**Bryan Peterson**

**Education:** BFA, graphic design, BYU, 1979

**Job Position in 2006:** President and founder of Peterson Ray & Company http://www.peterson.com/

**Career:** Soon after Peterson Ray & Company's beginning in 1985, the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) named Bryan National Designer of the Year. Bryan's work has appeared in numerous national design publications, some of which include AR 100, Graphis, HOW, American Illustration, Communication Arts, New York Art Director's Annual, Print Regional Design Annual, Type Directors Annual, and the AIGA Annual. He is the author of Design Basics for Creative Results, a design textbook published by HOW Design Books in 2003. For the past seventeen years Brian has also been the pianist for the renowned Fabulous Fuzztones, and he has performed, produced, and designed two solo CDs of his own music, winning recognition for his creative designs.

**Questions and Comments:**

*What are your favorite Websites or publications for people in the discipline?*

Graphic design is a visual discipline. Consequently, inspiration comes primarily from viewing the work of peers in printed journals. There are design books that cater to specific areas. For example, a great book for logo design is any volume of Logo Lounge by Rockport Publishing. Annual reports are best viewed in Graphis Annual Reports. An all-around publication for a mixed variety of design is Communication Arts magazine. The Society for Publication Designers puts out a great annual of editorial design. There are others worth considering, such as Print Regional Design Annual and instructional books by HOW and Rockport Publishers.

*How did you develop your artistic style?*

I'm not sure I ever did. In graphic design, you're primarily striving to resolve the client's communications challenges. The goal is to reflect the image of your client's product or service. In that sense, I've intentionally tried to not insert my own particular style or agenda into my work.

Having said that, there are definite principles I follow which help structure my design and give it clarity. The best designs are to the point and well organized, not too complex. There have been periods in my career where I was partial to certain color palettes or font styles, but these haven't driven me to declare a particular artistic style.

*What advice would you give to students in your field?*

Graphic design is all about the thinking behind an idea. It's not about the mechanics or the technical methods of displaying that idea. While the computer is a wonderful tool, it is just that—a tool. My advice is to not lose sight of the concept of your design by getting caught up in techniques or technology.

Having humility and continually striving for excellence is important. This is an ego-driven field full of awards and competitiveness. In my experience and in the eyes of the customer, you're only as good as your last piece.

*How have you felt about your career?*

My career has been particularly rewarding because I get to help clients solve problems. It's exciting when a design I've worked on "wows" them because it directly addresses their audience and meets expectations. It's also an exciting field because your work is often in the public eye— lots of people see it, and you have the opportunity to make an impact.

While I really like my job, I've always felt a career isn't the most important part of life. I live for many things beyond my job; family and church have always been very important aspects of my life.

*What are some of the frustrations with your career?*

Being a business owner carries with it certain challenges and inherent insecurities. There's no guaranteed income beyond what you produce for yourself. There is the constant pressure to perform and compete, to pay yourself and your employees, and to find ways to continually generate revenue.

More related to work in graphic design, it can be frustrating when you feel you have a great idea that will really help a client, but the client doesn't see it and won't buy into your concept. It's also frustrating when you know you're capable of doing a certain project, but the work ends up going to someone else, or when a client shelves a project you've been working on for some reason out of your control.

*How have you balanced career, family, and other life issues?*

The things that really matter in life are family, relationships, and service. I continually try to not let my job become more important than those aspects of my life. That means trying to not constantly work late or neglect duties and opportunities that will bring the greatest benefit in the long term.

*Why and how did you choose graphic design?*

Before I declared a major, while I liked art, I found graphic design to be somewhat of a mystery. Even after I began the program, I really didn't understand it, nor did I feel I was very good at it. Still, I improved steadily in the program. Early in my senior year, while working on an assignment for Mac Magleby (my design professor), I had an epiphany. At about midnight the night before the assignment was due, I looked at what I was planning on turning in and decided it wasn't good enough. I thought that, from that moment, "I am going to be the best in the class or not be in design." And so I started over on the assignment. I worked all night and turned in a project that I felt good about the next morning. Mac Magleby felt the same, and, from that time, I began to be a serious student.

Because Mac noticed my work, I decided maybe I had some potential. I gained confidence as I continued to be recognized for doing good work. Eventually Mac hired me at BYU Publications and Graphics where I worked for four years before being recruited to take a job as art director at Southern Methodist University. This job led me to meet a private investor who eventually funded the start-up of my own company in 1985.

*What other advice or comments do you have?*

Do your very best work. Strive to rise to your best ability because good work leads to other opportunities. It's troubling to see students who are lazy, spoiled by privilege, or who expect to receive without effort. Some of them are truly gifted but end up being mediocre in their profession because of lack of a work ethic. The middle and bottom tiers of this profession are loaded with mediocrity. As Mac Magleby once told me, there is always room at the top for people who are doing their best work and are willing to work hard. I still believe this to be true.