t understand? Well, clearly you are not the right customer.”
Now, realizing that the business person would say, ‘Wow, I just lost a customer how do I get that customer back because I need every customer I can, because if I can’t support this, this is art and a hobby and a business.

So, that’s where designers have a power in the creation phase but in building the business phase they have to find the business person or they have to think of more of the business person and that’s kind of happening now.

You see, there is definitely a need on both sides like on the business side there is a big demand for designers and user experience people, at the right time I think that’s one of the key things. And then on the design side, there is sort of a big need so they can manifest ideas really quick, and then they get stalled because they don’t have a... So, they both need each other.

On the West Coast you have things like the designer fund which is both startup funds for designers and there is a lot of investment that really champions what designers bring to the table, because of the user experience, because they can tell the narrative, and everybody is sort of compressed for time, everyone is compressed for understanding.

So, the designer could come and say, ‘I can actually tell the story exactly.’ They can actually shape it. It’s like a door knob, it doesn’t need any explanation just look at it and go, ‘Oh, you turn it down and go out, yeah okay.’ You are gonna need that, and that’s the powerful thing.

But how do you, do you think it’s actually easier for designers to step up into the business role or for the business people who step up into the skills that designers?

Probably harder for the designers to step up in the business world. But I think that’s because of the general potential, it’s only the intimidation of the space. And I think it’s because, I think designers can, could get really stuck into detail.

so you know, I had struggled with this with my own designers on staff and you just, you know, Ben over here is really awesome here, he’s a God, he’s really good. But if I didn't like lean over and really sort of push him along the way sometimes, he could spend 7 hours making something completely amazing, you know what I mean, there is a part of me that wants to give you 20 minutes to do that.

Because that, because we have to work faster, because I am thinking the strategy the software space, where the fine detail that the designer wants to do, I kind of want them to hold off, I don't want him to go that hard yet, just yet. So there's a level of siphoning off, sort of, detail.

I think the way that businesses approach design, is they bring it in when they think they need it, so they see you as a line item expense almost and the problem with that is that they bring you in too late so they designed the whole thing they've manifested it they're starting to ship it and the customers don't like it and they're like that's weird, you know we spent a hundred grand and I don't get why they... because they never invited UX to the party, the designer to the party early.

I think the mix is when to bring a designer in, I think, I don't know, I don't necessarily believe that bringing a designer in from day one is the best choice. Just because I think designers need to feed off of, sort of, the context of what you're trying to do and I think the designers really want to know the action items around... they want to know more parameters.

so again, if you, if the business person is that blank canvass with a pen, the designer will be like I could have done anything but the business person is thinking succinctly, they just can't communicate it yet. So they're stuck on a real succinct piece but they haven't given the information to the designers so now you have that classic disconnect, the valley impact, designers that impacts developers and that's even worse.
So what happens there is that the business guys like “Yeah, I think it could be like a vase, maybe like a car or it's like a Facebook but it's also like Snapchat, its, it also works like LinkedIn. so like the developer is like ok, I can build this and they are trying to build all these different things and they are even more like obsessed with actual “tell me exactly what I am need to make I am not going to start anything until I do.” Or what happens is they, is they get burned out on that business thing and then actual start to hate the whole scene.

Designers the same thing, designers like ok, I spent all this time building this beautiful new vase and they are like “it’s more like a can of peanut butter” and you're like “what the heck”, so then disconnect. So it's all about that connect and disconnect and then the problem is it all comes down to who has the genesis of the idea, if its the business person, its, you know it will go a certain way if its the designer it will go a certain way.

**Why do you think Alexa’s successful?**

I think (Alexa)'s successful I think, a couple reasons, she's working on the food idea, roughly, I would say 4 to 5 years before it was turned into the concept that she built FoodSpotting with. I think she leveraged, she also owned, she had a real practical understanding of not only design but user experience, she’s a big, infographic, sketch noter. you know what I mean.

so that one thing I always like to look for when I look for designers on a projects, I love people that can do sketch notes, I love it when somebody can sit down, enter with the people talking and draw a diagram from it and I don't care how crazy it is I just want to see how they interpret and how they put it down on paper. I think that is a super valuable skill. I mean, sketch noting itself should be a class that is taught to designers, so they can sort of speed, its almost like speed ideal or speed think or whatever, I’m taking, I’m hearing what your talking and I’m drawing along the way. That's a huge powerful skill. So (Alexa) was sort of doing that(Sketchnoting)..

and I think, the other thing I think about is that through her(Alexa’s) experiences in research in user experience design I think she really started to understand not only users but she knew infrastructure, she knew the infrastructure she knew the world and the eco system the users lives in. She, adding this up, but I think I would say largely, easily 80% of what she added up was her own experience. So, again that’s where the ego is very powerful right, the ego is you, you understand the experience you understand why you bought that, you know. I mean the marketing helped the design helped, absolutely but you have that knowledge, I think she had that knowledge and she just translated it into a concept, and then of course, you know she found the right developers to get it...

Now, her startup was a hard- It wasn’t exactly a knock it out of the park success in terms of Silicon Valley startups. You know, she- She got it going, she started getting users, and she went sort of the viral route first and got a lot of people mass- Mass users to use it, and then the problem was, how do you convert these people that use your app into money? Right? That’s a classic problem in software. Right?

So you get a million people to download your app, they love your experience, but you actually have very little idea on how to convert them into a dollar. So, there’s a lot of startups built on just getting users. And there’s this hope, or this rainbow, at the end, that: if I can get enough users, I can take that sort of notion of all these users and sell that to somebody. That’s a lot harder than it sounds [laughs].

So, but, in the end, you gotta remember, that just getting a million users is still a great thing. The question is how do you convert them into a transaction. And, she’s(Alexa) really converting them into business intelligence. I think she’s trying to sell that business intelligence to companies, and it wasn’t until she got a couple sort of larger- She had a couple ad, you know, like the Food Network was interested. And that’s great for PR and maintaining some momentum of the app, but it wasn’t truly converting until she worked. . I think it was the restaurant service.
And eventually, you know, a startup like hers, you know, there’s a runway. And every time I meet a startup founder, that’s one of the things I think a lot of the startup people don’t realize. Every founder is on fire. Every founder is working on a runway where they know where the end is. They know they have 9 months, and then they’re dead. You know, we don’t think about that when we have our nice jobs, and they’re paid for, whatever. We’re not really truly feeling that. They have full- They’re in that space where they have total power and total creativity to really manifest their world, but at some point when the money runs out, they are gone. They’re dead. And then they, you know, they consider it- That’s true peril for them. So it’s always about raising more money and getting more runway so they can continue their product, so that something happens, like it really takes off. Right? I think for Food Spotting, I think her runway was starting- Like, she could start to see the end. And I think they took an exit when they could. So- And that’s good. Now she’s with Open Table.

And, of course, there- I think Open Table probably did a little bit of two things. One, they probably assimilated a lot of her technology and some of her business ideas and some of her designs, but it’s mostly, I think Accu-hire, they hired Alexa. They want to- You know, the power this person creates, pulling her technology and her big idea, pulling her team, and then going to double-down on Alexa, how can they get the next big idea that this person brought to the table? And, of course, she’s still just really great on Design UX, and still just a huge asset to startups.

I think that’s becoming more- You know, a good UI designer, front-end UI, a good user experience person is almost, I would say, as valuable as a full-on coder in terms of development concepts, provided you are at a state where you know what the product is.

**Do you think, everybody understands things like you?**

No, I’m pretty confident that most people don’t (understand the value of UX to startups). I don’t know. I think- I don’t think designers get invited to the party as early as they probably should be. And that’s unfortunate, for sure.

I think that, you know, I think that in the world of corporate, the minute the money arrives- This is what I think. I feel like, it’s hard for a young startup to afford a really great designer, a really great UX person, because- Unless they’re from that space, unless they really understand it- Because in the beginning, they’re on this raft, on this giant lake- On this huge ocean, you’re on this raft, and you’re just trying to just figure out how to stay afloat.

You know, all these procedures to keep you afloat, you have this one main guy programming. You’re like: what do you need? Just keep programming! You’re keeping everything going, you’re talking to customers, you’re trying to figure out your product. And you have this designer sort of show up periodically. You know, I think one of the issues is: how do I keep my designer constantly working and improving? Because I don’t necessarily want to over design the product- And designers, I think, have a very succinct understanding of the applicability of their time. They don’t necessarily want to spend- They don't necessarily want to redesign this pen a thousand times. They kind of would like to do it three rounds, and get it right, and then move on to the next task. The problem that an early start-up has is focusing on what the next task is.

And, I think (startups) they’re doing a lot of different things so I don't know if they really know how to best utilize a designer. And I think- that’s the same thing with marketing, right? If you bring marketing and a PR person to a party on a start-up too early, you can't use them right away cause you're not organized enough. And the more first time start-ups are happening, they're kind of lost in that space. And you gotta remember these people don't typically have any money yet either, right?

Typically, if I was the start-up, there's always less people talk about this like “"Well you can give equity to a designer, you can give equity to a programmer.”" I think that's a mostly a bad idea. And the reason for
that is if you're building an idea, and you don't really know where it's going just yet. The problem with an equity position is...So like for example, when I was do- when I'm doing Big Kitty and someone basically asks me to take equity for a project. So like, "I can't pay you, Dan. I'll pay you in equity." The problem is, and I think designers and programmers should think this way (some of them do, some of them don't), one is that it changes the relationship I have with this person I'm talking to. Before, it was work for hire to bring me in as a mercenary to work on your project, right? But if you give me equity, now I have to care a lot more about the project because I have invested interest in seeing it really being successful. The problem is, is that if this isn't successful and it's not because of my work, but because of other factors that influence the project, it could be drawn out for years and years and years and I'll never get paid.

And so, and so I always sort of tell folks they should- is mostly understanding expectations. Like what- you know? I think everyone's time is just far more valuable. And I think that being really clean cut on how the engagements work is better than being really really vague. Because when things are really vague, there's all these perceptions or we think it should work this way but then it doesn't work that way. I mean it's like trying to do a user flow that changes every five minutes. I mean by the time you get done with the 30th user flow, you're like "You know what? Maybe I should go talk to customers." Right? So then you go talk to customers, and you know it's just, it's just...you'll get burned out.

And burned out, and people are actually getting fried, is something they don't really talk about enough on start-ups but it's hugely-it happens all the time. It's huge. You just don't wanna waste your time. So you wanna be real- so I think that, I think if you have a company, it should be work for hire straight out and it should be "I need a designer to come out and do x.""

Unless, you wanna bring that person as a part of your team and your company. But you're also asking that designer to basically drop everything else they're doing and do that. That's hard! You know? So I thinks that's a dangerous place.

Now you could say, you could say- You'll see people doing a little bit of a mix. In other words, "I'll give you this fee for service and I'll give you this piece of equity along the way so you're more inclined to help me as I go." That I could see, but definitely pay your people. You gotta pay your people.

In the early days of start-ups here in Columbus, you know, there was a lot of like there was- I saw a ton of start-ups folks who were first time entrepreneurs who constantly told me "yeah, I got a programmer and I'm giving him equity, but yeah you know, he hasn't really been returning a lot of my calls."" Why? Because he has no design requirements and specs. He's probably overdeveloped for you and you haven't given him the time of day. Sure, you're passionate about the idea but he's gotta pay a mortgage. You know? It's like there's- you're abusing that relationship when you do equity sometimes. When you don't know where the line is. And I think that's more dangerous.

It's better to be, "you know what? I gotta get my idea really down first." That's, that's probably the biggest space that people spend most of their time in. It's like "Let's figure out what we're really doing. Let's..."" You know?

That's where I'd be like. ""Hey, I have an idea. I think I know what I wanna make and how much would it cost to prototype?"" I would first say, ""what is your idea?"" It's really understated. Then I would say, ""have you talked to any customers?"" ""No, I haven't."" Well then don't spend any money on any code yet. Let's go build this thing out of cardboard. You know? And show it to a user and get that feedback.

And then a lot of people are like, ""I'm kinda worried about the feedback."" Well that's a big sign! Right? So if you're worried about the feedback, it's gonna hurt even more after you mortgage your house. You know what I mean? but people get in the act of art or creation and they get that kind of high of, I'll have to think about those ramifications.
So, it’s funny the startup parallels of people building businesses and people building a band. You don’t think about, when you think about joining a band and playing music you don’t think of that as a business, but yet you do the same sort of activities right? You think of the name, you think of the brand, you think about how to package it, you think about what songs to play, you think about how we should act in front of people. You think about the manifestation of the whole thing. It’s really no different, but the mindset of and the outcome of the band playing music is different than the business where you expect something to give you a ton of cash. So, I think there is a lot of hobby off going on. I think if you can not you know there’s just those differences going on. In some ways a lot of the stuff I did in the beginning was very hobby oriented, I didn’t think about business. I was just thinking about making my own things and having fun in it solely turned into a business. And then it was more important to take it more seriously about it.

So, besides Alexa do you have any other experience with design founders or design entrepreneurs.

Not really (have any other experience with design founders).

you know like my brother Chris who runs Lextant given his background, his background more human factored and user experienced then I so he’s kind of like that, you know he’s not the typical graphics designer type guy but, you know I was in he worked in Hewitt Packer he did human-factors and he was working on lots, he worked on printers and software. He was an industrial designer, for the most part. But more on the research side, more on the human factors and that kind of stuff. and he just saw an opportunity that more and more people are probably going to need this kind of thinking so he took that out and built a business around that getting that thinking and getting data from people so he saw the opportunity and that’s how it went forth.

I think when we use the term designer today we think it’s a person with the pen and the paper, we think it’s the person who can draw the most in the book, it’s the industrial designer person, that’s not true. It’s not the person that does the drawings anymore.

A designer is someone who knows human behavior or knows how to get data around human behavior to refine a process or to refine something. If you think about it in that light I think you would find a lot of people be applicable to it. But the typical word designer is really, we could actually do that persona. Put that designer persona on the wall, it will be kind of like a cool guy has the notebook, but that’s not true anymore. It should be the person who knows the user experience and even user experience has gone through the world of buzz words.

Do you think since designer is someone who should know how to collect human data then shouldn’t the designer be invited pretty early from day 1 when they have an idea and working for the designer to collect the right human data for your idea.

I think there is a bigger role for user experience research then design. So, being a part of that process of doing the contextual inquiry getting customer data and understanding the customer data.

Because what a start-up founder will do is they’ll talk to 20 people but they’ll take one person’s thought and say that’s how I should design it. In some ways that’s not terrible, it’s not recommended but it’s not terrible because before they had no data. So I’d rather have some data then none. Having someone to show them how to do user experience research, that’s huge.

But that’s, I guess you put that under the design thing that’s probably needed more upfront before the designs are actually being made. Which is understanding how to talk to people, how to build rapport, how to do things that don’t have bias.

We did all these(user inquiry) at Lextant, you know we’d talk about how you can ask questions and induce so much bias that you get exactly the answer you want. Don’t you love this pen? Ok you love it. So, Startup founders they are habitual abusers of bias. They’re built to basically bias you; they are trying to bullshit you
into buying their product you know what I mean? Because in the beginning they don't know if it works yet, so they are like these hungry puppies looking for any data point they can get. So they completely bias the conversation to get a data point.

They have to learn to report back or they have to basically learn to basically say ok this is where I'm gunna go to product phase, and I think you should do this you know and go off and do this user experience research and conduct a report. and let that user experience person go and do it in an unbiased way so really comprehensive data comes back that then informs us, his or her decisions going forward because it's highly consistently critical. So we try to do some of that here on our projects is we try to get that unbiased you know we don't have the time windows to perform exhausted research. On the larger projects, we do do that as much as we can in our kind of ad hoc kind of world over here, because you know its super valuable and it's definitely something that and that when investors come they understand the value of the input that we've done.

Right. I kind of see a trend here that you are thinking that designers that they should be equipped with the human-factors kind of research skills and therefore once they know that it's actually more valuable for them to be brought in right early or even partner up as

yeah, I mean that rule to me is combined. In fact I think... like a user experience researcher or human factors or other researcher with a minor in design is more applicable to a startup space than a sheer designer because someone who's really heavy, the problem with a person who's really heavy on design and that kind of stuff and light on user experience they get fumbled into the marketing department right they get fumbled into marketing.

You'll meet designers who are like I'm not about marketing and I'm not about PR that's not who I am. I'm not a pretty picture drawer, you know what I mean? You get that right? I remember talking to people at lextant they'll be like can you make something pretty for me and they'd literally like smack the crap out of me like: no! we don't do pretty. So there's a classification out there.

Do you know how to differentiate them?

I just know generally not to ask for pretty things. I've learned that over the years to not ask for pretty things. I don't know again, I’d have to look at their work. So I remember at lextant we’d look at people's portfolios and we were always looking for people who were actually doing full on research projects like their own personal research projects versus the person that showed a lot of really cool designs, because we wanted to see more thinking processes. I think if I was a startup you know a startup founder I'd be looking for the same criteria. I'd be looking for someone who approaches a user problem figured out how to get data and used that data to inform and create a product. I'd be looking for that as a criteria of that person whether they are on board.

Do you do you actually think that start-up people are aware they actually need something like this?

No (I don’t think startups are aware they need UX designers), so I think that's starting to happen. You're starting to learn more about Lean ux, so lean ux is kinda getting injected into the scene. There's a lot of people who are doing, there's a new, some folks are working on assumption modeling it's pretty much put your assumptions in a box, what you think it's gunna be, get out of the building, talk to some users, come back, and find out if that thing worked. And of course they're teaching this to everybody. But that's the role of the user experience person is kinda doing that.

I don't think start-ups really know about it but I think that's mostly because the people who do that ux space haven't approached them yet. I think there's a huge opportunity to make affordable start up oriented user experience products and services.

