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As a designer, listening to your ideas being questioned and your hard work being ripped apart isn't usually very pleasant. However painful, though, constructive criticism of your design work is the most effective way to grow as a visual communicator. Remember this when you leave the crit rooms of design school for the board rooms of the corporate world. Build a network of friends, co-workers and mentors you can use to collect feedback on your work. Online sites (heavy with anonymous commentary) are not an acceptable substitute for this discourse.

22. NEVER COMPROMISE
Once you've built strong relationships with everyone you work with (see No. 20), strategically use them to get what you want. Convince your clients to use the offset printers or web developers you know that value design and will actively work with you on the final quality of your project. We work too hard as designers to accept compromise at any stage of a job, especially when it can usually be avoided with proactive planning. Timelines that detail every step of a project and outline responsibilities for everyone involved are required to accomplish this.

23. KNOW YOUR HISTORY
Learn as much as you possibly can about the history of graphic design—its movements, terminology and important figures. Understanding design's cultural past will help you design in the present and future. Study typefaces and their designers, and share with your clients the significance and history of the particular typefaces you've chosen for their projects. In addition to being a go-to design resource, this knowledge will help position you as a trusted adviser moving forward.

24. VALUE YOUR WORK
A common mistake designers make early in their careers is undervalu ing their work in the marketplace. The best design jobs aren't always awarded to the low bidder—even a client with the smallest budget often values work experience and compatibility over price. Set an hourly rate for your services, and take a close look at the number of hours a job will take to accomplish, including revisions. Your estimate is simply your rate multiplied by the hours. Make sure you have a firm understanding of the entire scope of work you're providing an estimate for. Trade? Sure, but don't make a habit of it—this is your livelihood, not a hobby.

25. MAKE MISTAKES
Take a measured break from your comfort zone and experiment with an approach you've never tried before. Force yourself to take chances with form: Use a different technique or medium with text and image to create work you're unfamiliar and uncomfortable with. Save and display your best piece as a reminder to think differently.

26. KEEP A SKETCHBOOK
You don't need to be prolific at drawing to benefit from keeping a small book in your bag or back pocket. Ideas tend to arrive at the strangest times, and being able to record them on the spot will help you remember them later. When you fill a book, date, number and shelve it. Soon your bookcase will be a library of your best thoughts and ideas.

27. REMEMBER THAT YOUR MAC IS A TOOL
Twenty years ago, many people in our industry were sure that desktop publishing would mark the end of professional graphic design as we knew it. They confused the convenience of new technology with the skill and passion required to design with it. Take a good look at your design methodology and the role technology plays in your work. Can you select "Shut Down" and still be an effective visual communicator? Practice that.

28. RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT
Make the everyday effort to create a positive environmental impact by integrating sustainable alternatives in your work. Start small by identifying the things you can do in your studio to save energy and resources, and build from there. Present a digital slideshow rather than traditional color output spray-mounted to mat board. Get creative with your consumables by investing in reusable kitchenware and cloth towels in place of disposable plastic and paper products. Consider adopting the Designer's Accord—a global collection of designers, educators and businesspeople working together to impact the environment through positive social change.

29. TEACH OTHERS
Regardless of your experience, get involved with mentoring younger designers—or students who may be interested in design as a potential career path. It doesn't require developing a curriculum to get involved. Find a local AIGA chapter, design program or arts center and volunteer some of your time. Participate in local student portfolio reviews, and share your knowledge and expertise with aspiring designers. You'll find the experience rewarding for everyone involved.