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# Creating and communicating value(s)

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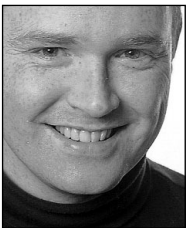
# Creating and communicating value(s)

by Roger Sametz and Andrew Maydoney

*By affecting how people think and act and by connecting an organization to its constituents' values, design can enhance performance. Roger Sametz and Andrew Maydoney present a model of design that articulates these outcomes and how best to leverage them. Their discussion is about communications design, but their insights are applicable across a range of design arenas.*



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## Thinking about value

It's difficult to talk about the value that communication design (or, more narrowly, graphic design) can create and deliver, if neither practitioners nor clients think about communication design in terms of value.

It's similarly hard to talk about what the different kinds of value communication design, and their informing processes, can contribute when the prevailing mental models don't include "value." Unfortunately, communication design is often:

- Thought of primarily as a formal, visual discipline: "We need someone to lay this out."
- Defined in term of artifacts—"making things"—"I need a brochure...logo... website."
- Conceived and executed separately from an organization's strategic plans and thinking.
- Purchased as a commodity; decisions are based on price, not value (and without taking into account "opportunity costs").
- Framed as "deliverables" to be checked off a to-do list, but without sufficient attention to the processes that deliver a useful (or not) deliverable.

- Planned and implemented, often without any sufficient connection to goals and outcomes or to agreed-upon metrics. (Almost anything else an organization embarks upon has some set of parameters to evaluate return on investment and success.)
- Not thought of as assets (beyond a logo or logotype) that have lasting value and need to be managed to deliver the highest possible return.

The fact that value, in any real sense, is not part of the dialogue is underscored through the "beauty pageants" that the communication design profession itself stages to "value" what its practitioners do. Thousands of entries are dealt onto tables, and judges bless those pieces that jump off the table (in the allotted nanosecond) with a colored chip. Enough colored chips translate into an award. But these awards are necessarily all about artifacts only—artifacts and their quotient of visual "cool." These contests may point to and, self-referentially, fulfill trends in visual iteration, but they are rarely explicitly about value delivered to a client organization or its constituents. They couldn't be: The goals, opportunities, constraints,

and results that connect to the artifacts are not on the table. And while visual coolness may well be important to a communication project's value, by itself, out of context, one can't know if any particular flavor of visual cool is appropriate or in sync with an organization, whether it will resonate with constituents, or if it will help to elicit desired responses and achieve stated goals.

### **Stepping back, defining “big-D” design**

Although realigning mental models is never quick and easy, the outdated ones that define the scope and value of communication design need to be revisited—in practitioners' offices, classrooms, boardrooms, and in the conference rooms of the media that “serve” the profession.

If “small-d” design is about making things with ink, pixels, or paint—however visually arresting and intelligent—“big-D” involves thinking about these artifacts in a wider context: *c o m m u n i c a t i o n*. And communication, even in its simplest form—leaving a note for the mythical milkman, drawing a map on a napkin to give directions, placing a classified ad to sell your old Jeep, or asking a friend about a new movie—is about learning, informing, educating, persuading, with some goal in sight. The most casual of communications are initiated with purpose, with a range of outcomes imagined—either in one's favor, or not. Certainly, communications that are more formal in their planning and execution should have at least as much rigor.

Thinking about communication design as communication that is designed involves stepping back and understanding that Web sites, corporate identity programs, and sign systems aren't the only things that can be “designed.” The analytical and translational skills that are critical to small-d design can—should—be applied on a wider scale.

At the front end, investigative processes can be designed to look both inside and outside an organization to develop goals, strategies, programs, and metrics—underpinnings that both inform any specific communications and give a picture of what success might look like. Frameworks for collaboration can be designed—frameworks that move hallway conversations from the subjective “I like/don't like green” to the more objective and useful “We need to effect x or y kind of change to be successful.” Customer experiences can be designed—across media and time. Channel strategies must be designed. And ways of generating enthusiastic and voluntary internal “buy-in” can and must be designed—without which the resulting artifacts may gather dust in some closet. None of this “designing” necessarily involves picking a typeface or art-directing a photo session. But it is all about “designing” a dialogue on many levels. Communication, according to our friends at the American Heritage Dictionary, is a “system for sending *and* receiving messages” (italics added to enhance communication).

Communication plans, systems, and projects can be designed and built to reinforce or change perceptions, build and nurture relationships, and promulgate visual and verbal branding systems within organizations—so that everyone within an organization can communicate more effectively. All of which is essential if products, services, and organizations are to be valued by desired constituents.

And, of course, conversations can be designed. Even a chat over a martini can advance a cause or promote a product—and be of value—if one is thinking about communicating with purpose, with goals in mind. Communication design can, and does, create value by affecting how people think—and act.

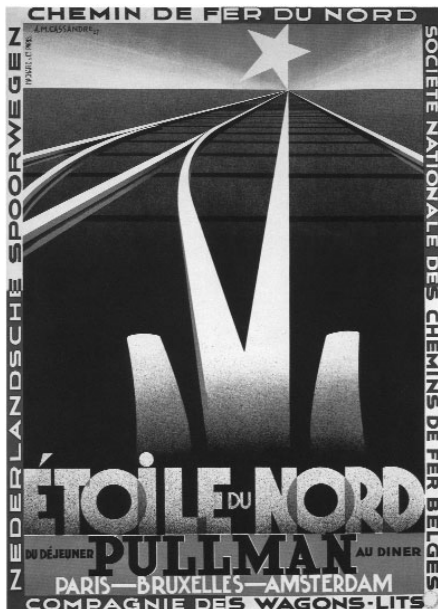
## **Moving from “communicating to” to “communicating with”**

For any communication to really create value, the relationship between the communicator and the communicant must be understood and valued. Not so long ago, communicators considered the people to whom they communicated as their “audience”—passive, and, it was hoped, receptive. Today, with ever-higher noise levels and an expanded set of methods and materials at the ready, it's important that organizations focus on communi-

cating *with* people—not *to* them or *at* them. The passive audience needs to become the active constituents and, maybe, collaborators, with whom organizations develop a dialogue and who will ultimately cast a vote in one's favor—or not. Understanding constituents' concerns and needs is critical if an organization is to move beyond single transactions to develop valued and valuable relationships.

### Connecting promises and expectations to build brand

A. M. Cassandre's posters connect directly to consumers' expectations and values: the endless possibilities and romance of rail travel on the *Étoile du Nord* (1927); the personal empowerment of electricity (*Thomson*, 1931); the appetite-enhancing powers of the aperitif, Bonal (1933).