Why do you think the ux people are like not going into this field
I think one is because startup folks usually don't have a lot of money and start are seen as a very sort of pre beta alpha product perspective meaning you know what when someone is trying to start something for the first time that product is gonna pivot probably 10 or 15 times before it gets to the customer. How many reiterations of this pen existed before I actually used it today, and where do I want to be, do I want to be on all that iteration stage when things get sort of tried and bied and died or do I want to be on the final stage when you're actually finishing the right product.

So I think there's probably a perspective that while it's a great learning experience, it's a really great for students it's really great for first time sort of ux people to get their jobs done because they have so much more time and control.

I think when ux people go into the work force they go into corporate and if they go into places like lextant, they're not gonna have a ton of autonomy they're gonna be really working with a collaborative team working with a client really focused.

In a startup sense, you have a ton of autonomy because you're dealing with someone who's like "why are users important?", right? You know? So you just have a lot more control.

**Why do you guess people aren't getting into the startup scene? I think in summary, what would you want to- how would you exactly say what designers can contribute and what they need to learn in order to survive in the startup scene?**

I think designers should do more startups. I don't know. I think they should just go after it. I think that they could learn more- you know, they should really sort of follow all the Steve Blank lean start up principals in some of those books and materials and they should really start doing their own projects. And then, network and sort of go to events and sort of share their skills with other folks.

But they have to be really aggressively oriented to express that they are not a "pretty picture designer". Because I think that's what the problem is, the problem is not so much the designer, I think it's the perception that everybody else has about designers. And the role of understanding the user experience is not really well championed in like the average sense, you know what I mean? So in some ways, user experience has to be re-branded or re-articulated to the people who are trying to build things so that they can be approached at, and pulled in at an earlier level, know what I mean?

In some ways it's like, you know, designers kind of need a- if they're interested in the startup space they should think about themselves as experienced strategists or something like that. So they sort of re-frame themselves- yes they do design, yes they do wire framing, yes they can do all those flows- but they really pitch themselves not so much as designer, because designer has a certain perspective of it, but an experienced strategist! And they still show off all the skills a great designer has. But they really position themselves very differently.

And I think the other thing, too, is that they- they- one of the biggest things that helps people in the startup space is making noise. So they have to learn the art of making noise. And they should kind of know that from just doing design and stuff, but getting on the speaker circuit and start talking, doing lectures, doing- you know, you could get a group of designers together and saying we're going to do a startup basics, understanding user flows and experience. You know, bring the entrepreneurs to you so that you can educate them and show them, you know? I think there's a lot of opportunity in that space, as well.

**Are you familiar with design thinking?**

Oh, it's bogus. I mean, design thinking is, it's like, I don't know, it's complex integrations of mass breadth, and mass vagueness, I guess, which is like- you know, design thinking is everything from how this room was built, right? What was the intent of this room? To how this desk was here. To why the keys are this way, maybe not this way. Because using them this way is really hard, so design thinking said to be
this way, you know? I think design thinking is kind of- its falling more under sort of common sense. It should be common or intuitive sense on how things should work.

And I think- I remember hearing folks like Don Norman talk about, like, you know with all the design thinking we have and design research most new products are not generated out of these outlets first. They're generated out of the outlets of someone going "you know what? I'd just like to have a better doorknob!". you know? So you got people who invent, because of such- they don't do comprehensive research to invent. And I do believe in that, I don't think they do.

I think- but I think what we don't realize is that the person who comes up with an idea and makes something happen, they actually are doing research, they are doing design, they're just doing it in their head. And they only have one data point, or the experience data point of them doing it and then watching their friend do it, they just didn't do a comprehensive exhaustive user experienced study to prove it. But they had all the data, right? And then of course they're biased, yes, but they have a notion of that data in them.

So, yeah I think- I think that design thinking is a word that really belongs in the design research world, it belongs in the corporate level world where people are trying to understand, ""how do these kids do this thing called Facebook and why is it worth 400 billion?", you know what I mean? It's usually the people on the outside who are trying to figure out, ""how is this whatsit app was acquired for 16 billion? I don't quit get it."" Right? ""Maybe we need design thinking!""
Startup Expert C

What this centre does

As a centre, we have two types of services. We help individuals who just have business ideas, whether they're students, faculty or anyone on the street...and we also have curricular programs that we use to direct student activities. So if a student were to come to me and say, "I'd like to be an entrepreneur, but I don't know anything about it." I would direct him or her to take some of the entrepreneurship education programs first...but then the middle group...or sorry...at the other end of the spectrum, if a gentleman, a plumber walks in off the street and says, "I'm an entrepreneur. Can you give me any help?" We don't do a lot of services directly for them, like we don't help write business plans and things like that. But we do help in the middle and that's a student who doesn't wanna take classes and has an idea for a business and would like to get started. Or out of a class, did a project, now wants to start that. So we do provide start up services but not to the community at large. We're pretty much an academic program.

In the academic program then, we're either designing and delivering and developing classes that students can take, that give them exposure to the ideas or we're coaching and nurturing and finding funding and making connections in the community for live, students who are doing live ventures.

So is this a minor program?

The ones who want to do the educational path can get a minor, there's no major at this university. The students who don't care about minors and majors but wanna get working on their ideas, they usually don't...the work they do is all based to the benefit of their business, it doesn't apply anywhere to their program...educational program.

What do you think makes a good entrepreneur?

Well, that's a great question. Success. (Laughter) They've gotta be successful to be good, if they're not successful, they're not good...I'm teasing! That's not a really good answer. You know I think the process of entrepreneurship starts with a creative idea and we evaluate that idea as to whether...is it real, does anybody really need what I think is important. And then, once we decide "yes, there's a lotta people who could really benefit from my concept, my product, my service!"...then, can we execute it? Is there, do we, can we get the right resources? Do we have the right experience to manage? So across that whole spectrum, I would have different answers.

If you ask me what makes a good entrepreneur at the idea stage, I would say it's someone who's creative, passionate...and someone who's great at understanding how things work and go together so...every now and then...so one of my best students was a physicist, a PHD in physics who did a website and it was one of the best businesses we've had. He didn't need a PHD in physics to do a website but all his other attributes of creativity and passion...that's just what he wanted to do.

So that's.. I guess if you asked me what would be successful in terms of "How do I know if my ideas have any real value?" It's analytical. They know how to understand an opportunity from the market's perspective.

They're probably outgoing. They like to be talking to others about their idea.. sharing their ideas quite a bit...

and they're open to coaching and nurturing. So coach-able would be the third thing.

But this...on the end, where they're actually trying to execute their companies?? I think it's someone who is very goal oriented...who knows how to set milestones and stick to them and someone who's fairly well-connected. They can line up resources they need...
and lastly, they...what's the best word for it? They're personable. You know, someone who can sell things, who believes in their ideas and is able to actually get customers to buy something. So it's a little different depending on where you are in the process.

**It doesn't need to be the same person**

Not really (need to be the same person with all the skills). Maybe for the first two steps...the "ideation" and the evaluation but when you get down to execution...not really...no. A lot of entrepreneurial thinkers hire people to manage their companies...all the time.

**What are the common challenges that are faced by the entrepreneurs that go through the program?**

Well, two types of challenges; you got personal challenges and these are probably the most profound- Do I have the right experience? Do I have access to the right resources and do I have what I call the bandwidth, it’s literally if I have a home, two children in college and my wife doesn’t work, probably not going to go out and start a company. I’ve got a good paying job, so I don’t have much bandwidth. I don’t have the will, the intent.

If you’re talking about who chooses more academically to go through, I think a lot of the students opt out when they realize how hard it is. Pursuing your own ventures are really challenging ways of providing a livelihood, because of the risks inherent, but the risks come from really the concept we call liability of newness.

If you’re trying to sell a new drink I think of the. I don’t know if you know this. Have you ever heard of the product called Four Loco? It was a drink where it was alcoholic beverage but they mixed it with a caffeine shot. It eventually got pulled off the market by the FDA because kids were drinking these and getting an accelerated reaction to the alcohol. It was invented by students at Ohio State, and before the FDA pulled it off the market it was a 300 million dollar product, very successful. Very very successful. However it took them 10 years to get there. So if you’re inventing a concept that is trying to compete against you know established brands, you need a lot of patience, a lot of hard work. They literally went out and went store by store. They went to 7-11 one store at a time, to UDF one store at a time, drug marts one store at a time, and took years to just get it up over the tipping point where all of a sudden it started getting press and kids started tweeting about it and then it began to sell throughout normal distributors. Normal distributors wouldn’t carry it at first.

A lot of students come up with a business idea and go wow that’s hard. How am I going to compete with coca cola the biggest brand in the world? And so they just stop there. Their idea might have a lot of great value, so if you don’t have that will to push through and passionately pursue your ideas that’s probably the biggest thing, the biggest challenge they have. They just look at it and go that’s way too hard.

The other challenge is limited access to resources. Students only have so much money and so much time and so much you know expertise. They just don’t have all that they need or believe they need to really start and run a business so. That’s the other for the more student academic minded.

It just looks too hard, or it gets too hard. I mean I have a lot of students that come and tell me oh I say how are you doing on your business like a year after graduation? They say I had to stop. Why’d you have to stop? And it has nothing to do with the business. They say I had to pay back student loans or I had to I don’t know, I had to come up with 5000 dollars and I didn’t have it. So a lot of them will stop pursuing their dream or their entrepreneurship avenue because they just didn’t have the resources or it got too hard.

**How important is the team of the startup?**

Well, all of those qualities I mentioned, when you said it doesn’t have to be the same person, it doesn’t but it has to all be representing the project so I think team is critical. In fact I don’t have a single start up I’ve helped since I’ve been here for 10 years that didn’t have a team. I’ve never had a single person come in and say I’m starting this business. Sometimes it’s only one person talking to me but as I ask them they’re like
oh yeah I have a developer and I have a coder and I have a salesperson and I have a market person. I’ve never had a single person in any of my business plan competitions. I only remember a couple.

So, it's a fallacy the notion of entrepreneur, you know, does, goes out by him or herself. It's always a team. It's, it's, so but it's a good reason. A team's essential. So to your question the team is an essential element. Not only to cover all the bases, but because the, they're, you know, it's just that the idea is that much stronger when you have lots of people speaking to, you know, what works and what doesn't work.

**What would be the typical background of an entrepreneur? Or does it even matter?**

Well, there isn't any typical. I was just going to say that. Yeah, I wouldn't say it doesn't matter. There are some attributes, though. Some antecedent attributes. And that is young entrepreneurs who have had a role model in their life. Maybe a parent that owned their own business. Or a relative or someone they looked up to. Like, I don't know, a baseball coach, perhaps. Maybe you really looked up to this person and he or she had their own business. They often have role models. That's a very strong indicator.

Secondly, they often have mentors. Meaning, as, just personal mentors who coach them beyond business. Just who are, just people who they take advice from and are seeking advice from. Another attribute is they have an inner drive. A call, we'd call a need for achievement. Most entrepreneurs have a pretty high need for achievement. But so do athletes, so do politicians, but we also know that's a common factor among entrepreneurs to a high need for achievement.

The last I'll say is they generally, I don't know if this would be across the board, generally have an internal locus of control. And so they believe they determine their future, not their futures, you have, is determined by external factors. You probably have students who say, I couldn't get, I couldn't get a job so I had to go work at McDonald's or something. An entrepreneurial-minded person never says that. They're like I'm working at McDonald's because by working there it's going to get me this and that gets me this. They're very internally driven. Or if they don't succeed it's because, I couldn't get it done. I just couldn't sell the product. Or my product idea didn't work. They never blame the inability to control the outcome on anyone else.

**If that's the case then your educational background doesn't really matter as much?**

You know, generally, the statistics show that the highest population pursuing entrepreneurship in terms of sheer numbers are non-college educated. However, the college educated student are typically those who start faster growing businesses and larger businesses.

So they use the education very effectively to, to do more with it. But, so for example. A non-college educated plumber says, I can get one truck and I can be a plumber the rest of my life. The college educated says, I can, I can start a plumbing business and have, you know. I can franchise it and go national in the same time-frame. So, it's, there's a different growth orientation. Or growth, what's the word, growth propensity. Yeah, the more educated tend to have higher growth propensity. And the less educated have a less growth propensity. So they start smaller and stay smaller.

**You don't really have much experience with designers or have we even encountered any designers coming through this. How often is that?**

Well, one or two students a year in my class. There's a lot more than that in the program. I don't know how many exactly. I might be able to find out. Naw, I'd have to ask. But, but in my class I always have a couple students that are. Either, you know, a double major of some sort or with some design background.

**how would you think that design could actually help in a startup**

Yeah, well the only reason an entrepreneur is successful is because they sell products for whatever their concept is. Products for services. If they can't sell products for services, I'm, no matter how hard they try. You know, you gotta wonder are they. Yeah, are they really an entrepreneur. Because at some point we
gotta say an entrepreneur is someone who can sell products. And why that matter is, in order to sell, you
got to get somebody to buy, and in order for them to buy, they got to believe there is value. And where does
that value come from? It comes from their ability to use the product to solve problems.

So, what I like about design, or what role I think design can play is the ability to maximize the value
delivered from our products and services during customer use. Whether it's a website that helps me find
mailing lists or a soda that I'm drinking, the design element comes in so many fashions in terms of
designing the product, designing the delivery system, and designing the company around it.

I'm not sure if you mean that by design, but I think there are design elements in the company as well. How
am I structured? What's my culture? How do I approach sales? What's my customer acquisition approach?
Designing an organization that then leverages the design of my products and services are more value add,
more profitability for my company is essential to entrepreneurship.

**Do you think a designer will be able to play that kind of role?**

I think if a designer is hung up on the look, I'm not sure… they definitely have value but I think it's
minimal value. If a designer is more focused on the utility, what does the customer get out of the use of my
product rather than do I like, you know…

My opinion is that designers are usually either art oriented, they do it for the art of it, or they are utility
oriented, they do it to make sure maximum value is, is captured in the process. So for me, those that are
whole, their whole focus is on ensuring that the value of this underlying technology or product is realized
by the experience you have with the product - that's very essential and very - I think they make great
entrepreneurs in terms of how they think.

When it's purely the presentation, which I'm not sure how many that is or if that's even a real difference but.
If it's more that, if it's more about does it looks good on a shelf obviously that's going to be less, from an
entrepreneur's perspective, less value.

**How often do you actually see designers founding their own company?**

I don't see any reason why any of them couldn't at any time, so I don't see them very often, but I may see
them more than I know. I don't usually ask what their backgrounds, usually is irrelevant to the role I play.
You know, I'll help housewives who have no edu-, no college education, and I'll help PhDs in biomolecular
genetics or something. So, we work with so many different people that I'm really focused in on the business
side, or the idea of the product concept and the business they want to build around it and whether they have
the skills and experience to do it. So, and, but I definitely have seen designers. I had a very interesting
project in my class. It was lead by one of the design students. It was a new formulation for a backpack - it
was kind of an interesting idea.

So. One of the challenges is, I think that will be important for your way you are setting up your thesis is, is
no entrepreneur, regardless of their previous background has to know everything that, that they have to do
well to succeed in business. Does that make sense? So, for example, I do not know anything about
accounting, but I know that I need a really good accountant to manage my books for me. I probably know
this much about design, but I know that I need a really talented designer to help me get the most value out
of my product design. However, most designers I know don't know much about accounting either.

So I guess what I'm saying is, we have to lead from what we know, it's just the nature of things. I can't - I
wouldn't set up an account bas-. I wouldn't set up a business on how to treat people for cancer, because I
don't know anything about that, so it's just natural that I wouldn't go start a business in that, but there's a lot
of doctors who could treat people for cancer that wouldn't start a landscaping business, but I know a lot
about that.
so what I guess I'm suggesting to you is business ideas tend to emulate from our experiences that we have and what sense we made out of those experiences and by the time you've been through four years of education, you've been inundated with lots of experiences in a pretty narrow vertical.

I know we are working on programs to give students more broad exposure but they are still pretty narrow. So our ideas tend to emulate from those narrow perspectives. So that why i think in the execution, Once i have an idea now i need to execute i need more broad perspectives and expertise and skills to teach entrepreneurs knowing what i know and what i don't know. A lot of entrepreneurs regardless of background struggle with "'I don't know anything about that, i should really go get help"' they just think "'I can figure this out'" and it's one of those critical areas that instigating ends up getting them in trouble.

**So you think it's more important to be just aware of what you can not do, and to find appropriate resources to help you than to you know try to cover everything yourself.**

absolutely, I don't even think that is possible to cover everything.

**So the key is to be more, to be aware of your weakness.**

it isn't just saying i will use outside, it's not recognizing the need to find outside expertise, it's knowing when i don't have enough expertise to do that, i need to, need to find someone.

**So, I can see that your perspective of the design is we leave the firm because is I think a lot of the people tend to think that design is just cosmetic like add-on, so how do you change, how, not really change but how do you get to understand design in a way that is more utility based which is something, that you know in general I think to a non designer and premier, someone that only recognize design as a cosmetic thing. So like how did you actually also see this common thing, did everyone around you share the same perspective as you for design?**

I don't think initially, i mean when my students take the class, a lot of them have the perspective here that they may not come from design but they will have that perspective that design is more about the look, the artistic aspect of it. And, by the end of my class they don't believe that anymore

but yeah, i know what might shifted it for me, was when i got my P.H.D, I Have a P.H.D in Organizational design, and I Understood design as a way elements come together to create functional purpose and value. So when Somebody asks me about it, you know the design of a logo "'Can you design my logo?'" I don't just see colors and artwork, I see what does it say. If I could see the rest of that would i Know? And I don't like this one for example, it's about a healthcare colloquial, i think it is creative, i think it just have very little functionality, i don't get it. So I, So for me that bugs me and I work really hard to get, to get utility out of my design,

But I think it is important to design students, or designers, to recognize that what you said that would how do they sell themselves, how do they? because If you are talking to start-ups you are saying that you are a design student, I would like to work on your start-ups, they are going to go, but they don't get it, yeah i like, So I think it's really more a matter of design itself as a academic program, as a industry. It's presenting it's total value, it's total contribution. so i don't know how to do that because it's just like for me it's kinda an inheritance.

