



A shared **passion** for amazing design is what attracts talented individuals to pursue careers working with **in house** creative teams. But heavy workloads, unrealistic deadlines, excessive rounds of client changes, inadequate **respect** for best practices of design, and other workplace demands can take their toll on the smooth operation of in-house creative teams and job satisfaction. Successful in house **creative leaders** are motivated to help team members develop a clear understanding of business goals and strategies, as well as tracking **measurable** outcomes that contribute to the return on investment for their organizations, as the key to making improvements and growing stronger as creative professionals.

**Martin Schott** (Director, Creative Services at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts), **Ilana Greenberg** (Creative Director at GDUSA/Graphic Design USA Magazine), and **David Lesué** (Creative Director at Workfront) shared their insights on the work of in-house creative teams as the featured speakers at the 2015 InSource Signature Event held at the SVA Theatre in New York City on November 18, 2015. These three presentations sparked a lively discussion about the opportunities and challenges of in-house creative teams among those who attended this evening event.



**Beyond the Stage: Design at Lincoln Center**



**Designing, for Designers**



**Time to Get Creative: Increasing Your Team's Creative Work by Winning Back Stolen Time**

IN-HOUSE PERSPECTIVES featured: Beyond the Stage: Design at Lincoln Center by Martin Schott: Director, Creative Services at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts; Designing, for Designers by Ilana Greenberg: Creative Director at GDUSA/Graphic Design USA Magazine; Time to Get Creative: Increasing Your Team's Creative Work by Winning Back Stolen Time by David Lesué: Creative Director at Workfront.

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### Beyond the Stage: Design at Lincoln Center

Martin Schott provided a behind-the-scenes look at the work of his in-house Creative Services team. He described Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) as a world leader in the arts that is one of 11 resident organizations sharing a 16-acre campus in the heart of New York City. LCPA offers diverse programs for a wide range of audiences, serves as landlord to the campus which includes providing a high volume of static and digital signage, and delivers on its important role as an arts educator. Working closely with its programming, development, arts education, and executive office functions, this “lean” team of eight in-house creative professionals consists of design and production staff.

Martin presented many visual examples and video clips on how they approach their work “to keep the brand fresh.” Of special note are the high-end design for the “White Light Festival” (designed to illuminate the many dimensions of our inner lives), their collaborative work with outside illustrators (example: Midsummer Night Swing—a campaign for a popular dance series with a design adaptable for environmental signage and animation), and its “Art Propels the World” messaging developed for Lincoln Center’s inaugural Global Exchange conference in September 2015. Insider’s tip: While Univers is their longstanding font of choice, they have recently begun using Chronicle with its softer serif typography.

### Time to Get Creative: Increasing Your Team’s Creative Work by Winning Back Stolen Time



Left to right: Outside of the SVA Theater in New York City, attendees enjoying cocktails while networking before the speakers take the stage. InSource events are a great way to connect with in-house creative leaders to build your network, and share ideas for running your in-house business.



David Lesué introduced the notion of how “The Working Dead” (inspired by The Walking Dead vibe) can be a danger in the workplace. In-house creative teams can sometimes feel as if they are morphing into a zombie existence (for example, sharing such traits as being wholly subordinate, either to an outside force or to an overwhelming desire; being noncommunicative with an inclination to groan and howl instead of speaking; and being vulnerable to falling prey to a decaying state). He went even further with the metaphor and shared a photo to document how he arranged for a professional makeup artist to visit their office on a Saturday and described the fun his creative team had as the stars in their own “The Working Dead” photo shoot that resulted.

As part of a leading company that develops software for project management, this in-house creative team of graphic designers, illustrators, and digital campaign specialists develops and executes a wide range of deliverables for branding and marketing initiatives including event signage, customer case studies, and testimonials. They share a passion to produce the best possible work. But they also understand the dilemma of quality versus quantity trade-offs.

“Creative work takes time and energy,” said David. “There are no shortcuts.” He described how some creative professionals think the answer is to stay later at the office and work harder. But he advises to “stop trying to create time and energy and instead reclaim your time and energy.”

He proposed it’s useful to identify the concepts of “fake work” (defined as unnecessary, ineffective, and inefficient activities, such as attending an 1-hour meeting when only 5 minutes of the meeting are relevant) and “real work” (defined as generating and developing ideas and concepts, as well as doing the creative work that’s required to solve problems). The goal is to whittle down the extraneous “fake work” activities so the team has time and energy to do what they do best: to be creative.

### Designing, for Designers

Ilana Greenberg shared her passion for working on a leading magazine that covers the news and trends in the world of graphic design. “Our brand is about celebrating the graphic design community.” She added that she is always aware of “the high stakes” when their work—both print and beyond print to digital—is read by graphic designers. She notes her focus is on knowing “the graphic designer is in the driver’s seat.”

“Creativity is hard work,” she said. She has a special affinity with other in-house creative teams with five or less people, noting she understands working in an environment where “I’m the creative director of myself.” She agrees with Julia Hoffmann, Creative Director, Advertising and Graphic Design, at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA): “Design studios are the future of successful branding.”







**Left:** Audience members asking questions during the Q&A panel. **Right:** Our speakers all on stage, answering questions from the audience.



### Key Takeaways from the Q&A Session

- It's important for managers of in-house creative teams to support a collaborative process for creating outcomes together. Give the team time and space to create and then manage the schedule so deliverables are ready on time.
- Resist the temptation to micromanage your team. Let go and let your designers be creative.
- Allowing for flexibility and independence can lead to good results, especially when you have a small number of people on your in-house creative team.
- Each in-house creative team member needs to manage his or her own career. As a manager, encourage individuals to keep their portfolio fresh and get inspired beyond what they do every day.
- Whenever possible, arrange work space so in-house team members work adjacent to one another, not spread out geographically. Schedule activities that are fun for your team such as seeing a movie, having lunch, and/or having drinks together.
- Suggestion: When conducting brainstorming sessions, first come up with the worst ideas you can think of as a team to open up the discussion.
- To help keep the creative team excited about their day-to-day work, make sure everyone

has a mix of work, with at least one project that "scratches one's (creative) itch." Don't overload one person with only one type of work; mix it up. Seek balance in making workload assignments.

- Establish an effective traffic system for workflow. Set clear expectations with clients with no surprises. Keep all relationships positive. Keep talking and explaining and teaching others. Solve problems in terms of communicating through design.
- In-house creative leaders often wish they were better grounded in business strategies as well as budget management prior to accepting their leadership positions. As a result, these skills are learned on the job.
- The key to working with good creative briefs is to have meaningful personal conversations, preferably face to face even if only for 15 minutes. Discuss mutual expectations at the start. Some in-house creative teams let the client write the creative brief whereas others draft the creative brief for client review.
- Nurture in-house creative team members to develop a longer-term goal for themselves. Identify gaps so each individual can take action to grow in specific areas. Carve out one's own path.
- The better you understand the business, the better you can design to meet business objectives. Learn whatever you can about your business and communicate what effect your in-house creative team has on the business.
- Establish clear guidelines up front to help control seemingly endless rounds of changes from clients; for example, three rounds for some projects are reasonable, not 30 rounds.
- Designers are often undervalued in the workplace. Self-promotion is needed to prove one's value to the organization. Present measures about effectiveness. Show your team's design and what it does in terms of measurable outcomes.

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Our speakers with members of the InSource board (from left; Andy Brenits, Shani Sandy, Vivian Fransen, Kim Kiser, Cindy Salant, Adam Greiss, Robin Colangelo, Eric Reinhart, and Ava Salazar.)

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