And this thinking and acting can be measured. (“Buzz” or “word-of-mouth” communications have recently received more than a fair amount of buzz. But haven’t interpersonal communications and extended notions of referral been around as long as people? How language is used and leveraged has always been in the communication designer’s toolbox, if not always fully utilized.)

#### Delivering value, in several dimensions

Communication designers’ fellow travelers—architects and product designers—are more used to working and thinking in environments in which goals, outcomes, needs, programming, and process are more explicit and matter more. Maybe that’s because there are often more dollars at stake. Tooling up, producing, and distributing a new car, vacuum cleaner, or paring knife is a big deal; designing, permitting, and constructing or renovating a building, even on a small scale, can involve an ante that dwarfs a communications design budget. Or maybe those who practice and commission these sister disciplines may understand better how architectural and product design can generate value (in different dimensions)—and have a clearer sense of what a failure to deliver value can mean. While

there is plenty of room to discuss what “good” architecture is, there are lenses through which one can focus on different criteria for value. Those who steer both public and private schools know that their buildings can not only play a part in educating, but also affect how students, faculty, donors, partners, alumni/ae, and host communities regard the schools—thinking that can translate measurably into recruiting, retention, fundraising—and ultimately, the organization’s future. Architecture is consciously “used” by schools to broadcast values, build communities, send signals about the “quality of life,” and reinforce brand messages—architecture as a competitive tool. Architecture of commercial buildings can affect morale, productivity, and creativity of those who work within the buildings. And, again measurably, architecture can drive rents, change the market value of abutting buildings, and spur development that can have a ripple effect on the values of whole areas. Commercial architecture, like its counterparts on the campus, can also send strong signals about what an organization stands for and can reinforce its competitive position in the marketplace—or not, of course, depending on the architecture.

Communication design can, and does, create value in multiple dimensions—adding value to both tactical transactions and institutional and organizational health. Value generated can be:

<b>Immediate</b>	→	<b>Long-term</b>
<b>Tangible</b>	→	<b>Intangible</b>
<b>Internal</b>	→	<b>External</b>

*Value creation in a cultural organization*

A new subscription mailer for a cultural organization delivers results that are immediate, tangible, and external. The communication has engaged external constituents to buy tickets that can be counted; value can be tallied daily in dollars. But it may take years for the value of an initiative focused on planned giving through charitable remainder trusts to yield measurable results.

A campaign to build this same organization’s brand—what the organization stands for and promises, the benefits it delivers, why it’s worthy of participation and support—can deliver results across a wide timeframe, and across the organization, though the results may be less tangible. This brand campaign encourages ticket sales (tangible, external, immediate), lays the groundwork for improved fundraising (tangible, longer-term), and also builds meaning and value for constituencies whose opinions and actions are critical to the organization’s ongoing success—civic leaders, media, prospective board members.

This same branding initiative, if it’s managed to involve a cross-section of the organization in its development and promulgated to be widely embraced, can deliver significant internal value. In the short term, this designed communication system saves time and money every time a new communication project is designed and produced (tangible). If staff better understand strategy, goals, and main messages, they will be more engaged, better able to make creative decisions that advance the organization’s goals, and often make more enthusiastic team players (long- and short-term; tangible and intangible). If the process involves more than one department or function within an organiza-

tion, value is created every time silos are bridged; more conversation and coordination among groups always has the potential to increase tangible and intangible results, near- and long-term. And if engaged in the process, and armed with messages and materials, board members are more confident and effective (and more valuable) ambassadors.

**Broadcasting different values**



photo: James Reiley



photo: Andy Ryan

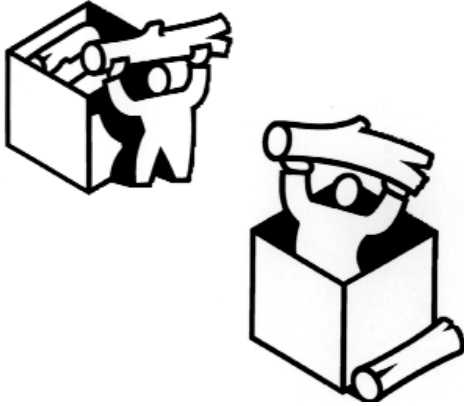
Beyond shaping how people live and work within spaces—in addition to how buildings interact with their neighbors—architecture has always been a powerful means for private and public organizations to express what they mean and what they value.

New to Harvard University: *Harvard One Western Avenue Graduate Student Apartments Allston*. Architect: Machado and Silvetti Associates Inc.  
 New to MIT: *Ray and Maria Stata Center for Computer, Information and Intelligence Sciences*. Architect: Frank O. Gehry of Gehry Partners,LLP.

**Building long-lived value and a framework for decision-making: Switchboard.com**

When Sametz Blackstone was engaged, in the pre-bubble (and pre-burst) days, to create the communications and brand identity for both a new company (Coordinate.com) and the first user-friendly online directory for finding people and businesses (Switchboard.com), our collaborators knew they needed an identity and a Web site. But the process yielded unexpected value. The friendliness and intuitiveness of the site helped to make it an instant success; the site was sold several times for figures verging on the “irrationally exuberant.”

Moreover, the company reaped significant internal value. According to the (then) vice president of marketing, “We embarked on a project to launch a new company and product and knew the identity and graphic interface would be important for success. What we didn’t expect to end up with from a design process was a system that would help us to make decisions about all aspects of the company, a yardstick against which to measure new ideas—and that continues to be extremely valuable.” (The site and mark are still extant almost a decade after launch—a somewhat rare statistic.)



# Switchboard™

**Re-defining the mental model of “museum”: Fuller Craft Museum**

New England is rich with cultural resources, especially museums, at nearly every scale and scope. Between Boston and Providence lies the city of Brockton, Massachusetts—a city with a long history of people working with their hands, from shoe factory workers to Rocky Marciano. When Brockton’s Fuller Museum of Art—referred to as FMA or The Fuller—decided to elevate its profile in the regional and national museum landscape, the board elected to shift the focus of the museum from a mix of traditional art forms—nineteenth and twentieth century painting and sculpture—to contemporary craft. The Museum would become the only museum in New England dedicated to this emerging art discipline, and one of only a half dozen such museums in the country. It wasn’t, however, until the board and staff were engaged in the strategy and planning phases of a communications process that they started to really define who they were, for whom, and why people would care. The name, the key messages, and everything the museum said and did were closely examined for relevance and impact as part of defining and sharing the story of the institution’s aspirations. Gone is the meaningless acronym FMA. All communications are designed to build value and meaning and foster emerging relationships.

exhibitions, visitors are invited to don white gloves and, with docent guidance, actually touch and interact with selected art objects. Executive director Gretchen Keyworth says, “We thought we had it all figured out when we officially moved from one art discipline to another. We have quickly learned that designing a new institution is a far more rigorous pursuit than previously considered. Today we realize that everything we do and say matters. And everything we do, we do by design—to connect with our constituents and to remain true to the institution as we defined it through our communications development process. We are who we are, in large part because of a designed and managed strategy.”