**So, for you, you intentionally teach your students that design is important**

(I intentionally teach my students about design), and I don't even distinguish it. i Say, i don't sit there and go "'We are going to talk about entrepreneur fellowship today'" "'OK now we are gong to talk about design'" "'OK know we are going to talk about innovation.'" For Me I understand the differences if somebody would write an essay i can tell what the differences are, within reason. but they blend, there are necessarily connected that, What is an entrepreneur if they can't get value out of a product. and what is a designer if they can't get really, if they can't get profit, can't make any profit, So the products aren't ready to
design. So for me they kinda put together. So yes I teach my students very specifically how to think like designers even though I couldn't teach design, I'm not qualified to teach design in the arts college.

**Have you heard of the term 'Design Thinking'?**

I've heard of the term, and I think I understand what it is, but you could enlighten me, I'm sure.

I would think craft designers would struggle to be entrepreneurial. Even if by nature they fit those qualities I talked about, I think they would have trouble. Because, well, I don't want to put anybody in a box, but...

There was this small experiment done --it's been several years now, probably eight years ago-- but I read the results of the research, it was very interesting, where they took Arts and Arts Design students and they asked them to create stuff, and then they were going to go sell it. And they challenged them in three areas. They wanted them to price their... so they would design something, or create something, and they had to price it. And it went all the way from, "'I can't price it, it's priceless,'" to "'I can't price that, I don't know. It's just mine. It's what I did. I like it, but I can't ask somebody to pay.'" And they struggled and struggled. The second step was they had to display it. Like merchandise it. So they went to a show, it was like an art show, and they had to set up their merchandise to display their art. And they observed another really significant challenge, as the more crafty-minded were like, "'that's a waste of my time. If somebody likes it, they'll like it. They don't, they won't.'" What we would call packaging and merchandising, they were like... And the third was to talk with people about buying it. And the third level, the crafty ones again struggled to even have conversations about "'what would you pay for it? What is it worth?'" Until the end, when what they did was they had people come around and it was kind of like a silent auction. They'd go around the room and put what they would like to buy it for. And they began to watch that, after ten, fifteen minutes, three or four people... the first person might have put fifty bucks and then it went to sixty bucks, and then the next person put seventy-five bucks in. And so they were like going, "'Why would these be different? I don't understand.'" And then later... the one that was most interesting was the, it was a tractor --this was out in Saint Louis-- but it was a tractor made out of really fine, dried grasses. They literally shaped, and built this thing. It was purely an art piece. And the young woman that was profiled in the article said she would not price this. She just flat out refused. She says, "'It's priceless to me, and probably worth nothing to anybody else.'" And by the end of the night she got a thirteen-hundred-dollar offer for it, and it just blew her away. She was shocked. And they brought them back and did this big lesson on how value is socially and perceptually derived.

And that it's okay to... that this notion of utility should be part of our thinking if we want our designs, our art, to be functional and purposeful. If we just simply want it to be. Display, or to create a feeling, and you never expect it. That's okay, too. But that art has value. Your ideas have value, your talent has value. And it was a really, really compelling piece. And reading that piece might have been how I shifted my thinking. But I certainly have shifted.

All I would caution you is I don't know if that’s true. In any population, that would be like saying, doctors or physicians, they want to heal you and take care of you. Why aren't they setting up doctor’s offices? I mean, there are some that do, but why doesn’t all doctors set up a doctor’s office? They want to help you, you get value out of it, you pay them to get that value, why don’t they all go set up a doctor’s office.

The separation between, I design something with value so that you use it and get the value out of it, versus I design something with value so you will get the value out of it, and I’m gonna build a business around that, is where the entrepreneurship piece comes in. The entrepreneurship piece is designing a business that allows me to sell that product.

Technology, Product. Market. Technology capabilities, Product Attributes, Market Needs. What we do is to create investable, scalable technology-product-market linkages. Once I begin to link technology capabilities with market needs, it begins to inform product attributes. I took the raw technology, and I get what it does, but I ask “Who cares?”, and why do they care. If I can solve their problems, why do they get value, what value do they get, and that begin to inform my product. But wait, never forget that I’m still restricted by the
inherent capabilities of the technologies. So by creating these linkages.. what I’m saying is at the end of this, once I have a solid link that I have to drive, how do I build an enterprise to sustain that. Core technologies with clear capabilities that solve unique problems in the market place, and I have configure a unique product that allows me to sell. Now, what’s that product? It’s a price, and the price I can sell it for, is the inherent measure of value I have created for the market place, now how many can I sell? How many can I sell is about how fast I can grow, can I get enough capital, do I have the right team, is this a good marketing strategy and bla bla bla. That’s all… so that’s why designers don’t… more designers don’t want to start businesses, because they can’t be designers anymore.

So the dilemma comes in when I have to go out and build an enterprise around my craft, I spend all my time managing that enterprise, and not doing my craft. That’s true for every field, not just designers. I would look at that as one of the designers’ anxiety as a point of which, they have to make a criti… do I want to be a business owner who owns a business that designs stuff, or sells really cool designs. Or I want to be a designer, puts cool stuffs into businesses. So, that’s a big dilemma.

If you can elevate the concept of design thinking away from product, to enterprise... I don’t know. Do you guys talk about designing the enterprise, that manages the cool product, that is based on design thinking? It’s easier because usually it’s you and you, or a few people. Start elevating the role design plays in organizational design.
Startup Design Expert A

I think there is a lot of overlap between Art and Design, but there’s some differences. When I think of Art, I think of art... the artist role is to question. To question authority, society, ask questions of us and provoke us. To come up with our own feelings and answers to those questions. Where design, design to me is about being in service to others. Like a design is really about helping people make sense of the world.

Art is about... how to provoke people to have feelings in order to achieve a certain agenda. So when I talk about Art, I think of music, fine art, I think of all of those creative outlets. More about having a point of view, and provoking certain answers to questions vs serving people’s needs. Answering questions or helping them make sense of the world in order to achieve a certain objective goals.

So I see those two things very differently. But the overlap between art and design is this magic factor. It’s this very creativity that defies... it’s more about intuition than it’s about making conclusions based on factual data. Artist and designers rely on their creativity and intuition to connect the dots to create innovative solutions that people aren’t looking, aren’t asking for necessary... The overlap between art and design is intuition and creativity, and craft, the focus on doing things really well.

But why design?

When I say design is the new model of leadership, I’m not saying design is the new leadership. I’m hypothesizing that the skills that designers learn in order to serve people’s needs, directly apply to being a great leader in today’s environment. Because the world is incredibly interconnected. It’s complicated and connected that we have to start thinking more as systems thinker than just solving problems linearly, one at a time. Traditional business people typically have a problem, they solve it, and they move on to the next problem. But today’s world is so interconnected. Look at us now, we are much more people connected than ever before. We are more connected via environments, via governments, all of those things are about having an impact on a systems. Designers are systems thinkers. They understand that the decision on one piece of the system is gonna have impact on the other piece in the system. Designers are breed to take risk. Traditional leaders look at mitigating risk, they start with what are the risk, and how am I gonna knock those risk off the plate. But designers use risk as a way of learning, and a way to get to the next level, to be better, be more innovative. Designers live in this world of analytics and creativity. It’s not about design being a new model of leadership. It’s embracing the mindset that designers learn, for everybody. Everybody is born creative, we just lose our creativity beginning around 4th grade, by the way we are educated. The very programs that are igniting our creativity are no longer being taught in schools. Those creativity skills, lead to design and art, are the very things we need in today’s society, in order to progress as a society. So that’s the point I’m making.

Creativity and innovation?

In order to be innovative, and improving the products.. you have to be using creativity to get.... Analytics and crafts etc.

Leadership by design, = design thinking

I hate design thinking. First of all, the word innovation is often being misunderstood. The term design thinking is often being misunderstood. The term design thinking is being popularize by tim brown and david Kelly. Basically what they are talking about is using design processes to come up with innovative solutions. Design thinking is an oxymoron. Because design is not useful unless you are doing.

Part of being a CEO and part of embracing design is what I called Getting Shit Done. The thinking part leads to doing. So I find design thinking half of the design equation. And I don’t consider that similar to
what I’m talking about. But a lot of people put those two things together. In order for us to solve the world’s problems, think like designers, feel like designers and work like designers.

**DEO = Success?**

No. Because you could have DEOs that suck. What makes a great leader in today’s society, one can call them DEOs because they embody these characteristics.

Leadership is one of the most important attributes for successful businesses. People are looking to their leaders more and more, and how their leader’s values map to their company’s values. Consumers are paying a lot more attention to what is going on in the inside of the company than ever before. So the leader’s role is the most important towards building a successful company.

And embodying these (DEO) characteristics will enable them to be more successful. Because society has changed. Another example, just the way people has changed. We moved from this notion of working in isolation to working in teams. Cooperation and teamwork has been increasingly important, more so than ever before. The success of a product or service is really the result of teamwork. It’s not the success of the rockstar in the corner anymore. These are the big things that I mentioned in my book that is really different than traditionally.

There are also other things that will affect the success of a company, financial model, culture, a product that is successful in the market place. All those things will make company successful, but the DEO as a leader will be better equipped for today’s businesses.

**DEO = Designer?**

You don’t have to be born a designer to be a DEO. It’s really about do you have these qualities or do you not. I’m just calling these qualities Design oriented qualities. But there has been people in history who has been incredible visionary in the world of business or government or entertainment, and they possess these qualities that I’m classifying as DEO qualities. But you don’t have to go to design or art school. It’s really unlocking these skillsets that you have as a child and using your creativity, using these softskills more to lead companies rather than suppressing them. So my hypothesis is that anybody could be a DEO if you …

these qualities. Like being more people centered for example. Having learn to be more empathetic, there’s tones of ways you can be more empathetic towards the people that you serve. There are tonnes of ways to be more empathetic towards your employees, by getting to know their families, their real life situation is. Realizing what you do at work and at home is blending more and more in society. How do you incorporate that into the business worlds, how do you have enable people to have home life and business lives. Those kinds of acknowledgements and sensitivity is important for success.

**Why DESIGN?**

Can you think of a different word (besides design)? The reason why I use the word Design intentionally, was because the very definition of design is changing. Design and the word designer, is a very misunderstood term. When I think of the word design… when somebody says they are designer… I love to do this in my… when I’m teaching. If you define yourself as designer, how would you define yourself? What does design mean to you? When somebody defines themselves as a designer, typically this happens: it’s very hard to describe what you are doing. We bring great things to live, but what does that really mean? We kind of go to these artefacts, to define what we are all about, but the definition of design is not about it at all. Design is about change. Designer is about being a facilitator… It’s being a negotiator.. It’s about a lot… Design is more of a conduit to get to an end result, and the end result is something about change.
So when I say a DEO, I’m talking about a change agent. Design to me is about change, it’s about radical change, and designers enable change to happen. And everybody can be that person. Because it’s not about making an artifact.

A mindset and approach, rather than a craft. The craft, the ability to make things, is part of it. But the first thing you have to do when we are talking about DEO is to change your mindset about what design means. And design does not belong to an elite group of people who gets a degree. These are people who embody change.

Are designers more likely to be DEOs?

No (designers are not more likely to be DEOs). I think that a lot of designers limit, don’t realize the superpower that they have. And they relegate themselves as makers of artifacts. And that’s part of our problem. We as an industry tend to celebrate the artifacts and not the process to get there. And there are a lot of things that are intangible that designers design. Systems design, processes, services,… these are things that people can’t see, but they are designed experiences.

Are design founders DEOs?

Yes. I think that design founders are DEOs. I’m very very excited about design founders, because they are the ones that have found that combination of leadership and using their creativity to create a company or product and service. They already have a built in vision, and they know actually how to make their vision real, because they are designer-led founders. And the rise of design-led founders is a testament of the new way of leading, which is DEOs.

It’s interesting, when I give out my book to design founders or design CEO, they say Thank you. I have never known how to define myself. I’m a leader but I lead very differently than traditional counterparts, and I don’t know how to call myself. Many of these leaders are thanking me because now they have a term for how they distinctly run companies, and they run them differently. DEOs run company very differently than traditional founders.

How would you define Designers if it’s not the training?

A lot of design founders haven’t even gone to school. There’s a lot of founders who didn’t graduate college. So you can’t define it by the education. So then… some of these come right out of high school. It’s not that they take design classes in high school.

So how do I define them? I define them by people who embody these principles, which points to the kind of things that designers learn in school. So you could somehow, you don’t have to go to school to get these skills, you could have them as part of your DNA. You can be somebody who has great EQ or get shit done or born a risk taker, all of these things are inherent as qualities.

Now if you go to design school, you learn those qualities. So if you don’t go to design school, you learn it through experience. You can get those training in design school, but you don’t have to go through design school to get it.

Hopefully you can read my book to get the playbook. That’s reason why we wrote the book. I really felt that this is a book that had to be written, not necessary a book that I wanted to write. Coz I felt that this is not like a secret society.
Like people… you don’t need a fancy degree to be a really great leader. And I wanted to create a book to actually lay it out for you. Like… here’s what you need to do. Not to say it’s easy, but to show to anybody who believes in this way, could do this work.

**Is the company culture that a DEO builds naturally a design culture?**

Yes (DEO naturally builds design culture). I think that designer founders have a leg up, because they know how to build a design culture, because it is part of who they are. I totally agree that…

it used to be businesses… if you have a really great technology, and you are the first to market, you can have successful company. But that’s because technology is so new at that time, and it required special skills to develop these technology. It’s sort of like the secret sauce. People were willing to forgive bad experiences in order for them to do things technologically that they haven’t been able to do before.

For example, when the web started, in 1993 or 94, remember like it crashing in 10mins, but you still did it. Or opening Photoshop for the first time, and waiting half an hour for it to render. Because you couldn’t do it before. Nowadays, so many people were born into these technology, it’s part of their own DNA, they don’t have patience for bad experiences anymore. So people, especially young people, demand good experiences. They are not going to sit and wait for any minutes, because this is not part of their past. This demand for good experiences means, that we need to create products that are meaningful, and serve a purpose, and that they are great products. Because people are not going to buy shitty products anymore. And they care about how products are made, they care about companies that support them, there’s all these things now that are around the products that are beyond the tactile quality.

And that’s why design is so critically important now because it becomes a competitive advantage. Design can’t be a commodity, but technology is. Technology is the commodity, but design has become the differentiator.

**Why aren’t there more DEOs or design founders?**

I think that they(DEOs) are coming out of the closet everyday. I think that we are where right in these possible conditions. It’s because the world is interconnected, and because we are care about human kind more, we care more about people. There’s also study after study, that showing that creativity has become the most important competency, globally, worldwide, all of these conditions is creating these right environment for people to start thinking differently about what it means to lead a company differently.

You see a ton, I have not done a study about these DEOs, but many of them are coming out of the west coast. They are young, they don’t have the history of what it means to be a good business. Many don’t go to business schools to become leaders anymore, so they have to use their own intuition and figure out how to lead their own companies based on their own experiences. And the environment is right for these kind of leadership and it will only be increasing. The hope is for everyone to be DEO, and the old CEOs die off.

**How can we find more DEOs or Design founders?**

(having more DEOs) It’s gonna happen naturally. Hopefully more people read my book. It’s gonna come from more people talking about it. We can see Business schools talking about it. It’s gonna take time, for people to become these new form of leaders.

(change to DEO) It’s not gonna happen overnight. Because it requires u to change what has been done before. It’s a cultural shift, and cultural shift takes time. Now I’m enjoying the fact that there are not a lot of DEOs, because that makes me more important.

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Easier for designers to step up to become leaders, or for business people or non-designers to pick up these skills and become a DEO?

I don’t think one is easier than the other (designer become leaders, or businessman become designer). Because it ultimately comes down to you, and your ability to have confidence in yourself, your ability to either step up or lean in. I don’t see it easier for designers, because they have to embody leadership characteristics, designers have to recognize that they have these superpowers and can use them a lot higher upstream than how they use them downstream. Business leaders can realize they have the ability to influence people, they have the quant side down, they have the data, they have to trust their intuition and be more people centered in order for them to move in. So one has to step up, one has to lean in. I think they are both ends that can yield the same results.

Design school needs to teach more about business, and business schools need to teach more about design. And that’s happening now. You can see standford d.school, you can see CCA where I teach, called Business and Design, where I teach MFA students with some other teachers, how to create a product and a business in a semester. So these things are really happening at a progressive school models, and they are going to be models for other schools.

What are the main challenges to get more DEOs?

The main challenge is People, and their ability to understand that this is important, and that the mindset has to change. The big schools are historically the slowest to change. They are the worst when it comes to understanding how people are learning, how design is changing, how business is changing. I would say that’s the biggest threat that the schools are falling behind. But then so many of these design founders are saying Fuck Schools, I’m gonna do it. So I think the risk is that the institutions are not moving fast enough. The other risk is that these principles can be thought in high schools. We can begin talking more about collaboration and cooperation, empathy, and using your creativity in high school. we are going to get a lot more DEOs faster.

What about beyond education? What are the challenges?