Today, Fuller Craft Museum is the most closely watched newcomer to the New England Museum tradition. Museum membership increased by 44 percent in the first six months of the new strategy and other metrics are favorably on the rise. And Fuller Craft Museum is quickly becoming a vital economic engine for the area while contributing significantly to the national movement of collecting, exhibiting, and educating people about art through contemporary craft.

Further, the very notion of what *museum* means is being tested and redefined as Fuller Craft exploits the tactile and familiar nature of craft materials and objects. In some



# fullerCRAFT museum™

Let the art touch you







cycle, and how to write engaging headlines. The value delivered: more effective, culturally-appropriate materials; a more involved sales force; materials produced in less time for less money; the ability to send out updates, globally, for almost no money; flexibility to respond to changes in offerings quickly; and a much lower investment in inventory and corporate-based marketing staff. All this from a design solution—favorable results in all six areas.

*Looking inward: value within a communication design office:*

Shifting the focus from artifact creation to “How do we best communicate?” can also re-focus the analytical and translational skills resident in a communication design office to deliver more value (both to the office and to clients). If every strategist, writer, visual designer, programmer, print buyer, and HTML coder is thinking about how his or her skills and decisions can come together to fulfill a value-driven program—to create compelling communications that connect with people and affect thinking and behavior—then choices have a context and a rationale that goes way beyond “doesn’t this look cool?” Communications can still, of course, look cool, but approaches are grounded, creativity is directed toward results, and everyone can talk to the client in the client’s language, creating value for the firm and the client.

**Creating value by influencing thinking and behavior**

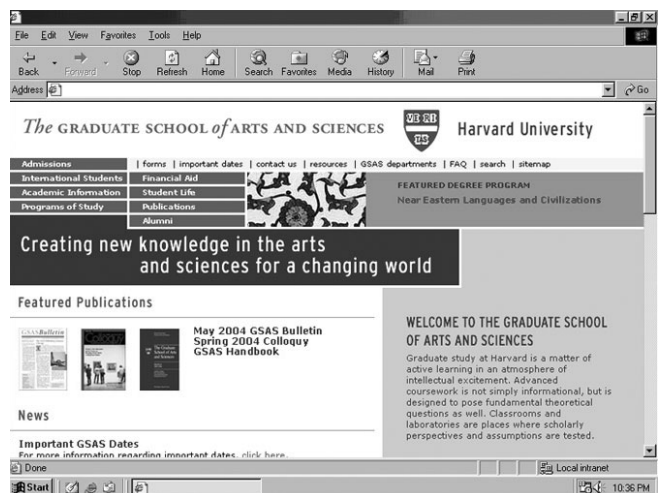
If communication design is valuable because it can influence the way in which people think and act, how does that happen—or start to happen? There are lots of treatises on this topic. Many authors believe there is some magic formula or overriding modality that is more valuable than others. Experience demonstrates, however, that despite trends and (often limited) statistical analysis, the most effective communications programs are as multi-modal as the people to whom they are directed. It’s likely that there is no single “way” that guarantees success. Effective communications need to evolve not only from an understanding of what people value, but also from the knowledge that different people take in, process, and are moved by communications in different ways. Dynamic conditions require dynamic responses, not monolithic doctrines. Disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and other sciences also play a vital role in the study and practice of how we communicate, because they help us to better understand the context in which we and our constituents communicate.

Holistic, thoughtfully planned, well-executed communication programs and initiatives can:

- Cut through the increasing communications clutter and give an organization, product, or service a more clear and consistent voice—a voice that resonates with desired communities.
- Open dialogues and facilitate connections—people are willing to “listen to” and, perhaps, have a conversation with that “voice.”

**Connecting internally and externally: Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**

The Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences is the largest of Harvard’s 13 graduate schools and serves a geographically and demographically diverse constituency. For many years, the administration of the school struggled to provide its key constituents—primarily prospective and enrolled students—with valuable information and insight about school programs and events. Through the discovery process, it became clear that earlier efforts to communicate did not acknowledge—and weren’t built around—the decentralized nature of the organization. Sametz Blackstone created a Web-based solution that offered opportunities for every part of the organization to contribute. In addition to receiving high praise from students, who now feel better informed and more connected to the GSAS community, the school’s leadership reports that the site (integrating information from the school’s numerous and diverse departments) serves as the main organizing tool for the school’s weekly administrative team meetings—offering the school a framework for collaboration both internally and externally.

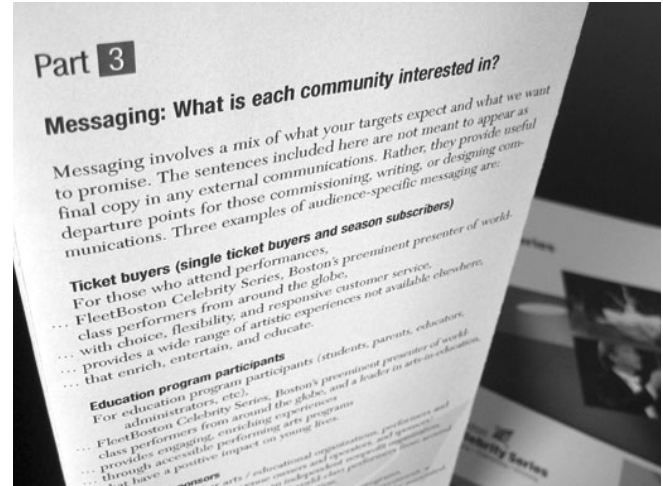
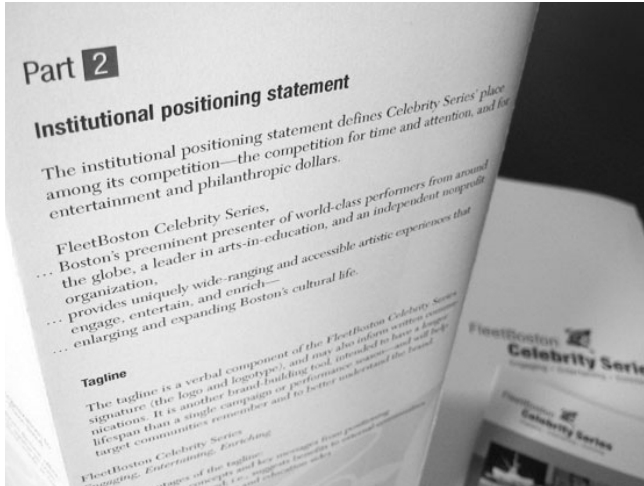