If you look at some of the most successful business, fortune 100 companies, and you look at the leaders, except for gas industries that have nothing to do with people. But if you look at tech companies, entertainment, you at the people at the leadership level, you see that they are running the company very differently than other less successful. So for those traditional businesses that are really slow to adopt, a lot of them are even slow to get on to the web, or embrace technology, or are afraid of thinking how people are… kids are their whole pattern are changing. I grew up in the TV generation. Most kids don’t watch TV, my kids only watch on the internet. But the ipad is how they watch tv, they consume stuffs differently. Companies turn a blind eye to progress, or they look at progress as a threat, these are they people that fall behind.

What suggestions do you have to make the change faster?

I don’t know. The more people, more models that are out there, the more measurable success stories that are out there, are going to speed the process out. I don’t think it’s within my power to speed the process up, but people will model good behavior. So if there are great, not just about feel good, it’s like is this materially having a positive impact on the bottom line. If that’s the case, it’s gonna speed up.

Much like the green movement, the green movement didn’t take off, until people are willing to spend more money on products that are good for the environment. Then suddenly people start caring.
Startup Design Expert B

Manufacturing company and sold it in 2008 and that changed the way I’ that changed our consulting firm from the top to the bottom, because at that point we began to think like a business firm, and not like a design firm. So much so that I, I used to joke that I would send letters to my former clients apologizing for having a limited view of what their business was, because I only thought of it as a designer and didn’t think of it as a business, I didn’t think, we’re designing a product for you, and that product has to be manufacturable and sellable and marketable and, and create revenue and revenue’s gonna create new products.

I had that limited view of the designer, traditional designer who said, I’m designing a cool product, at the end of my time when I give you the drawings, I’m done, I don’t care what happens after that. That is reckless behavior, you know, and that, and that has, that has to change. I think there’s also an old trend of designers who believe that design is the most important thing, when it comes to the businesses. It’s not, it’s one of the things that, that contribute to the value, so I think that big, see a big picture, being a creative thinker are two huge drivers that designers apparently have that make good business people... and a, and a creative problem solver.

we used to say, when I had the business, lets not do it the traditional way, lets do it the right way, and so often times that would be a discussion we had, ‘well, everyone else does it like this’, well just because everyone else does it like that doesn’t mean it’s the best way to do it, given current state factors and scenarios, like, lets just do it the right way and then, well, that’ll be the truth that will follow.

That takes a, it does take a creative mind to be able to, to be able to challenge yourself to think outside of, I, I hate the word, ‘outside the box’, think outside of the normal path, understand what is the, what is the right path, you know?

When I say the term, ‘design founder’ what would you, who would you actually constitute a design founder? Do they really have to have design training background or’?

No, I don’t, I don’t think so (design founder needs design training) because design to me a design founder is someone who, who recognizes the ability to use design in, in its broad sense, create a plan, right? So, design is to create a plan and every good business man creates a plan.

So to me a design founder is also a designer, they design their business to solve the problem that they’ve identified there is a need for, right? And that is, does not have to be exclusive to people who have design training. Some of the best designers that are called designers, have no design training at all.

Dan Rockwell’s a perfect example, Dan Rockwell doesn’t have a degree in design, he’s one of the most creative business people I’ve ever met, you know. He can listen to your idea and go, ‘Yeah, well what about this? What about this, and if you change this, and what about that?’ That, you know, you don’t need design training to do that, you have to have a, a, in fact, I’m gonna go maybe super philosophical in that, I think that designers aren’t trained. I think you’re kind of generally born a designer, you know?

this is why I like talking to kids about, about the profession of design because they all think in terms of design, you know, they think like, ‘I can make this thing better’, you know? ‘I can, I can make that cart go faster if I put different wheels on it’, or ‘I can make this tower that I’m building bigger’. You know I think that kids don’t have this limited sense of what they can do, and, and they have the great ability to see creatively, how something could be different, and I, I really like to encourage that, I want kids to be think that way.
I’ll even say, to some extent, that hard scientists can become, could be designers, because they have to think of creative ways to solve common problems. You know, a researcher, a researcher has to come up with a plan to how, to solve a problem and though that plan might be very straight forward like, ‘Well, go get this data and see what the data says and then go through the client’. Well you could take that and say, ‘Go see the data is that ethnography, you know? I mean, you’re, you’re, it’s just depending on what, what input you’re putting in, you’re still going through the process.

Would you actually summarize it as creative problem solving? And that you actually, you actually call that process of creative problem solving as design?

Design is creative problem solving.

But you have to be really cautious of using the word "creative." I like the word but I think that it has been sometimes given the wrong connotation. Saying creative is wearing tennis shoes and a t-shirt. No, creative is solving, looking at all the options and trying to think of what is the best option. To me, that's creative. Uncreative is somebody who says "Well, let's just look at what everyone else did and let's just do it their way." Let's just repeat the same mistakes without actually having to stop and think about what the opportunity is. So, to me, you short yourself so horribly if you don't think creatively about everything.

I'm not very design-oriented but I love to practice it. I think creatively about how I'm going to get home tonight. I go "Let's see, it's a warm day, so I don't want to drive on the freeway and I want to see maybe some flowers blooming or I want to put the windows down and I like to be able to hear the city, so I'm going to go this different way." I didn't think about designing the path but I'm going to go home based on the different experience that I want to have because I look at that as an opportunity. To me, when you solve a problem based on historical process without thinking through what might be the best option, then you're shorting your life, you're just not living to a fulfilment because you're just living the way someone else thought it should be instead of saying "This is the way it ought to be."

But again, that's where, to me, the design philosophy of a good leader comes in. A good leader, his company is going to die if he just follows somebody else's path. They have to constantly rethink the path they're going to follow.

It's kind of like the ability to keep challenging yourself? And challenging existing things?

Absolutely, and taking the opportunity to challenge. I've said that to people before, I've said - they say "Well, why do you have to recreate that?" and I say "Because you have the opportunity to recreate it. If the opportunity presents itself, you should always question." Sometimes the opportunity doesn't. You don't have time, you don't have money, you don't have - but if you have been given some ability to rethink a problem, absolutely do it. You may not come up with a new solution but you at least have proved the solution you have is the right solution because you went around and you thought through it.

I can see that you were saying that the important skill that designers have is the ability to keep questioning and expanding options instead of limiting yourself to existing stuff?

That's right. The ability to interpret and then begin to converge is also critical. There's a lot of designers who love to creatively diverge their thinking but then don't have the discipline - that's a word I use a lot - don't have the discipline to say "Okay, now we're at a point in the process where we have to converge and we're going to converge based on a series of predetermined guidelines or goals." I never am fond of saying "Early on in the project, we're not going to define where it's going to go." Well that's crazy. Everything has to have some parameters. You have to be able say "I'm setting aside some expectations early and I'll allow myself to expand these ideas and then I'll start to filter them in based on the criteria that I set up,
which allows me to bring it back into focus and then get it really super focused in order to actually implement and actualize the solution to the problem.

I think, from that standpoint, some of my philosophy may differ from some standard of design. I had to because I had to run a business. At the end of the day, you can't just sit and think of big ideas all day long, you have to know how to implement and execute. Designers tend to not - they're a little afraid of execution, they're afraid to say "This is where we are, I have to make a decision today." Designers don't like to make decisions and then stand line.

I heard this great philosophy one time that designers always wear black because they don't want to be committal, they don't want to commit to a color, they don't want to be held accountable and they don't want to make a decision. Wearing black is this great way to not commit to anything other than something that's simple and can't be argued with. Discipline is really important to me and I think even creative thinking can have discipline.

Because you can set aside, again sort of this is something that Erika and I practice a lot, create an activity or an exercise that has discipline that allows you to have, you know, creative flow. Whether it's certain types of brainstorming, or it's smashing two bits of research together to see what you get, or it's doing sort of predictive modelling of a particular idea? I really am a fond reader of being creative and also creating a path that we know how you got to it.

I really... it really really angers me when I have this idea. And we had this incident here where a designer came and showed me his concept for this thing we were going to build here, and I said, "So, tell me how you got here?" Like, what was the it's kind of an unusual... Unusual idea like... "What was the process? What? What was the steps you went through?" "Well, I just threw it" and I said: "Okay. Don't ever come back to me ever again." But that is an explanation. You know, if you had no idea, like then done this, then go back. You can't tell me just you know, come out of midair.

There's a philosophy to the assignment that I just happened to read, this guy wrote. This guy, Gerald Brownley... There are two types of problems designers try to solve. Problems people have and problems designers delude themselves into thinking people have. That is like the designer's dilemma. You know, because this is a real common thing, right?

Think about how many design researchers know what they want to solve. Now, this is different from what I talked about before, knowing where you want to go. They know the problem they want to solve, so they start doing research based on let's solve the problem. Let's solve the reader's problem. I know I have finding the path to the research I want to connect. And if it, research, somewhere starts going off, you know, the wrong path, then they quit doing it. Or they talk themselves out of it. That's really concerning to me.

You know, and I see that with design firms. They know where they want to go. And big ones. I mean, we did a project with IDEO one time, and as they were doing the research, which and I really liked the research they were doing, just conducted great interviews and just doing a lot of good documentation, and then I noticed at the same time, they were, they started presenting concept work. And I said, '"Well, how is that possible that you could be doing, showing concept work and you're still doing the research?" He said, '"Well, those two don't really talk." It's like, well, how can you do concept work without the research? And it was a, it was just a, you know, that was the way they did some of their business. They were sort of selling the research component. But they were doing concept work without absolute direct connection between what was done and the research. So I thought that that was a really unusual process. And I don't want to say that's typical for them, but for that project that was really disappointing in that arrangement.
To make informed design decisions. That's a really critical, that's a really important step. Because the designers have like, they want to make something cool. So they're going to make stuff to look cool, and the research is going to be a way of hemming them in that they know all the end by.

So, do you know the company Lexton? So I had, lets just stay with Taylor Lee, cause he was one of the researchers there at Lexton. And we talked about this, that theory. Saying, them, they're trying to put that out of practice by saying to the company "If you'll let me research, just have research, or if you already generally know what you want to do, and you're doing the research, to try to validate that, don't do it. Don't do the research. If you're going to do the research, be pure about it. Be pure about the process. And the research may show that you, that you are totally wrong, or that you have to move in a completely different direction. But better to know the truth, than to bury your head and just drive with what you want to know.

And so, I think that probably puts them, as a business, in a dilemma sometimes. Because they certainly want to get the billing for the work. But at the same point, are they, are they willing to make the stand to say if you don't value the research, then don't do it. We're not going to do it. Now, I think that that's gotta be a really interesting dilemma for companies to come to. Companies that have to... make money out of their service.

What do you think in how like is research even taught to designers? Like... how much does, yes. How much does designers value research?

I, you know, I can't say that I could speak for all designers, I tend to think that designers will tell you that they value research. But they generally don't want research to tell them what they, think they already know. They also are, tend to be a little lazy when it comes to really doing research. Myself included.

you know, we call it ethnographic research right, because it's easy to go watch people and take notes, and maybe take a little bit of video, and write some observations, but when you see other scientists do research, it takes years and rigor of filling in notebooks and a notebook of observations and try out tests and, and, and huge failures. That's, to me that's research, you know.

And it doesn't mean to say that ethnographic research or watching somebody and documenting it isn't-isn't not. There's value. It's way more than I did when I was, when I was the first ten years of my career or fifteen years. You did whatever you wanted to do. The designer was everybody. I mean, you designed the product that you wanted for what you thought they wanted nobody every validated anything. You know, there was no research—Research was seeing what the competition did, just so you would copy it. It was just horrible. You know, and your basic decisions are absolutely nothing other than purely subjective. Decisions by the company or by you as the designer, or whatever.

So, I do think that design research has taken huge, huge jumps. In the last fifteen years. As evidence of somebody, like Liz Sanders, you know, I mean...I look at the...you know...insight that Dave Smith and Dean Richardson who owned the firm that she started working for must have had, when they hired her. I mean cause she's-she's you know, you worked there thirty-five years ago, and she was there when I was in school. And for those two guys, who are both fantastic designers, fantastic company founders, to say "I think we should hire a cognitive psychologist," You know? I, I gotta believe that the rest of the designer world was thinking "You insane? What do you care about what she has to say? What can she-how could she impact design. And, not only has she impacted design, I might go as far as to say that she might even be the queen mother of design research in the United States. You know, that's how much I think of her—how highly I think of her. And I, and I think of her in those terms because I hear other known design researchers talk about her that way. Liz Sanders, oh my god, she's Sanders, yet she's so, she's...she's very a humble, you know, I don't think she acknowledges, and she would probably say that, she would say that I'm-well I'm completely wrong. That-that my opinion of her is completely wrong, you know, She's not led this. What I think she has, she was really groundbreaking. Working in a design function, and a design firm as a psychologist. And the research that she does is so perfectly pure, that even today, that people have a hard time, you know, making the translation because her research is so, is so good. You know.
So, I...I think that you guys should really encourage that you get a chance to work, you know, around projects that she's working on. But she was very insightful that designers didn't want to do that, so-and you could see her change, right, she...was was ahead of...of user experience before user experience was a word. She was ahead of...of user-centered design before user-centered design became a word. She was experimenting with co-design before co-design was now just still in its infancy of being applied, right? And she's already like, make tools is-all right, that company's ten years old or something at this point, you know. So now that she's talking about this idea of make spaces-I'm even more fascinating because she is really, ahead of the game, you know. And I think the work she's doing with-with you know, David Staley? You know, the two of those two together, you know, they should win an award or something. Cause they really are thinking, they just think differently. But because they come from non-traditional design backgrounds, right? They are creative thinking planners who have this fantastic ability to see people in-in on a state, right? And I think that's really important.

There's a woman that I work with, who-who works out of our Worcester campus, she is a soil physicist. So she looks at the way that soil compounds actually work, and how soil aligns itself. She's not doing business intelligence documents for this industry RAYS on office that I'm working with. And you should see the reports she puts. She doesn't look at with this eye that an MBA looks at it. She doesn't look at it like a designer. She looks at it like a researcher. Well, a company is doing this activity and this activity and filing these patents and writing these papers and going to these conferences, so I'm going to put all of this data together and then begin to infer what the company is doing moving forward and what their needs are. To me, it's so brilliant and it's funny when you talk to her about it because she doesn't think that way. She thinks, "I'm just putting together reports." And I'm like, "You know, you really need to give presentations on just putting together reports because what you're doing is so much further, so much more detailed and interpretive than what's coming out of any MBA that I've ever seen put together a business report. I'd love to really drive her. I would like to have her do a design project. She would just kill it. She is also so bluntly honest about everything. I mean, you could say, "Listen, we're going to look at all this research, but I really want to go this way." She's like, "I'm sorry, it's not going to go that way. It's not going to happen." It should never happen. If you drive her that way, you're wrong. But I love that! It's a pure honesty.

This is something that I have a problem with designers. Designers aren't typically a very honest people, sometimes. They aren't honest about what the truth is. They're honest about what they want to do and that they want to win an award and that they want to get the next job, which are all good things. I don't mean to get on my soapbox, but I think that designers could use a little more honesty sometimes and research is a great way to do that. I know I've gone off on a tangent, but these are all traits of a good leader.

So, technically, it's actually, I would say, the ability to not only just conduct research, but to synthesize the research data.

But synthesize the data based on some determined factors. So, let's say you've done all this research and you have all these data points of how people might interact with a product. We know their safety concerns and how big it should be and what the intervals should look like, but when you go then to do the interpretation and synthesizing of that data, you need to have some standardized metrics, points of evaluation because what you don't want to do is do all this great research and then just make purely subjective decisions.

Well, here's all of these different factors. Which one do you like? "Well, I like this one." Well, why do you like that one? Do you like that one because you know where you can't take it? You like that one because it reminds you of something from when you were a kid? I don't know that I think it should be "I like...." No, no, no. My opinion doesn't matter. It's my customer's opinions. It's then user's opinions that's most important. So, even if it's just using... if you're synthesizing your interpretation is based on user criteria that's great. There's criteria. You just have to be careful to not to just inject some subjective decision
into the process because then you've also rendered all your data useless to me if you then run it through a filter of what you want.

**It's the same as conducting research to see what you want to see.**

(conducting research to see what you want to see) That's right. That's exactly right. You discard if you don't. Which happens, this is not a perfect world. I mean, that happens, but it would be really good if you could actually interpret the data based on some very objective viewpoints because then you know that all the way along you can justify decisions.

Now, I'm going to throw a wrench in that whole philosophy. I'm a firm believer in this idea of gut-feel. Do you know this term gut-feel? But not in the necessarily truest sense, but in the sense of this guy who wrote the book ""Blink"" and ""Outliers"", Malcolm Gladwell." He talks about, in Blink he talked about, gut feeling, but he says gut feeling is based on real world experience. You know? I mean, you know that you can go into a restaurant and within the few minutes in the restaurant you can say, ""I'm going to like the food"" or ""I'm not going to like the food."" Now you don't haven't done any data that says why you like that food or what to like that food, but you say, ""I like the way that it smells. It looks clean. The people look like they are enjoying themselves. My quick glances at the portions look like something that would be appropriate and fitting for what I want to do."" You know? So, you haven't gone through all of that in your head to say, ""here's my checklist of why I like this restaurant."" You walk in very quickly, ""I like this restaurant."

It's like a website. This is why I think it's so cool that people are recognizing that somebody makes a decision about a website in 10 seconds or something right? Not because they have done this full evaluation. Because they have had enough experience with websites that they know immediately, and their brain is able to process super fast, ""Is this a site that I trust? Is it going to be easy to navigate? Does it have the information I'm looking for right up front? Does it in fact fit what I'm here to go try to find??"" You know? And you know that decision very quickly. You didn't have to go through a checklist in your head or go through the data, but it was all part of that gut feel. So that's where, this is where I love this Malcolm Gladwell approach because we all have this innate ability to make quick decisions based on years and years of mental hoarding.