## Engaging the organization for success: FleetBoston Celebrity Series

Staking out a position in the landscape, crafting messages, and being clear about the constituent groups with whom an organization needs to interact are important components of every visual and verbal brand communications system. But for these concepts and messages to have meaning “out there”—where it counts—it’s important that all those within an

organization are on board and have the thinking and tools to make the creative decisions that build awareness and meaning—and generate value. For FleetBoston Celebrity Series, in addition to transferring knowledge of the new system to those who make and commission communications, simple tent cards were given to all staff and board so that all could have a shared basis from which to write and talk.



## Connecting to values—and value delivered: Ireland Funds Worldwide

For Ireland Funds Worldwide, the world's largest private-sector fundraising organization for Ireland, North and South, communications had been focused on donors. We collaborated to evolve a new communications strategy that shifted attention away from people in tuxedos to the programs that donor dollars supported and to the benefits delivered—for peace and reconciliation, arts and culture, education, and community development. Communications programming took the form of a new brand identity system, redesigned member publications, refocused annual report, fundraising materials, special event collateral, a director's report, a new Web site, and materials for their three-year successful \$100 million capital campaign. All this was done to tell a story rationally

and also emotionally—a story in which each donor is integral to the telling—and to connect the organization's vision and values to donor values.

Executive director Kingsley Aikins, who embarked on this new communications program thinking he needed “new things,” is now clear that communications is about “... a philosophy, process, and structure through which we could address our diffuse communications and put in place what we needed in order to grow. We went back to ‘first principles’—starting with strategy, goals, and constituents—to build a system. We connected strategy to operations. That process and the work that continues to flow from it are now central to our business planning and to our success.”



- Start and nurture relationships—build trust and confidence.
- Shepherd people along the communications continuum that is just as applicable to cultural organizations and academia as it is to consumer products, consulting firms, and financial services...

**Awareness**



**Comprehension**



**Participation**



**Commitment**



**Loyalty**



**Support**



**Renewed awareness and comprehension**

This continuum is a progression that is important if one is to move people and communities closer to an organization—and to its offerings and products—and retain their interest and participation for significant periods of time.

All of which is critical to (and analogous to) brand-building—getting people and communities to know and value your organization and offerings in the way you want them to know and value you. And while brand-building has, until recently, been more connected to soap and sneakers than to academia, cultural organizations, professional services, and even cities, all organizations can benefit from having visible and understood brand(s); all can benefit from managing awareness and meaning built through product, service, and communication.

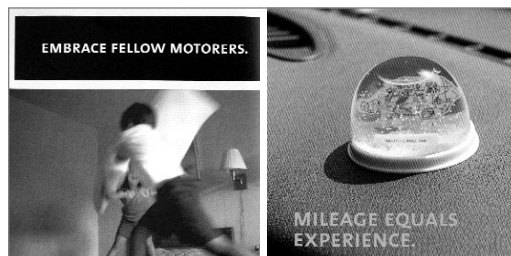
**Telling stories that resonate**



In the depths of the Depression, the Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner (model 30, 1937), designed by Lurelle Guild, told a story in addition to cleaning carpets. The design spoke to the future, to optimism, and to the endless possibilities that American invention could realize.



Futurist poetry didn't just describe the speed, noise, and explosiveness of modern life; it lived and breathed it. Grammar and syntax were thrown aside. Type is used both to make words (that have meaning) and also solely for visual and emotional impact. (Filippo Marinetti, *Montagne + Vallées + Strade x Joffre* (Mountains + Valleys + Streets x Joffre), 1915.



Some people drive; owners of Mini Coopers “motor.” Far beyond just extolling the virtues of a car, communications on behalf of Mini Cooper tell stories that do nothing less than involve both prospective customers and owners in a fresh, Mini-driven view of the world—the glove box “can heat soup or chill chocolate bars and spare hoagies... because no one keeps gloves in them anymore.” Listening to music, feeding parking meters, attracting Luna moths, and shimmying out of a wet swimsuit are all new, different (and cool) experiences if you motor.

**Connecting to values to create value**

Relationships. Trust. Dialogues. Connection. Most of us know how to start and manage these kinds of interchanges on a personal level—more or less—but how can communication design, more tactically, play an important part in moving people closer to an organization or offering to create value?

*Communication is always with someone.*

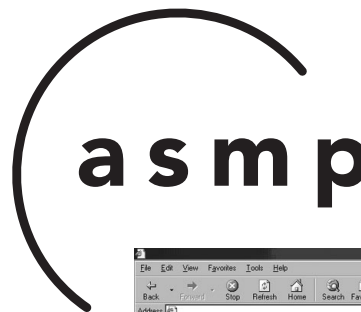
Whether you're selling financial services, trying to recruit faculty, raise money, or create board-level ambassadors within your organization, you're trying to build connections with people—and you have ideas about the responses you're looking for. Even B2B communications are “with someone” in that second B. And even if that specific person isn't actually known, whoever is initiating those communications has some notion of that person's needs, expectations, and what keeps him/her up at night. Start there.

**Increasing value to the “trade”: American Society of Media Photographers**

Trade organizations, put simply, are supposed to help facilitate and improve trade for their members. Difficult economic conditions coupled with fundamental changes across industry landscapes make the importance and relevance of such organizations more important than ever. Photographers have recently been threatened by the proliferation of royalty-free stock photography and decreasing standards in business practices—from copyright issues to commoditized pricing. The American Society of Media Photographers is one of a number of trade organizations for photographers. ASMP's unique focus on business and legal issues, coupled with its history as the longest-standing photography trade organization—60 years—were the values that were most resonant to its members; these became the basis of a strategy to attract and retain its membership and to increase the value of the organization. Two challenges were that most photographers are sole proprietors and that membership is geographically dispersed. So, it stood to reason that in addition to a new approach to the organization's brand and identity, investing in electronic communications would offer optimal value to membership.