**So that would be kind of first impressions? And it's all based on, probably, your past experience or anything... that impacts you.**

And the best thing about that is each of us individually have that sense, right? So tell me one thing that you, aside from design, one thing that you, maybe that you did as a kid that you are good at. If I could sing one second of a note and you would know immediately whether I was a good singer or not. Or whether I was had been trained or whether I was just horrible, right? I have no ability to make that decision because I don't have the experience as a singer. You know?

And so, this is where I love this idea that you as a designer like this whole idea of being born as a designer. When I was a kid I loved colors all the time. I was a...I loved stopping and looking at what colors were put together. You know? And that was always that fascinated me. And so those are things that I learned when I was as I was a little kid. I liked the way things, you know, colors fit together. I'm also very geometric, so I like always like a lot of line stuff up, right? You know? I think that's also sort of a designer thing, but I, you know, but I do like things arranged. I always have.

And so I think that this is what I love about that first impression. If you have the experience, that first impression is really good. So, there are people, and this is what the point I am...I hope to think I am in my career right now from a business stand point is I've seen a number of businesses and know whether they fail or have been succeeded. So, somebody can come in and they can give me a 10 minute scenario on what
their business is and I can generally say, "'yep, it's a good business or it's a bad business'" or "'you're missing on this point and you need to spend time adhering to that.'" Because of hearing...it just experience. I haven't looked at their data. I haven't looked at their books. I don't know whether that person has a billion dollars in their pocket, you know? It just evaluating business ideas.

And this is where I think also, as a leader, designers are good at collecting this data, you know, about what's good and what's not good. As we walk around and look at the way, visually, things are put together. Because we are very visual learners, right? So, when it comes to being then or making, you know, being a business person, if you as a designer you have a collective, collective, collective information, then you become good at, very quickly, at assessing whether something is a good path or a bad path for a business and you can make a decision about that. That may be this first impression, or this gut feel, but it's probably pretty accurate, you know? And I think there is something to that.

Because it's funny, you know? You're a designer. I'm a designer and we could talk about, you could recount walking though here and say, "Oh, well I know their space arrangement was this" or that "the boards are that color," you know something? There's people here who have, couldn't have picked any of that up. Maybe their very good at number or very good at this or very good at that. They have they couldn't tell you anything about what the shape of something was or that something was off or that something wasn't aligned. You know?

Observation. And I think, I think that has, that is a big thing about walking it through inherently why designers tend to be good business people, because they're pretty good observers. They also read people really well, I think. And that's a big part of business is, you know, to read people and interpret situations and understand appropriateness.

You know, think about designers that you've met who are just, they are awkward. They are probably, generally, not very good designers because they don't, they don't listen and they don't watch people.

Interesting. I've never heard people describe designers in that way and, like, the way the personality of the designer reflects the design skill and everything.

Yeah. Now maybe this is my opinion. And I, I'm sort of starting to challenge it as you are writing it through. Is like you said. Is that one person’s point of view, is there something there, you know?

I did see that there are a lot of different types of designer. And, I cannot say all types designers are, like, good entrepreneurs or a good leader. And, therefore, I'm trying to find out, like, who are they? Or are they just typical, like, if you actually take a test that says whether you are suitable or not, is it just that or is it something, something more about designers that, you know, if you have more, if you have more interest in these qualities maybe you are more suitable to do it.

Well, I think that you can definitely do some personality tests to decide that but... It's a funny thing, because I’ve thought about this a lot.

So when I started our sporting goods business, I partnered with an accountant because I said, ‘Oh, well, I’m not very good with numbers. So, I better hire an accountant.’ And this, he - who is still a good friend of mine, today. We talked about it initially. Like, he considered himself this stable person behind me, this wild horse, at the end of the ropes. He would sort of, like, be along for the ride but, he was, he was using these reigns to steer me here and steer me there and steer me down, you know? And I always at the end of it running and running and running. But, as we continued to work together, I have, I gained this greater appreciate for running a business based on the data of numbers. And, in fact, found it really creative and really fun. And I loved it. I loved that part of me. That part of business right now is very interesting to me. Because, when I started to find, and so. As, when we sold the business we had almost flipped roles because,
I had, I was really ‘by the numbers’ like, understanding how my business ran. And he was constantly saying, ‘Okay, what’s the next big thing we’re doing?’ So I got to, I got, so we really switched roles because he got to be very free by being around me and getting to thinking ‘big’ and I was the one saying, ‘What are the numbers?’

And, so, I wonder, and I, and I, so I - and this will be something a that would be a little fascinating in this part of your research to find out a little more about ‘ is, do designers not make good entrepreneurs because they don’t think they are good entrepreneurs? Or that they haven’t been exposed to some of the components of that?

Because, like, think of it in the same terms. Engineers that say, ‘Well I’m not very creative.’ I would probably challenge that. Creative confidence, right. I don’t have the ability. So, I’m going to say the designers may be not numerically confident, right? But, when you lay out a spreadsheet and the spreadsheet is, is your business model, and you know that, okay, if I, I can make this product, I can make this component of a better material and it’s going to cost $0.62 more, how does that effect my ability to sell? Like, how does that work through? I love setting up spreadsheets that show me how I can control, how design decisions can be made and then funnel it into how the business works. You know? So I think that a number of people can be very creative, you know? Because they have to think and create a plan and, and’

**In fact, they are probably very creative but, they do not see what they are doing as ‘creative’.**

That’s correct. That’s right. Because they see math as having an ultimate answer. And they don’t envision that creativity can have an ultimate answer. Now, I don’t know that I would say that either. But, it can have a good answer, you know?

And you have to, to me from an accounting standpoint if you have a problem to solve, there are so many ways you can solve it. You have to begin to visualize it what is the best place to start, what might be the best path that I take, in order to get to that answer. Because I know that if I just wander around I’m going to get there but maybe that's not the best path. So your starting to create this plan of approaching a mathematical problem. And so that may be my challenge as I like the idea of teaching designers about business because they will almost inevitably say ‘Well I'm just not a very good business person.’ Well maybe that's because you didn’t’ find what was interesting about it. I think we tend to be wanting to be finding exciting things that we believe are creative. So if you present things to them and allow them to think creatively and then go, ‘Your thinking like a business man.’ ‘Oh, no, no, I'm not.’ ‘Ya you are actually.’

I just, I'm meeting last week with a guy who's one of the design directors at the Limited and obviously a supper creative guy. Who just said ‘I don't really have a good head for business.’ I said, ‘You know I think your selling yourself short, I bet you have a really great head for business. Because you just make decisions about what's good, you just don't call it that.’ So this is something that you and I really have explored a lot, which is, semantics and words, are so critical, to these sort of conversations.

**There are a lot of connotations to creativity, and business, and even design, that people just, people just cannot let go. And really explore it. It's the same with engineering too.**

Oh no, it exactly is, and this is a funny thing. Because so, I'm testing this a little bit right now, because I came back here to this job with the intent of really creating new ideas for inventions, and working on product development. I'm actually moving into a new position, as an operational coordinator for a whole collaborative effort. And I don't have a masters degree, I don't have an MBA, I don't have an engineering background, or PHD, but all the people whom I'm dealing with all do and they've said ‘We love the way that you think.’ And they don't attribute it to design. You know, they attribute it to, your education doesn't make any difference. It's the way that you approach problems. The way that you get people to work
together. And the way that you creatively communicate a complex message. To me, it's still all design thinking, you know. It's just done in the context of the running of a business meeting, operation. You know, here at Ohio State.

So I think its really funny I'm testing. I mean, I'm at the edge of sort of my comfort zone sometimes, because I'm testing into things that I haven't, I don't have a formal background in doing. But just feels like the right thing to do. You know, So I'm really very curious, about how this is, how this is going to work out over the next couple of years. But it's very much in line with just what your saying, you take a creative thinking person and put them into a business environment and have them actually thrive, purely based on the principles of critical thinking. I've even quit using the word design thinking. I'm using this word critical thinking and translational thinking. Because it allows people to start to understand it better.

We did this, this workshop in the Calazo (SP) nursing based on critical thinking. If I would have called it design thinking I would have really alienated most of the people. They wouldn't have understood what I meant. But they understand the word critical, and they understand the word thinking. So they're like ‘Oh critical thinking, is just, you know, deductive reasoning and judgment.’ Great! That's no different then design is it?

**You will say that critical thinking is deductive reasoning. So what exactly is design thinking, in your opinion?**

Well I think (design thinking) is a made up word. Right? Because its sorta like, form follows function, you know this used to be a really common term, many years ago with designers. Form follows function. Somebody coined that and then everyone goes ‘Oh, form follows function.’ Well of course it does. To me, I'm a little bit angry about this, about IDEO being given credit terming using the word design thinking. It's not design thinking, you know, it is, it is, it is good, asking the right questions and answering the right intent. Right you know but its, but its too much of a buzz word again, but if you break down design thinking, to those steps where I'm saying, you know, observe, and interpret, and solve, actualize or whatever it is, everybody has different words for those four things you go through. I don't believe that that's even owned by designs or by designer, or design thinking. Its not design thinking. It is really good deductive reasoning, like anything else. You know?

I mean, and so I don't typically like that word, design thinking cuz I think it alienates people and it makes designers be like, I own the concept of design thinking.

Like I saw yesterday, somebody sent me an email saying I can get a certificate in design thinking. How ridiculous is that? A certificate in design thinking, because I can take an online course. Who do I show the certificate to? You know? I mean it was ridiculous to me. To think like, well, clearly I'm a design thinker because I have a certificate that says I'm a design thinker. Verified, 2 or 3 hour course. I can think like a designer. Oh goodness. As soon as you start saying that you should just jump off a bridge because you know, you have gone off the path. Then that comes back to that honesty thing, right? If you're honest, a certificate is not going to make you, you know, a design thinker. Discipline and willingness to explore, that makes you a design thinker.

**It's actually certain qualities that you picked up and become part of your habit to observe and questions and**

Yeah, that's right, I think yeah, exactly right. (picking up the habit of observing and questioning) So is that part of the criteria that you begin to judge whether a designer is a good entrepreneur or not right?
Super fascinated by this idea, that when, when Apple had a press conference and they were introducing one of the latest iPods, this is when iPod, before iPhone even came out, they were introducing iPod in the music store. And so Steve Jobs was showing this, he said I also have a special guest and out comes Madonna. And this was probably, you know in the nineties and Madonna was really relevant as an artist. And she says, okay, I've decided that now you can download my albums, song by song and put them in together in any form you want. And it was probably insignificant to most people. It was an epiphany for me, cuz I said oh, this is a point now where technology is changing art. Technology is driving art. Because Apple had developed this store, this technology, that an artist, you decide whether artist or not. She was now rethinking her artistic license because technology allowed that to happen, you know?

And I was really fascinated by something like that. That there now had been a melding of this, the technology and art that had always appeared to be so separate, and now they had put together. Then I started to get this theory that like, gosh, so that means a song could be like <claps>, that's a song, you know? Or a song could be a 4 hour symphony. Because technology no longer was gonna boarder what that would sound, what that would be like. Because before, you know, a song was, well, I can only put so much on a vinyl record, or so much on a length of a tape and then I'm gonna have a natural break. So when digital music became, allowed the freedom of, of art and creativity to see no bounds, I was really profoundly affected by that, you know.

And I also started thinking, oh my gosh, imagine 5 years ago if you were to have said to Madonna, okay Madonna, there is going to be this thing called digital music and you're not going have control over which song appears in which order. But, people are gonna just pick and choose. In fact, people are gonna pick your songs and they're gonna make new songs out of your songs by digitally, you know, mixing. She would be like, that will never happen. You know, sorry, whatever, I will never as an artist give up that control.

And so it drove me, that was the grammatically incorrect title on my book, is what will never happen. You know? But, so is the idea if you can understand in the innovative thinkers and the convergence of technology, or art, or roars, or something. At what point would innovative thinkers and some other dynamic come together that form the spark of truly ground breaking innovation and something, somebody will say, that will never happen.

To me, it speaks very much to the theory of business thinkers. Everybody who runs, to me, a creative business, they are thinking "Okay, what is the big thing? How do I really make a huge impact." They aren't typically satisfied with "Great, we made money today," or "I did something, I made a cool pen." I would love to go talk to Jonathan Ive and say "What's the most compelling thing to you?" He's not going to talk about all of that cool curve, or Mac did this, he's talking about changing the way people live.

How often did you actually see designers stepping up and becoming a leader?

When I started my sporting goods company 19 years ago, in fact 19 years ago almost today, it was really rare. I maybe only knew three or four designers in the country who actually had companies. Not consulting firms but who said "I'm willing to put my consulting money aside and start a business and operate a business not related to the service of design and launch a product." One of them is here in town, Paul Kolada who runs Priority Designs, he had the design for a baseball glove and it was great, it was so cool and so innovative and he solved so many great problems. He never launched it though, he never launched the company. He has since launched other companies.

What I find interesting is that when I saw that, her(Paul Kolada of Priority Design) motivated me to start a sporting goods company. In starting my sporting goods company, apparently, at some level I motivated him to start another company that he was doing aside from his consulting firm. So I love that idea.
I wrote two articles for Innovation magazine which was a part of the Industrial Designers Society of America, it was their magazine. I wrote these articles probably in 1994, 95, 96, somewhere in there. When I wrote those articles, they wanted me to write the article because I was one of the only industrial designers who won a design award for a product that I owned the manufacturing company for.

(IDSA) They were like ""Could you write an article about designer as an entrepreneur"" and I started talking about designer as entrepreneur at design conferences and my message was unsophisticated then because it was ""You just have to take a leap. At some point you just have to decide 'Okay, I'm going to decide not to make money today because I'm going to work on my own product and I'm going to learn things about business that I don't know anything about.'"" In my case, my partner was somebody who I knew was a good businessman that gave me the support to learn about the business.

So again, it was 19 years ago, there were only a handful and now, my gosh, Kickstarter is full of designers as entrepreneurs. I'm not sure that even - I would say half of the students at Ohio State are thinking about making a product. It's changing really rapidly right now. Kickstarter allows businesses to start without having to go through a traditional route that scares designers. Going to a bank, raising money, talking to VC(?), all scary stuff. Going on Kickstarter? No, you raise it, you make it, you don't raise, you don't make it.

What's the traditional route that scares designers?

Money, talking about money, spending money, asking for money. That's scary for designers because money is very concrete. It's not creative, it's not subjective, it's money. I think you'll hear that phrase from designers, like ""Ahh, Money just dirties everything up."" Well, that's because you don't like it. You don't like the way that money can be creative or easy money is creative.

Find creative ways to actually raise money.

So I do think that, above all, designers do make good business people, they make good leaders but they don't have the confidence to be able to do to that. That's what you said earlier, the creative confidence that's lacking in engineers or people who don't think they're creative, where designers lack that confidence that they can understand what it takes to run a business and see the breadth of finances and operations and production and customer service.
**Startup Design Expert C**

*Let's start off with your own experience, what your experience is with startups or what do you do?*

I would describe myself primarily as a user experience designer with a focus on user interface design. I have done it probably close to 15 years now. I have a lot of experience designing for mobile and designing for touch screens.

But over the last few years, I'm 35, and so I'm at the point in my career where I'm moving into a strategic leadership role. I still do a lot of hands-on work. The consultancy I work for, which is called Neo, we describe ourselves as even leadership, we are leadership practitioners, we all get our hands dirty.

But definitely in the last few years my interest in startups, for me, intersected with this kind of - reaching a point of being somewhat senior in my field and beginning to try and envision for myself, "What do the next 15 years of my career look like? Where do I want to be when I'm 60-years-old?"

*What actually caused you to change, because some people might change their career completely or move into some other thing, but why did you actually decide to go into startups?*

It's interesting, the consultancy I worked for several years ago had done a little bit - like, we were a design agency, and so we were doing design work for startups from time to time and so I had startups as clients at first. For me personally, I think my interest in startups happened because as a designer, I got more and more in designing what I would call products and applications vs. more like marketing websites.

A lot of designers, and if you look at sites like Dribbble or whatever, a lot of designers really enjoy just doing these flat pages full of photo and copy and like a brochure/marketing type website.

But because I really like designing user interfaces, for me, I enjoy the fidgety bits of design more. So it's more about designing an application that actually does something instead of just a website about our company.

As a designer, once you get interested in designing products and applications, then most of the really interesting products and applications that are being designed today, a lot of those are being designed as startup ventures. So as my interest in application design grew, I started to look not just at the interface itself but just at the business. For startups, the two are so closely related. When you're designing the interface, you're executing the vision of the business as well.

*I see in your survey, you said that you had ideas but you never thought of pursuing it and you say that it was because you were unwilling to pursue the startup life or the amount of work or the sacrifice that you would take. So besides that reason - is that the only pullback for you pursuing the startup life or was there not enough motivation to overcome those things?*

Yeah, and part of it too is I just moved to Columbus a few months ago. Before I was in Columbus, I was in Richmond, Virginia, so another smaller, regional city. And you know if somewhere along the way if I had found myself you know in Silicon Valley like in San Francisco or in New York, you know maybe I would feel differently. But I think that it’s like I know from being sort of close to close to the whole scene, it’s hard to raise money in cities that are not San Francisco or New York. It takes a it takes a hustle and a lot of folks you know if they’re really serious about their startup dream they’re getting on a plane to the west coast and then eventually relocating to the west coast.

and so for me so part of it was an unwillingness to pursue the lifestyle you know part of it was just there’s you know again my initial interest is sort of in products and applications.
So for me I have a lot of you know I’d probably be much more willing to bootstrap my own product rather than seek like venture capital in that kind of startup sense. So and you know, so you know having my own set of skills and knowing people in the community, it’s certainly, it would certainly be more easy for me to bootstrap than it would be for a lot of like potential entrepreneurs who need to raise that kind of capital.