Sametz Blackstone collaborated with ASMP and its members to create a robust online system that allows each of its many thousands of members to create personalized profiles with sample online portfolios. This information is fed to a “find a photographer”

function that is marketed to, and used by, photo buyers from around the world. Further, our approach to value offered opportunities for members to increase their commitment to the organization, at higher levels of membership, in exchange for increased online benefits—more detailed, collaborative counsel and access to information. The most active of the new online resource offers opportunities for direct dialogue through member forums—facilitated by board-appointed experts—and is used by increasing numbers of members for advice and feedback. Results to date are higher value to partners, offering them access to more qualified leads; significantly higher levels of membership applications; and increased conversion and member retention. One member reports, “We have a very valuable tool here. My colleagues and I can attest to that over and over. My yearly membership has been recouped many times over.” A recent successful vote to increase member dues in spite of difficult economic conditions has been attributed to the clear value delivered through the communication strategy and programs.



*Understand...*

- The constituencies with whom you're communicating. If there are several, they probably have different needs, interests, responsibilities, and goals.
- The values that are important to these different groups. What are they looking for, beyond specific offerings, in order to begin a conversation? Do they care if you're part of the city's fabric? If you're "green?"
- How they see themselves. People who see themselves in a Chrysler PT Cruiser may have a very different self-image than those who see themselves "motoring" in a Mini Cooper.
- What their expectations are—and what's likely to drive decisions. Access? The soup-to-nuts customer experience? Price?
- How what you're offering—whether it's a product or an opportunity to support a philanthropic endeavor—will match up with the constituents' expectations, values, and needs. Is there a fit? Is what you're selling what they want to buy (literally or metaphorically)?
- What are the different ways into a relationship? If you're communicating to raise money on behalf of an academic biomedical research center, it would be important to know if prospects care about basic research, specific disease areas (and which ones), supporting young researchers, or investing in new technology. Perhaps they just want to be associated with an endeavor they see as "cutting edge." Or all or some of the above.
- The responses you are looking for. What do you want the people to whom you're communicating to think and to do? Buy something? Know more about you? Write a check? Be an engaged team player?

*Connect / align this understanding to...*

- The meaning, value, and values you are trying to communicate (and make known and understood). What will resonate and connect with your target constituents? This connection is critically important to relationship building, especially when there

is no existing relationship. Whether or not there is some "value connection" might determine whether a mailed communication to a prospect gets picked up off the kitchen table and read—or swept immediately into the trash.

- The "personality attributes" of your organization or offering. Do you want/ need to communicate innovation? Tradition? A disruptive way of looking at the world? Comfort?

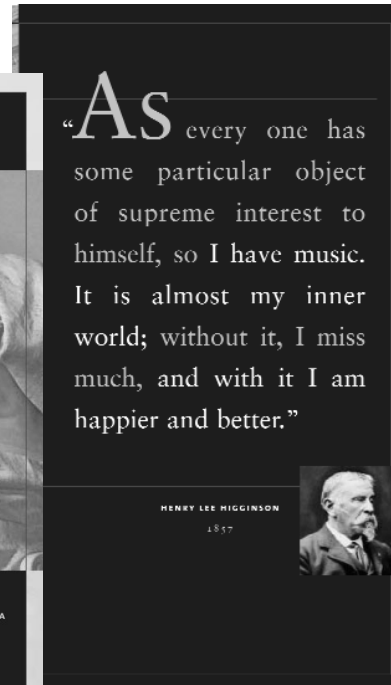
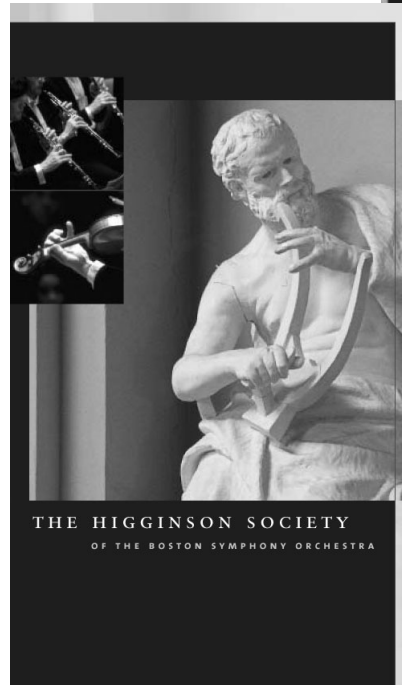
*And begin to tell the story that connects you with your target constituent(s)...*

- Organizations are good at talking about what they do and offer, but there are other stories to be told: stories about meaning and value; stories about how your organization or offerings fit into the larger landscape; stories that involve your constituents and encourage them to see themselves in the story—and understand how they might help complete it.
- Stories—designed communications—often need to be told on two levels: the rational and the emotional ("good and good for you"). That sensible mini-van might be the perfect match for your family's needs, but do you want it? Development officers always have the "reasons" why one should support x or y initiative, but they don't always pair these with more emotionally driven content needed to make their reasons come alive.
- Anticipate and build in different resonant points. Identify the different ways your intended constituent might connect with your organization or offering and build them in. Everyone won't connect everywhere, but the goal is to have everyone connect somewhere.
- Pair "what" and "so what?" Be conscious that you're providing reasons (rational and emotional!) for people to give a damn. This is as important for internal constituents as it is for external ones.

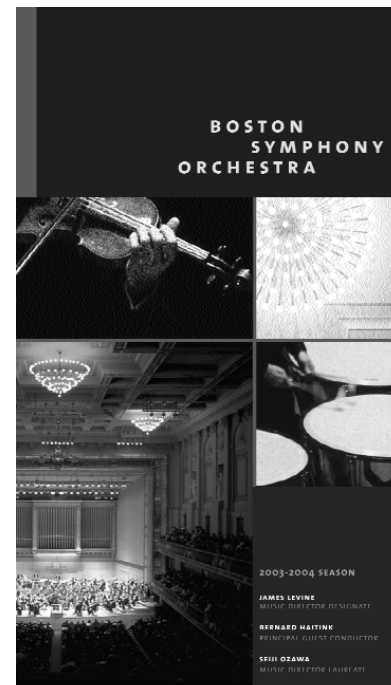
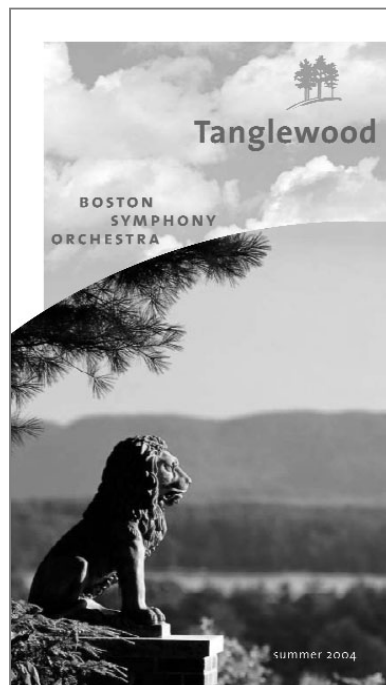
**Integrating communications to move people closer to an organization: Boston Symphony Orchestra**