But part of it is the lifestyle and part of it is just the risks that come along with raising capital and you know essentially giving part of your company and giving control of part of your company to other people whose values might not be in alignment with your own.

Okay, so you would, so you were saying that actually finding the partners is one problem you were saying you actually wish to avoid the fundraising aspect of startup and then just do everything by yourself because you have the skills to do it? Is that right?

Yeah and it’s, I mean, finding like technical partners or even employees doesn’t seem difficult, it’s more, it’s hard for me to imagine finding a venture capitalist that I would that it would feel really comfortable working with. And at least that’s true for me today whether that will be true for me you know five or ten years from now you know things change but I’m not, I’ve not really wanted to get into that dance of giving up ownership of my company to someone for millions of dollars.

And that is because you are worried that they will change your vision or what was the worry about that?

Yeah, I mean it’s, you know, it, I think that when you’re you know obviously when you’re working with other people’s money and you’re looking for product market fits, when you kind of you have to give up control you no longer just have the ability to just do exactly what you want you have to you have to be open you know to more influence and yeah. It’s just even the process of seeking out an investor investment like that just seems exhausting to me right now.

what do you think makes good entrepreneur?

You know I think a lot of it is that you have to have a high tolerance for that atmosphere of uncertainty. and I think you have to be and I think you have to be willing to be open to a lot of ideas and a lot of advice from other people but I think also have to you also have to be willing to stay true to your vision and convictions even in the face of a lot of doubt and uncertainty. And not, and very few you know products are like you know Facebook like they show in the movie where you know Zuckerberg codes it one night and then the next day hundreds of people are logging on. It’s you know the guy who. Pinterest launched in 2008 you know and the guy just kept plugging away on it for years and years and has basically said he didn’t give up because, he was, he didn’t want to admit he was a failure so he just kept going with it. You know like he didn’t want to admit he was a failure so he kept going with it year after year. It had been like finally like four years later it kind of blew up and became hugely successful and so that kind of conviction and determination and willingness to just keep going you know without getting you know.

And I think that’s hard speaking like speaking for designers you know. Part of being a designer is that our work is constantly judged and critiqued, and we receive a lot of feedback. We receive a lot of pads on the head, and we receive a lot of “Oh, I think this isn’t working as well here as it could”. So I think for designers is hard to years and years like that without getting positive response from the market.

So is that one of the reasons that is stopping designers from being founders?

That’s part of it. Speaking anecdotally, I have done a lot of, I mentor a lot of startup weekends. I love sort of startup events and startup competitions and stuffs. And designers are always the most under-represented group. Like, there are always fewer. Like, I went to the startup weekend Columbus, 3 weeks ago, at the end of March, and there are probably twice the number of developers there as designers. And every time there
was a call for help, every team was like “We need a designer! We need a logo! We need a designer to help us!”

It’s funny, like this, it’s hard for you to get answers, because it seems to me that so many designers in our industry are wholly uninterested in startups. And I was the one that responded to the survey. Because, I’m kind of interested in startups. But it amazes me how many designers just aren’t… and I feel like part of it, anecdotally, is fear and reluctance and hesitation around the business side. And I too, I just talked about not willing to raise money and deal with investors.

I think a lot of designers are creative, but we put our taxes off to the last min. So to get into a position where we are responsible for a business, and profit and loss, and how am I gonna make payroll, and that becomes like a lot… There’s a lot of tedious number crunching that goes along with the startup. I think like a lot of designers just want to make pretty things, they just want to design, they don’t want to think about business strategy, or accounting, or finance.

**Do you think UX designers are more likely to move on to the strategy level?**

I don’t know about likelihood. But I do know UX designers have all the tools to move in to strategy and entrepreneurship. I love reading articles where people talk about, companies are something that can be designed too. Teams are something that can be designed. In my experience, it takes a little while to get to that point. I don’t know if there are many 25 year olds UX designers… I mean, when you are 25 years old and you are a UX designer, you are still learning a lot about UX and digital. But I think that as you get further on in your career, and you kind of feel like you solve the same design problems over and over again, you are pushing pixels around, and you are looking for new challenges around, then the challenge of designing a business becomes more appealing. And some designers are just very happy. I know UX designers who are 45 to 50-years-old and they just want to sit down with Axure and draw some boxes and arrows. That's all they want to do, they just want to keep designing interfaces. But some people want to expand their horizons and I think that - I always say that UX design is really about problem solving and that's really what startups and entrepreneurship is about, it's about problem solving. You're creating something different, you're not creating mock ups or wire frames to solve the problem. You're creating teams and products and business plans.

**Who would you consider a design founder? Is it the education background or something else? How would you consider a design founder? What do you think constitutes a design founder?**

I think it's somebody whose primary skillset is or has been in UX design or visual design as opposed to full back-end development or as opposed to just strategy. Someone who can actually execute on at least some of the design elements of their vision.

**So it doesn’t matter if they did not go through a design school?**

No. From a digital perspective, many of the best web designers are self taught. Formal education in this area - I feel like higher ed. in particular - has not really caught up to what the marketplace is doing. So no, I wouldn't say that they need formal design education.

**Previously you also mentioned that when you go to a startup, you can really see that designers are the most unrepresented group. Why do you think there are fewer designers out there that are trying to start up their own company?**

I think it is the perceived gap or conflict or tension between business and creativity. I think that designers see their work as creative and as being about vision and emotion and intuition. Rightly or wrongly, I think that many designers see the business and financial aspects as being something that does not appeal to them.
or as being something that they don't have the skills to tackle or as just being something that they're not interested in. They don't want to deal with it.

**But if they start up a company with somebody else, then that somebody else probably could handle the aspects that they don't want to handle?**

Yeah. I think sometimes that's certainly a possibility. I think that for many designers, they're better at the business stuff than they give themselves credit for. I think a lot of it is a lack of confidence and is just sort of being intimidated by the difficulty of things that are really not that difficult. You can get advice and you can hire people to help you with it but I think that obstacles can seem insurmountable that are not nearly as difficult to deal with.

And...and if I can, if I can level some criticism in the other direction I think that part of it too is that too many companies do not include designers in the business/strategy aspect of what they are working on. There is this perception that we will figure out this strategy and bring the designer in at the end to like execute on it. And so in that sense I think a lot of designers don't get exposed to the more strategic aspect, like they are sort of sheltered from it; their employers keep them, keep them away from it and they don't discover what they have to offer.

*you think that actually the non-designers, the business side that is also contributing to the trend of my designers not coming out.*

Yeah, yeah. I think that, I think that businesses do not, do not include their designers in as much business strategy discussion as they ought to. I think that is definitely something that happens.

**So do you think that this is a chicken and the egg thing, like, designers don't step up but at the same time businesses don't think that designers can do it so, like, if the designers themselves don't also believe that they can do it then...so how do we actually...**

Yes, yeah and so a lot of and I would say that I kinda, that I feel like that I fell to this a lot by accident that and again, certainly, when I was 24, 25, I had no idea how to start my own business. I would have been, whoa, that thing is terrifying, I don't want to go anywhere near that and I just want a paycheck, you know? And, it was, you know, kinda by luck and accident that, that I got more exposure to the business side of things and suddenly realize, hey, ya know, I'm kind of good at this, like, hey, I can do stuff like this to. Like, that was just, that was just kind of a lucky chance and I'd worked at other places and I had never been exposed to that.

**And then you might not, might not even think about working to start off, to make your own company. You would think, would think that the business side is really quite scary or something like that. So for yourself how do you actually overcome that?**

You know, I pinpointed what helped me and, and what had always helped me in terms of... this at least helped me in terms of starting my own design consultancy, not a startup, but at least, like, you know, dipping my toes and having my own business. This is talking with other creatives who also run their own business and having the community to like, share experience and knowledge. So, just to be able to go to lunch with somebody and say "'who is your accountant?'", "'How do you know, do you do your financial record keeping?'", "'What software do you use?'" like, "'how often do you reconcile your books?'" Like, like to have other people to ask those questions and for them to be like, "'that's easy, it's no big deal. don't worry about that.'" And, like, it just, it was more reassuring to me. So I think that having, you know, having a comm... having a community, like a support network, a peer support network for designers doing, doing start...like, for all start up founders and designers you know to feel like they have a place that they can get advice or kinda vent or whatever.
So it's the support, actually, that you think would be very helpful?

Yeah, I mean, it is. So for me, like, overcoming... That, that has been my biggest thing, knowing, knowing people that have done it, that are doing it, feeling like if I have a question I know somebody who I like, who I trust, that will answer my question for me and it will be ok.

You mentioned that you have worked with some startups before and some consultants... Did you actually notice any differences in terms of, like, mindset or even from the process that you need to take might be a little different because of the speed of the startup or something else?

Yeah, I mean, and, and I say this as somebody who loves startups but I mean the startups that I worked with, sigghhh... They have really low budgets and they basically rarely have in house - I was a freelance designer - they didn't have an in house designer, so I would look at the work and I'd say "Okay, I can do that, and that's going to be 20 hours. It's going to take me 20 hours to design all of that for you." They're like "Oh, no, no, it's not that big of a deal, it's a small thing, can't you do it in like 8?" Because a lot of startup founders are, especially now, going into technology space, they don't have experience with software design or working with designers, whatever their role used to be. Just giving them an estimate, it is challenging.

I know design agencies who will not take on startups as clients, for several reasons. They can be much more challenging to work with and you're less likely to get paid. There's a startup from when I was freelancing last year, there's a startup who still owes me money. I have one client who still owes me money and it's a startup. They're a funded startup, too. So when you are a service provider, like a designer or whatever, working for startups is risky. Startups are operating in atmosphere of uncertainty and that uncertainty often includes how much money they have week to week.

Did you actually think of engaging in equity-based payments? Have you heard of something like that?

Oh yeah. Personally, I would be extremely unlikely to do that. The agency I've worked for, I don't know what your experience is with founders or hopeful founders is, but everybody thinks their idea is the next Facebook and everybody thinks their idea is so beautiful and precious. They have no money but "This is going to be such a huge success" and they want you to work for free in exchange for equity. Five percent of nothing is still nothing. If I'm going to work for equity, my title is going to be founder or co-founder and my equity is going to be large. I'm not going to design some mock ups for somebody for a fraction of a percentage.

You mentioned that you did have some chance to start your own business with somebody, but you didn't actually start it.

I had an idea that we worked on in a bootstrapping kind of fashion, but my life and my interests have taken me in other directions and it just wasn't something that I was so passion about that I just wanted to pursue it full time. It was just kind of a side project.

So it just kind of died by itself?

I think the problem is, I think it's a real problem, I think our solution was decent. I think if we really wanted to work on it 16 hours a day and try and raise funds and make a go of it, we'd have as good a chance as anybody but I wanted to do other things.

Could it be because it's just one thing and you don't wish to actually focus all of your energy and the rest of the next three years on one single thing, you wish to pursue some other stuff?
Yeah, and I think that my perception, and there are rare examples, but if you’re going to be a founder of a startup, that’s pretty much a 24-hour-a-day job. You don’t really have a social life. The people - your romantic partner or your friends just have to give you a lot of leeway. It is your life from the moment you wake up until the moment you fall asleep and you get to sleep for maybe four or five hours a night and then you wake up and you do it all over again.

So, you know, I wanted to you know pursue a new relationship, I wanted to spend time with my friends, I wanted to speak at conferences. I wanted you know I wanted to do all these other things that were not just starting a business. I don’t think I was overestimating the time and effort commitment of something like that. You really, certainly the successful founders that I know they live, sleep, breathe and eat their start up all day long every day.

That is awesome and someday maybe I will be that person, but it was just not, that is what I meant by I don’t want to pursue the startup lifestyle. I just wanted to go home and sit on the couch and watch TV like a couple of nights a week. I wanted work life balance and I don’t know that a healthy work life balance is possible with a startup. I at least don’t know that I could do that. I don’t know that I could simultaneously have work life balance and a successful startup. Some people can, I don’t know if I could have that. I don’t know if I could do both.

So, how do you think designers are different or similar to other types of founders?

I think that designers are different because, I favor technical founders whether it is a designer or developer. I think it is good when founders have the ability to execute on their of ideas.

I think it is also good, I think another good thing about designer founders, they are more empathetic to users and often have more realistic sense to what user will and won’t do. A lot of sort of more business like non-technical founders say we will put a button on the website and users will click the button and they will all sign up for our email list. And I think the designer will be like actually nobody does that. Nobody’s going click the button to join your email list. Yeah so I think that more, being more oriented towards users and behavior and empathy for the people who might be signing up or wanting to use your product, is I think that is a huge advantage.

But just I do think that a lot of startup founders, and particularly I see this as non-technical founders and not developer founders, they really underestimate the role of design and what a designer can really contribute to their startup.

So as a freelancer, I did work, I kind of specialized in working for startups, because I enjoy them. But there was a lot of work for me because none of these startups had a designers as part of their team. Like they hired people, most of them had hired people, they were more than two guys. Even if they were teams of 3 or4 or 5 but most of them hadn’t hired a designer yet. And you know I thought that was kind of a big business mistake I mean.

Why do you think they do that?

They undervalue design and they undervalue the designers. Again it is like the other businesses who exclude designers from kind of business decision making, they think of designers as the people that make it pretty and someone who comes in at the end a tidy it all up and puts some color on it. They don’t think of design as a problem solving skill set.

Do you think this is like this is a, like a misconception because of the way designers like show themselves or it’s just how the businesses assume design is?
That’s a, that’s a good question. It’s probably a little bit of both.

**Have you heard of the term design thinking?**

You know, I think, I think that that, I think that that has become a popular buzz word and you know I’m, I’m certainly guilty of using it myself. But, I mean, I like the’ part of it is trying to put design at the core of your business, and trying to design everything. I would also talk to my start-up clients about like, design your sign-up process. Like they would just like smack, they would just slap this ugly little form up on the page where it’s like hey e-mail address, password, confirm password, and I’m like so distracted like this little like 4 field design. Design your experience’ like what is the experience of joining your product going to, what’s that going to be like and they’re like ummmm??? But like again, they just think of design as like you know, where do we put the boxes on the page. You know like.

**And do you think, do you think design thinking is mainly about, like you know, trying to incorporate design into business. What do you think about non-designers trying to practice design thinking or claim that they are design thinkers?**

I am highly skeptical and cynical of that fact. You know, I think because, because I know that for me as a designer, it took me, you know, it takes years of practice to be able to build empathy with users and to, and, and by building, and building empathy is really just like to think like users, to kind of take on user’s mindsets to sort of think Hmmm I’m a user. What am I here to do? What do I care about? What do I not care about?

And, and I, you know, I think I see how a lot of people write about how empathy is, empathy is the best skill a designer can have. And I think that’s.. I mean that’s absolutely true and so I think empathy is at the core of design thinking. And so empathy is a kind of inside out skill. Like empathy isn’t about like where to, you know, empathy’ empathy is beginning like who am I? Why am I here? What do I want? And then using that to kind of figure out okay now where do I put the box on the page. Where do I put’ okay, who am I?, why am I here?, so where am I going to look for that button?

And I feel like a lot of people you know who are not designers, you know, who have not had that opportunity to practice empathy over and over again, they just start out with their, their design thinking starts out with where do I put the box on the page you know, instead of starting out with that empathetic view.