“At the Boston Symphony Orchestra, it’s all about the music,” according to Kim Noltemy, director of sales and marketing, “but it’s also all about relationship-building—about connecting to people and moving them closer to the organization. Seven years ago, before many cultural organizations were even thinking about their brand, we began a collaboration with Sametz Blackstone to better define who we were, for whom, and what each of our brands ‘meant’ (and needed to mean). We wanted to put in place a system that enables us to craft communications that both generate the desired transactions and work hard to consistently reinforce our institutional image and messages.”

Noltemy continues: “The always-evolving system has both enough ‘glue’ to connect communications across departments, initiatives, brands, and years—and enough flexibility to ‘tilt’ communications to achieve resonance with specific constituents—a single ticket buyer is not the same as a long-term subscriber. We’re able to achieve near-term objectives while always building the awareness and meaning needed to fulfill long-term goals. And both the planning and the implementation of communications continue to reinforce shared thinking across the organization so that all communications reinforce each other.”



Top: development communications for The Koussevitzky Society (Tanglewood) and The Higginson Society (BSO); bottom: acquisition brochures for Tanglewood and BSO seasons.

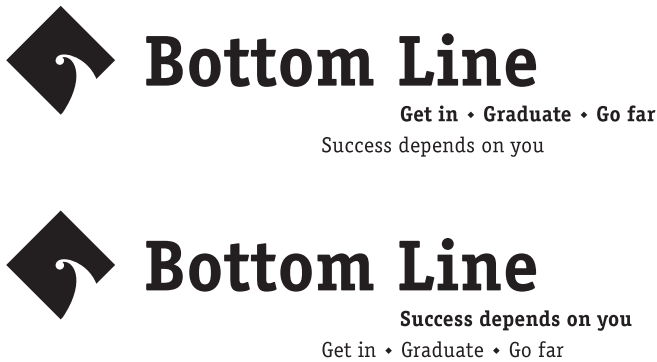




**Making a real difference, increasing impact: Bottom Line**

Optimistic indicators show that of the approximately 3,400 graduating high school seniors in Boston Public Schools, at best, 800 may enter and graduate college. National studies show that approximately twenty five percent of urban youth achieve college degrees. Bottom Line is a private, non-profit organization built to help improve these statistics for urban youth. In its first five years, the organization achieved steady, but slow, increases in its efficacy. The planning and implementation of a new communications strategy connected Bottom Line more directly to the two key constituents necessary to move young people from “at-risk” to hopeful—students and funders. In addition to a new visual system and targeted materials, a two-part tagline / message system allows focus and attention to be directed appropriately: “Get in, graduate, go far” connects to students; “Success depends on you” is about engaging donors and prospects. Both sets of constituents can find value in either statement, but the two-part structure allows the organization to more clearly articulate its

value propositions to each group, to connect each group to the other, and has lead to increased engagement and conversion rates. Within eighteen months of launching the new communications strategy, Bottom Line has more than doubled its annual budget and significantly more than doubled its reach and impact. Greg Johnson, Executive Director reports, “Virtually every student we work with gets accepted to at least one college (98%). We now serve over five hundred graduating high school seniors and college students. Our message is unmistakable and our supporters get it more clearly than ever. Our communications are a fundamental conduit to the people who matter most to Bottom Line. Today we know more donors, get more funding, and have a greater impact on more students than ever before. And this success is within a social service environment that is, for the most part, contracting, not expanding. Our communications strategy is a vital part of over-all organizations strategy and future growth.”

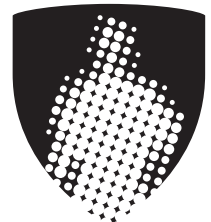


**Advancing institutional advancement: CBR Institute for Biomedical Research**

Organizations of all sorts—profit and non—evolve and grow, and the environments in which they live and breathe also change. Often, communications don’t keep pace with this change. The result is that communications under-sell and under-value organizations, products, and offerings, and important constituencies then under-value the organization and its offerings, as well. Out-of-alignment communications can, and do, limit the future.

The CBR Institute for Biomedical Research, one of the world’s premier institutes for the study of how the immune system defends the body and of the crucial processes of inflammation, was approaching its fiftieth anniversary. Although it was called The Center for Blood Research, its focus was no longer on blood, and within the Harvard Medical School environment, Center did not adequately describe the scale, scope, and independent governance of the organization.

A new name, logo, logotype, architecture of communications, and visual and verbal brand-building blocks were created based on the findings of a wide-ranging investigation, aligned with a new strategic plan. “The new program,” according to Laurence W. Herron, vice president for development and external affairs, “gives us the thinking, tools, and materials to more-accurately position the Institute in the ever-changing biomedical landscape and to build the awareness and understanding that is necessary if the Institute is to successfully compete for the faculty, dollars, partnerships, and interest it needs to enjoy a vibrant future.”



*The first two logos for the now re-named CBR Institute for Biomedical Research featured a caduceus, the symbol for healing, and a hexagon, a shape given mystical powers by the ancients. The new mark takes the shape of a protective shield; the dots represent the cells and molecules of the immune system and the many breakthrough discoveries; taken together they take on human form and symbolize The CBR Institute’s ultimate mission—helping people to heal through research that leads to new discoveries and cures.*

*Put the words and music together...*

Not all communications are expressed visually, but all visual expressions communicate. Cave paintings, standing stones, illuminated manuscripts, annual reports, Web sites, and fast-food signage all reflect choices made among available methods and materials—choices that can either nurture relationships, resonate with people, connect to values—or not. Choices can reinforce or dilute meaning, foster interaction or erect barriers, create value—or not.

But it's not enough to choose words, type fonts, colors, compositional moves, and imagery within the matrix of time and space. While these choices are very important, it's how these building blocks of communication are executed and expressed—and how these expressions interact—that often has the greater impact. As designer Josef Albers showed, the same set of colors, deployed in different quantities and in different relationships to each other, generates startlingly different effects and responses. The content of an image can be manipulated to have widely varying meaning: angle of view, focus, color, cropping—illustration or photography—all can be marshaled to different effect. The same

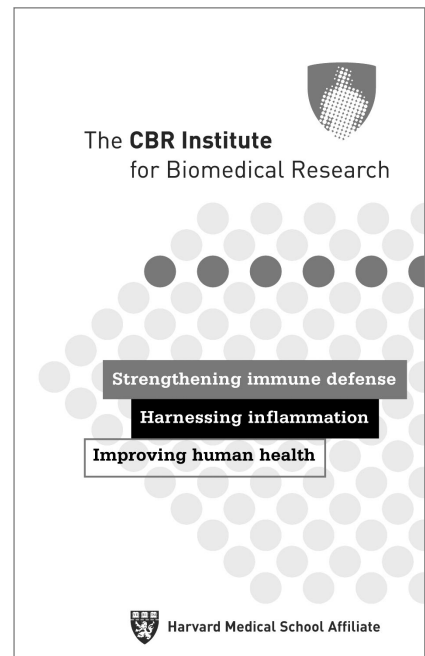
few words can be expressed in a straightforward declarative statement, be made imperative, or can be articulated to create communication that generates different responses.

*It's about integration across media and time*

Much as there are different timeframes in which value is created, there are different timeframes in which communications make a difference. Some communications have immediate effect; others build over time. For communications to create value beyond a one-off, immediate transaction—to build relationships, internally or externally—communications need to be integrated across media and time. This is not to say that a Web site, conference display, and an invitation have to be slavishly identical—they are different vehicles. But to the extent that familial relationship among communications can be aligned with the need to “tilt” for specific initiatives, constituents, and media, people learn more quickly what you'd like them to know. They start to understand who you are, what you stand for, and enter into a dialogue with your organization and offerings—all important if communication design is to create value.



*The new Web site connects hard science to stories that translate research to benefits. A wallet-sized card enables all investigators, staff, and board to be better ambassadors.*





### Connecting the dots

Communication design can, and does, create value for all stripes of organizations—in different timeframes, internally and externally, generating both tangible and intangible results. Communication designers can make both things and processes; they can evolve strategies and the implementation and measures for the strategies.

But as important as communication design is, and can be, its value is tied to the people, products, and services within each organization—and to how each organization “lives” its brand, vision, and mission. While smoke and mirrors are communication tools, they’re not

ones that deliver lasting value. The smoke dissipates; the mirror reflects reality.

Communication design truly succeeds, and adds the most value, when an organization takes the time to look inward and outward to understand who it is and for whom; communicates to connect to values and to what is valued; delivers on its promises day in, day out; and continues to reinforce meaning and to nurture relationships by involving constituents in an engaging, resonant dialogue. ■

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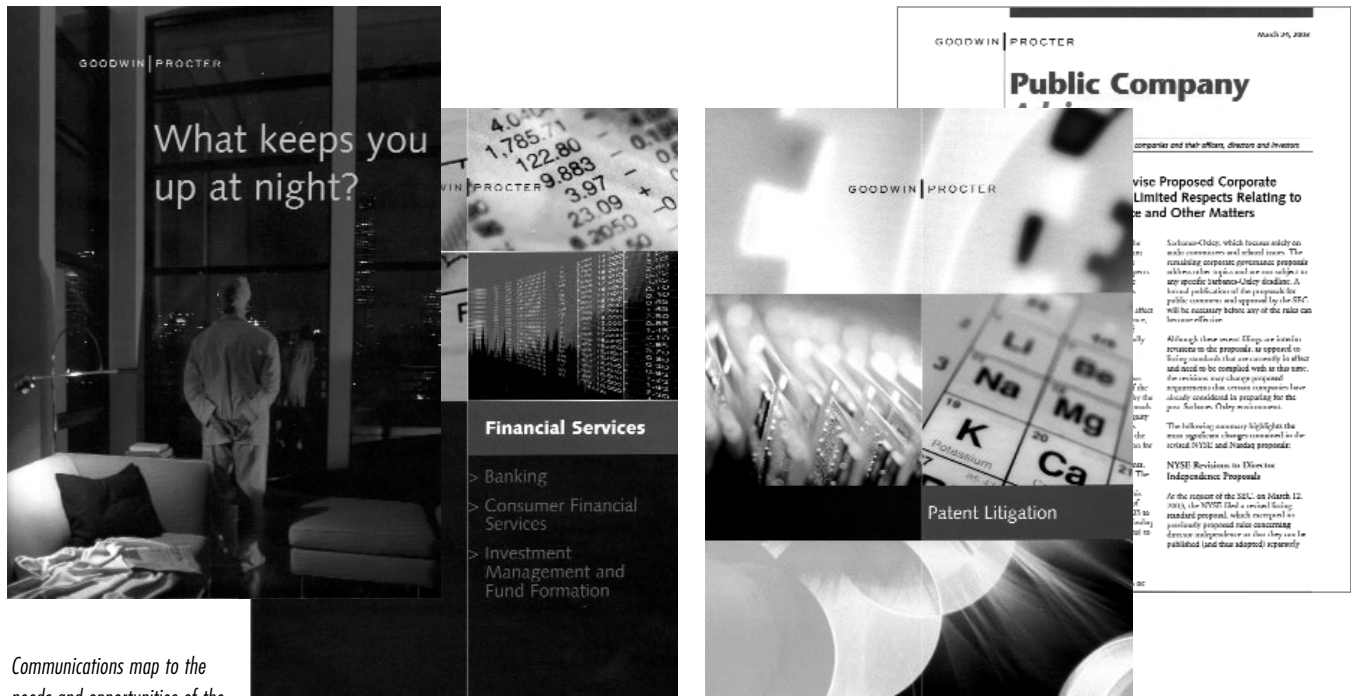
### Meeting people where they’re coming from: Goodwin Procter LLP

“Not so long ago, marketing for professional services firms, and law firms in particular, was somewhat random and focused almost exclusively on tactical approaches. These efforts, while well-intentioned, were often driven by objectives of individuals rather than in support of a true firm-wide strategy,” says Anne Malloy Tucker, chief marketing officer of Goodwin Procter LLP.

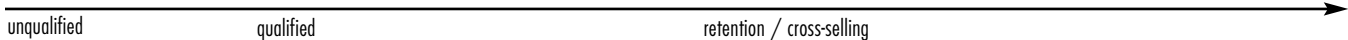
“As law firms have become more adept at marketing and business development, they have begun to shift their focus from inward-facing, generic brochures to communications that better address clients’ and prospects’ needs and concerns. Just understanding the difference between marketing and sales has been a huge leap in this evolution.”