**Well some people are supposed to think that design thinking is ruled by a process or by a mindset that they kind of like separate design thinking as design doing. So it becomes like, like some business or some marketing agency they claim that they do design thinking kind of thing. (laughter)**

Yeah. I don’t know. I’m a designer. I, you know, I work with other designers. I don’t know how the non-designers practice design thinking

**what kind of start-up do you think are designers more to the goal or likely to set-up?**

I, I honestly, I honestly don’t know because ‘you know like, like the designers founders that I’m aware of that you know, have started with a wide variety but I guess I mean from my perception designers tend to start consumer oriented start-ups as opposed to like B2B start-ups.
Appendix B: Survey Data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
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Table 25: Respondents’ Timestamp, Age, Gender, Occupation (Continued)
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Table 25 (Continued)

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<th>#</th>
<th>Education and Year of Graduation (List all professional degrees)</th>
<th>How many years of professional design experience?</th>
<th>What is your current professional title?</th>
<th>What do you design?</th>
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<td>Creative Director</td>
<td>User Experience, Visual Communication/Graphic, User Interaction</td>
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<td>Intern</td>
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<td>User Experience, Visual Communication/Graphic, Products, User Interaction, User Interfaces, Services</td>
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<td>more than 5 years</td>
<td>Lead User Experience Designer</td>
<td>User Experience, Products, User Interaction, User Interfaces, Services</td>
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Table 26: Respondents who are Designers: Professional Degree, Years of Experience, Professional Title, Type of Design Work (Continued)
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<td>Game designer</td>
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<td>User Experience, Visual Communication/Graphic, User Interaction, User Interfaces</td>
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<td>Designer</td>
<td>Visual Communication/Graphic, Products, User Interaction</td>
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<td>Independent Design Consultant</td>
<td>Products, Interior Spaces, Services</td>
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<td>User Experience, Visual Communication/Graphic, Products, User Interaction, User Interfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Interaction Design Degree 2013</td>
<td>&lt; 2 years</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>User Experience, User Interaction, User Interfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>graphicdesigner, 2012</td>
<td>more than 2 years</td>
<td>junior</td>
<td>Visual Communication/Graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>BA. Applied Art, 1994</td>
<td>more than 20 years</td>
<td>UX Design Strategist</td>
<td>User Experience, Visual Communication/Graphic, User Interaction, User Interfaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Master industrial Design 2005</td>
<td>more than 5 years</td>
<td>Industrial designer</td>
<td>Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>B.A industrial design Master's degree in social entrepreneurship (student)</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Social Designer</td>
<td>User Experience, Visual Communication/Graphic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>more than 2 years</td>
<td>UX Designer</td>
<td>User Experience, User Interaction, User Interfaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26 (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Are you a Designer, Developer, Business Hustler, or...?</th>
<th>Education and Year of Graduation (List all professional degrees)</th>
<th>What’s your background/what do you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Both Designer &amp; Business...whatever</td>
<td>MBA 2000 Psychology</td>
<td>UX Designer/Consultant/Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PhD Study 2005 Cognitive Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>UX Researcher/Designer with my own consulting business</td>
<td>BS: Meteorology - 2006</td>
<td>User Experience research and design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS: Human Factors in Information Design - 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>MHCI, 2013</td>
<td>Product Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MFA 1990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>lecturer</td>
<td>Bachelor of Design, 2006</td>
<td>I teach Entrepreneurship and Business Experience to undergraduates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MBA, 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Business Hustler</td>
<td>Bsc, Industrial Design Engineering 2012</td>
<td>entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MBA, 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>one and three</td>
<td>My education is work based. I managed a carpet store as my first job. I was there for 4 years. Store was in Manhattan Bch, California. Clientes were very high end, it was great experience in measuring and computations. Next job, worked as a decorator for Jerry German and assoc. Manhattan bch, I did the Porto fino Inn in Redondo Bch and the sand castle condos (eath stories on the beach.), on the esplanade in Redondo bch.. Worked at Sinbad Carpets for 8 years as a Decorator and estamator. Clientes were based in Palos Verdes. Started my own business in 1990 (Necessity is always the mother of invention.) Had a child and needed to work. I still have business. My clientes are mainly in Palos Verdes, California.. I have 2 hotels that i have done for the last 20 years in. Los Angeles. 2 years ago i was sent to Boston to do a job on an estate in Beverly Farms and i am presently working on a Penthouse in Los Vegas. I do have a California Contractors license and i took the test and passed, basically i learned in a work experience. Please check out my blog at strictlylemontree.blogspot.com</td>
<td>work experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: Other Respondent’s Professional Degree, Professional Background (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Are you a Designer, Developer, Business Hustler, or...?</th>
<th>Education and Year of Graduation (List all professional degrees)2</th>
<th>What's your background/what do you do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Business Hustler</td>
<td>Jan10 - Dec10 Postgraduate Training Qualification 'Mini' ADP.</td>
<td>With an arts and design background, I work for a number of clients in the engineering and technology sector. From design integration/understanding, marketing, business development and trend hunting ... I do a little bit of a lot of a broad range of areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>All of the above!</td>
<td>Jan08 - Jan10 MA Multi-Disciplinary Printmaking.</td>
<td>With an arts and design background, I work for a number of clients in the engineering and technology sector. From design integration/understanding, marketing, business development and trend hunting ... I do a little bit of a lot of a broad range of areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I'm a trained designer, but work only with radical innovation in value chains, creating new businesses</td>
<td>Industriel Designer graduated in 1993</td>
<td>Industriel Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Both developer and designer</td>
<td>Bachelor's Computer Science - 2010 Master's in HCI - 2013</td>
<td>UX Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Designer / Developer</td>
<td>BSEE 1990</td>
<td>Solve business problems with apps and website people love to use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Business Hustler</td>
<td>MBA 2010</td>
<td>Product Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Business Hustler</td>
<td>Toulouse Business School, 2014</td>
<td>Analyst at 50 Partners, french accelerator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Designer+Developer</td>
<td>Computer Science (including HCI) undergraduate and graduate studies; Media studies graduate level.</td>
<td>product designer of software tools for creatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>How many of these original (novel, unique) idea(s) have you created a new business with?</th>
<th>What are the motivations for starting the business?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>To test whether or not my idea was viable as a startup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2  | 1                                                                                       | 1. I'm tired of working on crappy projects.  
2. When you own a business you can't blame anyone but yourself. |
| 3  | 1                                                                                       | independence, freedom, curiosity, self-actualization |
| 6  | 1                                                                                       | To make a living doing what I enjoy |
| 12 | 4                                                                                       | Solving a problem. Or satisfying an opportunity in the market. |
| 13 | 1                                                                                       | I wanted to learn |
| 14 | 1                                                                                       | To become a pioneer in the business. |
| 16 | 2                                                                                       | publish creative works capitalize on new technology |
| 17 | 2                                                                                       | make ideas happen |
| 18 | 1                                                                                       | just pursuing your ambitions, trying actually sell a product in the real life compared to superficial projects on the university. |

Table 28: Respondents who Had Original Idea & Started/Co-Founded Original Idea: Number of Business Idea, Motivations for Starting (Continued)
How many of these original (novel, unique) idea(s) have you created a new business with?

What are the motivations for starting the business?

19  1  Unrestricted execution.
20  3  First one for business opportunity. More recently cos why not, its so easy to get an MPV out and test an idea for traction
21  1  Family.. Had to be available for family and be able to take my child to work with me.
22  1  it seems to be the best way of mixing what my professional skills with my personal objectives.
24  3  The freedom and the chance to learn new things all the time.
28  1  Suite of design productivity tools
   1) solving my own needs as a designer
   2) recognizing that there was a larger need in an emerging market
   3) establishing credibility for my own business
33  7  When a business idea / technical solution can be patented it is often difficult to go to the existing market, as your disruption will either be competing to what the manufacturers already do, and the novelty you are presenting might often have to be sold to the market differently than the prevailing situation.
41  2  Create Something. Different.
42  2  The challenge.
43  1  want to run my own business
46  1  Solve a painful problem of the world
   Make your own stuff
   Create things w/ mindful-like persons
49  3  Changing the world to the better while potentially bringing in fundings that I can use for the next idea... ;-
51  1  Adventure, Learning, Money.

Table 28 (Continued)

How many businesses have you planned to start with your own idea, but never did?

Why did you not start?

Have you ever started or co-founded a company?

Have you ever had the opportunity to co-found a company before?

What made you decide to not take up the opportunity?

5  0  No  No
7  3.5  Do not know how to code to create demo. Didn't know enough developers who were willing to code ideas coming from a designer and not a developer or MBA. Didn't have extrovert skills to grow company and get clients/investors.
   Yes
8  0  I have recently started exploring on thoughts of being an entrepreneur and am in the process of connecting with other UI/UXers for this
   No  No
9  1  Unwillingness to pursue "the startup life" and the amount of work/sacrifice it would take.
   Yes

Table 29: Respondents who had Original Idea but did not start & Had thought of Starting:
Number of Businesses Planned to Start, Reasons for not Starting, Ever Started any Business, Ever had Opportunity to Start, Reasons for not Taking Opportunity (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>How many businesses have you planned to start with your own idea, but never did?</th>
<th>Why did you not start?</th>
<th>Have you ever started or co-founded a company?</th>
<th>Have you ever had the opportunity to co-found a company before?</th>
<th>What made you decide to not take up the opportunity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I have tried and failed a few times</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have too little time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to find like minded partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In some cases lack of dev skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I am a problem solver. I see problems that exist and wonder how they can be solved. This is what makes me a designer, it also is a trait that makes entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>To many uncertainties to deal with</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I'm just planning and organizing to open it</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>too overwhelming, afraid of risks, not enough money, afraid to ask for money from people/investors</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Saving it for my post-design career. Completely unrelated field.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I looked at starting my own company about 2/3 years ago, laser cutting bureau.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At the time I was just finishing up an MA and was surrounded by people with a demand for this type of service. I attended courses and began a business plan. I quickly put in on hold as the UK economy was still in a deep recession and trying to raise the funds would be near enough impossible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I also realised that reading business books was no substitute for gaining proper business experience and knowledge, ultimately, I had no idea what I was doing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Since I have been working as a freelancer with start-ups in the engineering and technology sector. Often my role is closely aligned with the owner/MD so I have gained valuable insights into business development, finance, marketing, client relationships etc ... all the while in putting my design experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At present, as I continue to work as a freelancer with five clients, I am slowly building new ideas for a new business.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nope, not laser cutting bureau (that ideas certainly been done!) but more aligned with a craft output that is saleable to high end markets.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Did not have the funding or experience to start. I already had mortgage and lifestyle that I did not want to impact by taking a risk with a new business.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Time and money problems</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WE could not start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of human resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Why did you not start?</th>
<th>Have you ever started or co-founded a company?</th>
<th>Have you ever had the opportunity to co-founded a company before?</th>
<th>What made you decide to not take up the opportunity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Basically for a lack of money</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>windows system, practical soap packaging, connected objects for bikers, Consultancy for start-up (design, management, etc.)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>don't have funding.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Seems risky.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Seemed risky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Because of Time, my industrial design activity, doesn't let me create a parallele activity, but I'm nos planning to have my own business. I'm back at school to study strategy.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>The reasons I tell myself:</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>the time and resources needed was not enough to realize the desired dream</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>多半不进行.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>I'm building it first</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Why not?</th>
<th>Have you ever started or co-founded a company?</th>
<th>Have you ever had the opportunity to co-founded a company before?</th>
<th>What made you decide to not take up the opportunity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Finances and personal interst lies elsewhere.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I had other opportunities that would benefit me more in the long term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Respondents who had Original Idea, but did not start and Never thought of starting: Reasons for not starting, Ever Started any Business, Had Opportunity to Start, Reasons for not starting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>How many new businesses have you started or co-founded as an entrepreneur that is NOT based on your own original (novel, unique) idea?</th>
<th>What are the motivations for starting the business?</th>
<th>Have you started or co-founded a design consultancy?</th>
<th>Are there other types of companies that you started? If so, what types?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>the same as my own businesses</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Started a business based on listing food outlets for special dietary needs (so far unsuccessful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Partnership with like minded designers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I wanted to learn</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The market segments are already established so less effort for market education.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>To provide quality marketing and design services for the underserved small business market.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Nope.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>The challenge.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Content provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>there was lack of that kind of product on the market...</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not really</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Supporting my partner</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Fitness app, Video backup service, Data visualization tool for venture capitalists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I love to solve problems.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fitness app, Video backup service, Data visualization tool for venture capitalists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Felt energized by the founder's passion for his idea.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I was asked, and we were 4 persons on board</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>a food company...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The chance to work with my co-founder.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Online legal, online social media watch for B2C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Even if the initial idea is not mine, it's just a starting point where I will contribute much of the innovation, perhaps even replacing the original idea. The benefit of working with somebody that are excited about their idea is that it will drive them to perform. The disadvantage is that they may feel too much ownership of their idea and overvalue it (in general, ideas are overrated).</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Software based companies, internet and mobile.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Adventure, Learning, Money.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Respondents who had co-founded a company base on someone else's idea:
Number of Co-founded Business, Motivations for Starting, Founded Design Consultancy?, Founded Other Types of Companies?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Have you started or co-founded a design consultancy?</th>
<th>Are there other types of companies that you started? If so, what types?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Working on a startup that will focus on innovation in the automotive space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>app studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no it is always a combination of different ideas but with new added value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Small digital design agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>xxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Handling machinery and systems in: Construction industry (handling plasterboards) Distribution (Diary delivery) Automotive (Valve to ensure correct tyre pressure) Baggage handling system (in aviation) Security systems (in aviation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>retail / consumer goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32: Respondents who had NOT co-founded a company base on someone else’s idea: Founded Design Consultancy?, Founded Other Types of Companies?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What is your definition of a UX designer?</th>
<th>Do you think UX Designers make good entrepreneurs/founders of startups?</th>
<th>Explain your answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>User experience design is how how a user interacts with a company and its products. This can be in an online space, mobile or real-world context.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Subject matter expertise is not the determining factor in successful entrepreneurship in my opinion. There are many factors beyond skill set that could make a person a good entrepreneur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The person responsible for the complete user experience of the product.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Advocating users is not always good for business. Selling low quality stuff and moving all the cash to marketing is more profitable. You can start and run a successful business, but that's not the kind of business which puts profits first.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3 | the person/role which helps the businesses meet the needs of users/customer with strategy goal in a pleasant and intuitive way | Yes | - understand business&users  
- can transfer users into customers  
- can manage variety aspects of projects |
| 4 | A UX designer incorporates user research, usability, information architecture, marketing and other closely related fields to design the entire experience the a person has with a product. This can include the marketing material leading to the use of the product, the design of the product itself, the customer service experience and the design of a strategy that encapsulates all of the above. | Yes | A UX designer has to be a big picture thinker. Often times they act as a translator and mediator between users, product owners, managers, developers and marketers. Their goal is to put out the best possible product for the user. The skills needed to navigate all of the different aspects of a UX design are very transferable to an entrepreneurial role. You have to balance the needs and expectations of many different stakeholders (users, investors, employees) while keeping your eye on the big picture. |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | Interface between users(customers) and the business | Maybe | For a UX designer to be a good entrepreneurs, s/he needs to be able t balance the interests of the users and the business. In a lot of cases, UX designers are leaning towards the users too much, which result in unsustainable business model. |
| 7 | A UX Designer is one who can:  
- work with clients/business analysts to create user requirements  
- come up with interaction design and information design of product  
- create paper and interactive prototypes of product  
- get approval of design from stakeholders/users and get it built  
- come up with visual design  
- plan for and execute usability testing and research  
Most people can’t do everything. I am more of an information architect then a visual designer, and I don’t code. | Yes | Today, products need to good at first launch otherwise users discard them. Having a designer on board from the start will help considerably. As far as founder status (I’ve been one and worked in many high tech startups), a UX designer often is a jack of all trades and has experience pitching in where needed in the design of a product, very much like what a founder needs to do. |
| 8 | UX designer is a person who is responsible for using. User center design approach of designing all the user interactions, digital products and services. | Yes | UX designers with good amount of experience can easily balance between business strategic thinking to designing and to implementing the solution. |
| 9 | A UX designer solves design problems in order to create business value. | Yes | UX designers can design much more than products or “user experience.” We have the skills to design teams, companies, business models, and group cultures. |