“In collaboration with Sametz Blackstone, we’ve developed a system of communication materials that helps our attorneys to foster connections and build relationships while maintaining a unified image and visual identity system for the firm,” adds Malloy Tucker. “Our new brand-building system of image, marketing, business development, and service support pieces provides us with the perfect architecture; it is unified without being rigid, consistent without being boring, and best of all, it allows us to map our communications to a prospect’s particular need-to-know at any given time.”

*Below, from left: High level image piece (What keeps you up at night?), marketing piece for focus area; sales piece for specific practice area; service piece that maintains ongoing communication and reinforces the value the firm provides.*



*Communications map to the needs and opportunities of the sales cycle*



### **About Sametz Blackstone Associates**

Sametz Blackstone Associates is a twenty-five year old, Boston-based practice that integrates strategy, message development, design, and technology to create compelling communication programs to help evolving organizations better navigate change.

Clients include academic and research institutions, life-science organizations, professional service firms, businesses, cultural organizations and other non-profits, and government agencies. Sametz Blackstone has always approached communication and design as important tools to help organizations realize both their strategic and tactical goals—effectively connecting strategy to implementation—in order to get results.

Sametz Blackstone has years of experience helping organizations, both startups and centerians; articulate their vision, identity, brands, strategies, and messages. Their collaboration helps clients build or re-energize brands, enter new markets or geographies, promote offerings, increase participation in programs, raise capital, recruit and retain talent, and add value to the enterprise—over the short and long term.

Working with clients to define their positioning, develop branding and identity systems, logos, complete communication plans, collateral systems, websites, CD-ROMs, and targeted communications, Sametz Blackstone helps to build awareness, increase revenue, and build brand equity.

Located in Boston's historic South End in a turn-of-the-century brownstone, Sametz Blackstone works with clients both around the corner and around the world.

**Roger Sametz**, President and Founder of Sametz Blackstone Associates, received his BA from Yale University and an MFA in Graphic Design and Photography from the Yale School of Art and Architecture.

Since founding Sametz Blackstone in 1979, Roger has collaborated with a wide range of corporate, academic, cultural, and professional service clients to help them to better communicate their value—and values—to a range of target audiences. Representative non-profit, cultural, academic, and research institutions include: Harvard University, Harvard Medical School, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, MIT Sloan School of Management, Boston College, Bentley College, Dartmouth's Tuck School, Yale University, the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research (and associated Genome Center), the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT, the CBR Institute for Biomedical Research, CIMIT (Center for the Integration of Medicine and Innovative Technology), Harvard-MIT Division of Health, Science and Technology, the Boston Symphony Orchestra (including Pops and Tanglewood), Bank of America Celebrity Series, Boston Center for the Arts, 90.9WBUR and the WBUR Group (an affiliate of National Public Radio), the Boston Public Library, the New England Aquarium, and Boston Ballet.

Corporate and professional service clients have included, Goodwin Procter, Abt Associates, Arthur D. Little, Compaq / Digital, Raytheon Company, Crane & Company, State Street, United Asset Management, as well as a range of high-tech start-ups.

He serves on the Executive Committee of the Board of Associates of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the American Jewish Committee, the Corporate Fundraising Committee of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Board of Directors of the Corporate Design Foundation, the Board of Directors of the

Boston Center for Arts, and is an Overseer of Boston Ballet. He is a member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts and the Design Management Institute. For three years Roger was president of the American Institute of Graphic Arts, Boston, and continues to serve on that group's Advisory Board. He has juried design contests here and abroad and was a past national chairman of the AIGA Communication Graphics show. Most recently, he was a juror for the Communication Arts annual design competition.

Roger has been a guest lecturer at the Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth, the MIT Sloan School of Management and the Johnson School of Management at Cornell. For twelve years he taught at the Art Institute of Boston and the University of Massachusetts/ Dartmouth. He has twice been a featured speaker at the IBM Design Leadership Symposium; he was a speaker at the national Bio conference in Seattle and at the Design Management Institute's conference on brand re-imaging held in Montreal. Last year, he addressed the Association of Fundraising Professionals, in a talk titled *Sure you're talking, but what are you saying?* He has been a featured speaker at Columbia Business School on *The impact of branding on design and design on branding* and at the Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI) where he spoke on branding for research organizations.

Other *Design Management Journal* articles include: *Creating a Principles-Based Identity System to Build Brand Equity*; *Beyond the Corporate Sphere: Branding and Design in Academia*; and *Storytelling Through Design*.

**Andrew Maydoney** is Vice President, Research and Strategy, at Sametz Blackstone Associates, Boston. He holds a BFA in design and photography from Southeastern Massachusetts University and has studied at Syracuse University, MIT, as well as extensively in the fields of media technology and organizational development.

Andrew's clients at Sametz Blackstone include: the American Ireland Fund, the Boston Public Library, Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Raytheon Company, BankBoston, Deutsche Bank / Scudder Investments, City of Boston, Harvard University and MSPCA. Maydoney has juried contests and graduate theses, lectured, taught, and facilitated workshops on communication and new media strategy, design, and production internationally. He has guest lectured to trade organizations in communications, biotechnology, academia, social services, high-technology, culture, and the arts. For a variety of social service organizations, he has mentored students, judged business plans, lectured on communication planning and led students on trips to the wholesale marketplace in New York City to study supply and demand economics.

His work has won many awards and has been published by *Communication Arts*, *Print*, *A/V Multimedia Producer*, *How*, *The Design Management Journal*, *Mass High Tech*, *The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)*, *New England Direct Marketing Association (NEDMA)*, *New Media* magazine and others. He received a Tops of the Avenue award for work on the Fenway Cultural District communications plan and website and on behalf of the firm, received a Community Achievement Award from Bottom Line, an organization that helps at-risk urban youth get into, and graduate from, college.

Recently recognized by *Boston Business Journal* as one of the area's "top 40 under 40 executives," Maydoney is an active member of the board of directors of several New England organizations, including Bottom Line; Fuller Craft Museum, New England's only museum focused on contemporary craft; as well as the Business Council for WGBH, Boston. A member of numerous communication trade organizations, Maydoney has authored articles for various trade and business journals.

**Sametz Blackstone Associates**

Compelling communications—integrating strategy,  
design, and technology to help evolving organizations  
navigate change

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