Table 33: Definition of UX Designer, Does UX Designer Make Good Entrepreneurs, Why? (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What is your definition of a UX designer?</th>
<th>Do you think UX Designers make good entrepreneurs/ founders of startups?</th>
<th>Explain your answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A designer who designs products, websites or other based on what would create a positive user experience aligned with user needs and business goals. This may include redesigning existing products to solve issues which prevent the above</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Due to understanding what user's want and that this is key to customer loyalty UX Designers will approach the creation of the business on multiple levels to create a viable, feasible and desirable product and business model instead of just executing on their own &quot;good ideas” without real testing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>A designer that visually communicates to users to prompt the users to react to their design.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>The designer today has a unique opportunity to transform the startup landscape. This is because the startup world is full of people all trying to do the same thing as you. So if you can set yourself apart from the hundreds of others by design you have a greater chance of succeeding. The basic design principles you are taught as a designer apply almost perfectly with the startup initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Research with users if a product or feature set is something they would want. Design and build a prototype, test. Refine. Test. Refine. Test. Beta launch.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>We have the right tools to 'hedge our bets' against ideas that are not validated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Discover the future looking at the past</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>We are ready to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overcoming adversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Take risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manage conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>A person who design with user centered approach.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I believe that every venture that developed by user centered approach product will prevail as they solve its targeted users' problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A designer that bases the entire process on UX</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>When you base something on the recognition of the user's needs, you are all ready on the right track...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Combines technology, research, and artistry to create the right solutions for the right questions.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>UX requires a person that is well balanced and able to see both the big picture and minute details. This matches well with entrepreneurs. However, the skillset of actually running a business includes a vast amount of knowledge that has very little to do with the product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>satisfaction and usability</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Steve Blank explains that very well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33 (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What is your definition of a UX designer?</th>
<th>Do you think UX Designers make good entrepreneur/s/founders of startups?</th>
<th>Explain your answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>A designer who focuses on the interaction between the user and the product/service.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>There is no focus on business, I believe an entrepreneur should focus on 1) unique proposition 2) business 3) the user. UX designers focus on the user and the proposition, but there is a lack on business orientation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I have co-founded a company with UX designers which was a failure, because their mindset was not set on making money. Their aim was to enhance the user experience (as is expected from them) but running a business, keeping track of your cash flow and managing projects is a different thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Also, you need to be able to sell your product and most UX designers don't speak business language like a salesperson. They have often great ideas but are often too superficial, not feasible and doesn't directly lead to revenue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The person who makes a digital product or service more effective for the user and more profitable for the company, through research, design, and analysis.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I think a &quot;good&quot; UX designer will make a good entrepreneur.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Many UX designers don't even make good UX designers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Most of the problems of creating and running a business are related to designing solutions to other people's problems or designing incentives that motivate them to behave productively. A UX designer is supposed to do that professionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Understanding the business objective, user objectives, and market constraints is what we UX'ers do all day, it is necessary to have a strong grasp of this before you can make any decisions on how or what an end product will be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The goal of a startup is to achieve product / market fit, who better to research and develop that than a UX'er.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UX'ers are listeners they seek to understand systems. Just what you need when trialling an idea or in beta release</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 21 | I am the pure definition of UX designer. Learning by action. When i first started my associates used to laugh and say its the school of hard knocks... if you make a mistake and you want to stay in the business , you fix your mistake and you pay for it ... | Yes                                                                     | UX designers have experience. They understand how things work. I have worked with decorators that say do this, and they haven't even got a clue how it works, how to make it or how to install it. Their lack of basic knowledge makes them a big liability. Where you have UX designer, they have knowledge on almost all levels which makes their decisions and ideas much more workable...
I personally hired a girl to work for me she had a college education and all the appropriate letters behind her name... i sent her to make a delivery of pillows and put a small tie on my clientes' drapes... She went into my clientes home... on a brand new hard wood floor with spike heels, and wanted to go up on a ladder with the same heels... I had angry clientes that didnt ever want that person in their home ever again... it was a no brainer. I told her before she went to dress casual. No hi heels. I was amazed that a college woman with a degree with aisid didint have the brains to not mar a clientes floor and also that legally insurance will not cover a woman on a ladder with hi heels on... so just common sense is sometimes really really important. |
<p>| 22 | User Experience designer                                                                               | Yes                                                                     | If the project is based on UX product, I think its a plus.                                                                                                                     |
| 23 | Is a designer that don't design only products but think about the emotion                               | Yes                                                                     | With the human centered design the vision of the UX designer can be very open                                                                                                        |</p>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Simpel, simpel, simpel. Don't make the user think.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I think that a startup founder has to be very aware of the design. So the founder has to be a UX designer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>A designer that focuses on user experiences, primarily in the digital realm, but in my definition it covers all human experiences: with physical products, with interfaces, with services, with spaces, with environments.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>I think people from any discipline could make either a good or bad entrepreneur. I think designers have a way of thinking about users and systems that can be very helpful when starting a business, but I think there are a lot of other qualities that affect whether or not someone would be a good entrepreneur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Any individual who shapes, molds, or has influence on the reader or user. Applies to websites, mobile applications, and even traditional marketing platforms.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Don't have the requisite knowledge to answer this. I would submit that any person can make a good entrepreneur, whether he is a UX designer, graphic designer, salesperson ... all that is required is a good idea, vision, patience, and drive to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>A UX designer is some I can safely say I have never met in my industry in the UK.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Of my 5 clients, one has almost (just about) gone under.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe they are called something else, perhaps an Account Manager (?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship is not about being good at anything, its about being good at multiple skills and juggling them all in the air at once.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Someone who understands the business (hard) requirements as well as the client (soft) requirements and negotiate/meet in the middle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>UX Designers ... would need to have a good business sense (ie. the fundamentals of running a business, or at least the traits that would allow this).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Called: Human interaction design / user centred experience.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>A Business Analyst with Design Talent Information Architect Interactive Choreographer Alien Anthropologist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>We are by inclination, skillset, and role entrepreneurial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We are critical aspect of entrepreneurial startup environment - collaborative with other(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Someone who designs a product with the user perspective and experience as a fundamental factor of the products requirements.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>I think a UX designer will have a lot of useful skills that will probably be useful when it comes to founding a start-up. But I do not think these are the only skills required, or that someone who is a good designer will necessarily be a good entrepreneurs. The skills the need are much more variable and from wider sources, who knows if they will have what it takes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Create efficiency and easy use which are not even realized by users and they use products intrinsically</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>It is just not only UX designers but the people whose backgrounds are cognitive science are good entrepreneurs because of the thinking styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Designing how products interact with people and the influence that this product has toward a person. Also what features of the product make it to be desirable to people.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I don't know. But I think it is about design something pulling people or targets to experience new.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>It seems a way to meet the opportunity than ever</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>A designer that honor the reality of the lives lived by the humans that are meant to use your solutions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Because we are true ambassadors of bringing real meaning and value to the customer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>A UX designer work on the interaction between the user and the service provided by the company. They make sure the feelings of this interaction is on par with the company wish, brand, objectives.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>Designers in general have a good base for entrepreneurship. Their work is about creation, there is not much difference between creating a product/service and creating a company. But they often lack a good vision of business, finance, and good selling capabilities. Designers also lack some legitimacy which could be a real problem, at least at the beginning, when a founder is vulnerable.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Defines an experience to be the most efficient and most user friendly possible. The final product must feel natural. The best experience is the one you don't notice.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They already try to suit the needs of the many in their everyday life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Designer that creates a meaningful and clear user experience of a product, service yet to be made. Also designs how that product or service would be used or enjoyed.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, they give clarity where needed through research and in-depth planning. They also have very hands on ideas regarding these products and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Fulfill users' expectations of usability and mentality and go beyond them</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>User experience designers value users and everything that come with them and understand them and utilize them. Unless you are not a user centered business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>understand how people interaction with everything, and design it.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>because it understandable and make performance better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Do-it-all designer.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>While I do think UX designers have more of a handle on how products work and should be built, I would not immediately say that makes them good entrepreneurs/startups, there are a lot of social skills and personality traits associated with those roles that aren't necessarily tied to design.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Someone who is tasked with designing a delightful and seamless user experience.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Because they are most focused on the end user - something which is essential to making the company profitable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>It enhances the User's Experience by solving problems with Design.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I believe that &quot;Form drives the Functionality&quot;. They have potential to change the world by different approach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>A UX designer is a business designer.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>UX designers are always looking for better ways. This one way to create new businesses and opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>User Experience hustler -- not just a designer but an advocate for all things user experience, an entire loop</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes especially if the designer is interested beyond just the UI piece, but the entire User Experience ecosystem ranging from onboarding to other consumer touchpoints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>I study ID during 5 year un til 2005, that was the step of wow effect and human factor: biomecanical and ergonomical aspect of products</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>This is a 360° approach of innovation, product is part of it, as experience, by brands values, as customer or user</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>As UX Designer, design for me is about making a change - through exploration (finding problems / opportunities space, research, insight), concept designing, and iteratively refining the outcomes through prototyping and evaluation.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They are people’s person, understand that we work with and for people. Users are not a subject or customer for them, who just are not trying to put their products on the market. But are really putting effort to understand what the needs and difference this product / services can bring to people life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>People that can put himself on the user's mindset to shape the best service.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>UX Designers are supposed to identify painful problems from customers or at least trying to understand customer, might be a good way for the problem/solution statement which is the basis of a startup idea.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>hum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>nn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Human-Computer interaction problem solver</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>understanding on business needs as well as user needs are fundamental skills for UX Designer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>An individual that works with the rest of the product development team to ensure the usability of the product, or more broadly, contributes to that all aspects of the company provides a good experience for the customer.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Ideal startup team consists of a hustler, a developer and a designer. Sometimes the same person can cover two of the three, seldom all three.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>A UX designers brings together a number of disciplines to craft a meaningful thread, through multiple technical/product elements in order to maintain a high level of satisfaction for the user. Those disciplines are, psychology, interaction design, visual design, information architecture, research, prototyping etc. It's not about the development of artefacts although they often need to produce some of them (wireframes, user journeys). The focus is on facilitating client, customer, and development teams through the process and illuminating many of these elements that would have otherwise been missed.</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>UX designers have the potential to develop into fantastic Product “managers”. That path requires them to take on and understand much more of the business issues surrounding the development of users and products. Entrepreneurs and founders should have a deep understanding of the business, just like in my product manager scenario above. UX designers generally don’t look at: P&amp;L, Product Marketing, Business Model, and Fit to the broader enterprise portfolio. If they do this, would would be a great entrepreneur-founder.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>UX means User Experience, so they design a positive experience for users. They must understand the user and how they will respond to different design choices (all 5 senses when applicable), hopefully resulting in good feelings and positive vibes.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Startups are all about validation and making sure your target markets will use your product or service. UX designers are drenched in the notion that they are NOT designing for themselves, but must do research, talk to people, understand people, in order to make a successful product that is seamless and memorable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>creating outstanding user experiences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>maybe they are more user driven than business people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Creator of a solution to enhance use of a product.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>i think so since for one to create a successful user experience, research and testing of solution is done. In that process, a lot of knowledge or information is picked up by the designer, and thus has 1st hand experience of what the market desires and rejects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>A designer focused on understanding and applying usability techniques in order to enhance products user centered!</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Because if they can understand usability they can understand the needs of their users.. But they need to have the guts of business as well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer can CONTRIBUTE as a co-founder of a startup?</td>
<td>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer NEEDS TO LEARN to be a co-founder of a startup?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Product Management, human-centered design</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Product Management, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Aesthetics, Big Picture Thinking, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Big Picture Thinking, Product Management, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, User Research (Quantitative), User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, human-centered design, Fund Raising</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Taxes, Business Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Usability Testing, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Quantitative), User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, Encourage design culture, human-centered design, Fund Raising</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Networking, Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills, User Research (Qualitative), User Research (Quantitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Ability to adapt to new technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Usability Testing, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Product Management, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Fund Raising, Patents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Product Management, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, User Research (Qualitative), Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Understanding Stakeholders, human-centered design</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, Marketing Strategies, Encourage design culture, human-centered design, Risk-Management, Fund Raising</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Risk-Management, Big Picture Thinking, Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Taxes, Contracts, Patents, Product Liability, Coding, Networking, Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills, User Research (Qualitative), User Research (Quantitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, human-centered design, Risk-Management</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Market Validation, Networking, Leadership Skills, User Research (Qualitative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Qualitative), human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Patents, Networking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Branding Strategies, Big Picture Thinking, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Risk-Management, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34: Contributions of UX Designer and Things to Learn (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer can CONTRIBUTE as a co-founder of a startup?</th>
<th>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer NEEDS TO LEARN to be a co-founder of a startup?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Aesthetics, Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Finance, Big Picture Thinking, Contracts, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Usability Testing, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, human-centered design</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Quantitative), User Research (Qualitative), Product Management, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Finance, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Quantitative), User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative), Wireframe &amp; Prototyping</td>
<td>Finance, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Coding, Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Marketing Strategies</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Leadership Skills, User Research (Qualitative), User Research (Quantitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Product Management, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Taxes, Patents, Product Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Big Picture Thinking</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Market Validation, Product Liability, Product Management, Market Research (Qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, human-centered design, systems thinking</td>
<td>Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Business Management, Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Aesthetics, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Big Picture Thinking, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative), Storytelling &amp; Presentation, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Understanding Stakeholders, Marketing Strategies</td>
<td>Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Coding, Product Management, Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>User Research (Quantitative), User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Usability Testing, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Networking, Business Management, User Research (Qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Risk-Management, Business/Revenue Model, Taxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Branding Strategies, Storytelling &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Contracts, Business Management, Product Management, User Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Quantitative), Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Encourage design culture, human-centered design, Fund Raising</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Patents, Product Liability, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34 (Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer can CONTRIBUTE as a co-founder of a startup?</th>
<th>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer NEEDS TO LEARN to be a co-founder of a startup?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Big Picture Thinking, Encourage design culture, Risk-Management, Fund Raising</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Patents, Networking, Leadership Skills, selling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Product Management, Marketing Strategies, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Risk-Management, Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Taxes, Contracts, Patents, Product Liability, Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Market Validation, Business Management, Product Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, Marketing Strategies, Encourage design culture, human-centered design, Fund Raising, I have too choose a lot sorry</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Usability Testing, Big Picture Thinking, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Contracts, Patents, Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Aesthetics, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Product Management, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Finance, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), User Research (Qualitative), human-centered design</td>
<td>Fund Raising, Patents, Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Market Research (Quantitative), Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Big Picture Thinking, human-centered design</td>
<td>Market Validation, Fund Raising, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Product Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders</td>
<td>Finance, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Aesthetics, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Coding, Market Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Branding Strategies, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, human-centered design</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Business/Revenue Model, Contracts, Networking, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Big Picture Thinking, human-centered design</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Business/Revenue Model, Product Liability, Business Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking</td>
<td>Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills, Market Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Branding Strategies, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Accounting, Risk-Management, Fund Raising, Patents, Business Management, Product Management, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Risk-Management, Business/Revenue Model, Business Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Make a product useful, Market Research (Qualitative), Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Product Management, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Lean &amp; Agile; Teamwork,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34 (Continued)
I regularly observe the world

New business ideas often come to me when directly observing how people interact with products and services

I have a continuous flow of new business ideas that comes through observing the world

I regularly observe customers’ use of our company’s products and services to get new ideas

Table 34 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer can CONTRIBUTE as a co-founder of a startup?</th>
<th>What are the top 5 things you think a UX designer NEEDS TO LEARN to be a co-founder of a startup?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Market Validation, Business/Revenue Model, Product Management, Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Encourage design culture</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Leadership Skills, Educate founders about design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Quantitative), User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Product Management, Encourage design culture, human-centered design</td>
<td>Finance, Business/Revenue Model, Market Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Generate or facilitate generation of Innovative Ideas, Make a product useful, Aesthetics, User Research (Qualitative), Market Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Branding Strategies, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, Storytelling &amp; Presentation, Big Picture Thinking, Understanding Stakeholders, Marketing Strategies, human-centered design, Risk-Management</td>
<td>Risk-Management, Market Validation, Patents, Product Liability, Leadership Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Make a product useful, User Research (Qualitative), Usability Testing, Wireframe &amp; Prototyping, human-centered design</td>
<td>Big Picture Thinking, Business/Revenue Model, Networking, Leadership Skills, Market Research (Quantitative)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 35: Innovative Premium Test (First 27 Respondents) (Continued)
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>22</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>26</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By paying attention to everyday experiences, I often get new business ideas</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a network of individuals whom I trust to bring a new perspective and refine new ideas</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I attend many diverse professional and/or academic conferences outside of my industry/profession.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I initiate meetings with people outside of my industry to spark ideas for a new product, service, or customer base</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a large network of contacts with whom I frequently interact to get ideas for new products, services, and customers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love to experiment to understand how things work and to create new ways of doing things.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I frequently experiment to create new ways of doing things</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am adventurous, always looking for new experiences.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I actively search for new ideas through experimenting</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a history of taking things apart</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 35 (Continued)
| # | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 |
| I am always asking questions | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| I am constantly asking questions to get at the root of the problem | 7 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| Others are frustrated by the frequency of my questions | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| I often ask questions that challenge the status quo | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 4 |
| I regularly ask questions that challenge others' fundamental assumptions | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| I am constantly asking questions to understand why products and projects underperform | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
| New business ideas often come to me when directly observing how people interact with products and services | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| I have a continuous flow of new business ideas that comes through observing the world | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 7 |
| I regularly observe customers' use of our company's products and services to get new ideas | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| By paying attention to everyday experiences, I often get new business ideas | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| I have a network of individuals whom I trust to bring a new perspective and refine new ideas | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| I attend many diverse professional and/or academic conferences outside of my industry/profession. | 4 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| I initiate meetings with people outside of my industry to spark ideas for a new product, service, or customer base | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 |

Table 36: Innovative Premium Test (Last 27 Respondents) (Continued)
I have a large network of contacts with whom I frequently interact to get ideas for new products, services, and customers.

I love to experiment to understand how things work and to create new ways of doing things.

I am adventurous, always looking for new experiences.

I actively search for new ideas through experimenting.

I have a history of taking things apart.

| # | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 |
| I have a large network of contacts with whom I frequently interact to get ideas for new products, services, and customers. | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| I love to experiment to understand how things work and to create new ways of doing things. | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 7 |
| I frequently experiment to create new ways of doing things | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 5 |
| I am adventurous, always looking for new experiences. | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| I actively search for new ideas through experimenting | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| I have a history of taking things apart | 7 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 5 |
Dear Dr. Gregersen,

I am Selene Chew, a graduate student pursuing an MFA in Design Research and Development at the Design Department of The Ohio State University. I have read your book about The Innovator's DNA and I am very intrigued by the findings of it.

My thesis research is about the influences of having a Founder that has a design background in a startup. There has been a rise in the importance of designer's role in a company, especially after the success of Apple. It seemed to be a common agreement that companies should embrace design if they want to have a better chance at succeeding. As mentioned in your book, the "DNA" of a CEO greatly affects the innovative premium of a company, and having an innovative CEO would put a company at a better position of succeeding. I believe
there could be some relationship between the innovative premium of a company and their embrace of design. The influence of design could be more visible in a startup that has a Design Founder. My study would include finding out what can a design founder bring into a startup, and part of it includes evaluating the “DNA” of design founders.

I would like to arrange an interview with you to understand more about the book and your perspective on innovation and design. I believe your expertise in the subject academically and/or professionally would provide important insight to my thesis. The interview would take at most 1 hour, and will be conducted through either video or phone conferencing at your convenience. Kindly reply to this email to indicate your interest in participating in the interview, and your available dates and time for the session.

Thank you so much for your time and looking forward to speaking with you.

--

Regards,

Selene Chew
Graduate Teaching Associate
Department of Design | Ohio State University
250 Hayes Hall / 108 North Oval Mall
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1318 USA
School Website: design.osu.edu
Email: chew.40@osu.edu
Dear Selene,

Thank you for your inquiry about design and CEO impact. I have had some recent health challenges and will not be able to participate at this time. I wish you the very best in your work.

Kind regards,

Hal

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Hal B Gregersen

Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank Chaired Professor of Innovation and Leadership

INSEAD - The Business School for the World®  Website: www.insead.edu

Explore at HalGregersen.com  – Engage in The 4-24 Project.org  – Experience the Innovators Accelerator.com

"The important and difficult job is never to find the right answers, it is to find the right question.”  Peter Drucker, The Practice of Management, 1954
Selene Chew <chew.40@buckeyemail.osu.edu>

To: GREGERSEN Hal <Hal.GREGERSEN@insead.edu>

Dear Dr. Gregersen,

Thank you for your reply. I am sorry to hear about your health situation, I hope you will get well soon!

I have read the paper "Entrepreneur behaviors, opportunity recognition, and the origins of innovative ventures" and I am very interested in conducting the Innovation and Execution Assessment on the Design Founders as part of my research. Could I get the permission from you to use the Assessment for my thesis please?

Thank you so much for your help and hope you get well soon.

Regards

Selene
Dear Selene,

Thanks for understanding! That would be fine to use the items from the paper on your thesis.

All the best,

Hal