

# Intro to the Austin Design Community

June 23, 2015 @ 4pm



Annette Priest & Vittorio Miliano

General Assembly @ Capital Factory

@AustinUX

@AnnettePriest

# Our hosts

- **General Assembly** is new in town, and offers tech, design and business classes  
 [generalassembly.ly](http://generalassembly.ly)
- **Capital Factory** is a coworking space, startup incubator, and hosts a lot of tech events  
 [capitalfactory.com](http://capitalfactory.com)

# Our speakers

- **Annette Priest** conducts and manages UX programs, research & design worldwide; speaks at conferences on a variety of design-related subjects; and runs **Revel Insight**, which focuses on deep and actionable customer research, UX, and usability
- **Vitorio Miliano** runs a calendar at [AustinUX.org](http://AustinUX.org)

# Housekeeping

- Wear a **name tag**, it's friendly
- Add "HIRING" to your name tag if you're hiring
- **Feedback forms** will be collected at the door, please fill them out
- Restrooms are straight ahead from the elevators, past the front desk, men's on the left and women's on the right

# What this talk covers

- Resources for UX, UI, and graphic design
- The three major design associations
- Resources for learning design
- Resources for hiring designers
- Q&A

# Design-related meetups we don't have slides for include

- Flash and other Adobe products
- Processing and D3
- Interactive installations
- Traditional arts and media
- Product management
- Motion graphics and animation
- Data visualization
- 3D modeling, rendering, visualization, printing
- Branding and advertising
- Art instruction

# Other things we don't have slides about

- How to find freelance work
- Where to find freelancers for piecemeal design work
- Where to find designers willing to do market research, user research, and/or product design solely for equity
- What agencies/studios do “good” work
- What agencies/studios are “good” to work for
- How to magically change your company culture overnight to prioritize design and research

# Intro to the Austin Design Community



Community

Becoming a designer

Hiring designers

Community

# A little history

- Design groups in Austin had a bit of a renaissance in 2008-2009
- IxDA, UXPA, UX Book Club, and Austin UX all started or restarted around the same time
- These four new groups joined AIGA Austin, a Flash meetup, a Design and Media meetup, and a Web Design and Development meetup (which had started merging with Refresh Austin)

# Community is what you make of it

- It's up to you to find the meetups, organizations, and people who can help you grow
- It's also up to you to keep in contact with other groups so you don't atrophy or lose touch
- The broader your network, the easier it will be to find new opinions, find new friends, find a new contract, find a new job, etc.

# Diverse / specialized

- You get out of it what you put into it, in all things
  - Socializing with designers like you
  - Professional development
  - Job hunting
  - Hiring

# Decentralized

- There's no “one place” to go to find designers or design firms to socialize with, get critiques from, collaborate with, or to hire
- There's no “one place” to go to find companies, agencies, or in-house departments that are hiring designers

“...‘Austin’ as a cohesive design community  
**does not exist** at all.”

*–Vitorio Miliano, “Local Communities In Practice and By Design,” 2012*

“... Austin contains **a loose collection** of dozens, perhaps even hundreds **of micro-communities** centered around workplaces, with social events being the driver to get people to interact outside of them.”

*–Vitorio Miliano, “Local Communities In Practice and By Design,” 2012*



# The Big 3

- Interaction Design Association (IxDA)
- User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA)
- AIGA, the Professional Association for Design

# IxDA

- Interaction Design Association chapter
- 1500+ members
- Joining means joining the local Austin mailing list, and is free
- Joining the national IxDA is separate, but also free

# IxDA

- Events are irregularly held, and are usually expert speakers, panels, or happy hours
- Focused on user experience and interaction design, leaning towards the more practical side: mobile case studies from RetailMeNot, product strategy from Jon Kolko, recruiting for usability testing
- Also, a lunch meetup every other month


# IxDA

- Upcoming in July:
  - Theresa Neil, O'Reilly author on mobile patterns
  - Social lunch
- Recruiting research participants with Erin Young
- Designers with Drinks happy hour

# IxDA

- Membership is 40% designers (mostly UX), 40% managers/directors/execs, and 20% everyone else (including developers and recruiters)
- If you attended an IxDA event for the first time tomorrow, recent events have been 75%+ members.
- Most attendees are *not* also members of the parent IxDA organization.

# IxDA

- Tori Breitling runs IxDA Austin and organizes most of the events
- Membership and sponsorship questions would both go to her
-  [ixdaaustin.ning.com](http://ixdaaustin.ning.com)

# UXPA

- User Experience Professionals Association chapter
- ~500 members
- Joining means joining the local Austin meetup group, and is free
- Joining the national UXPA is a separate, paid, yearly membership, \$69 or \$139

# UXPA

- Events are usually held monthly on the first Tuesday, and are a variety of speakers and workshops
- Focused on educational and networking events for user experience professionals and researchers
- Salary survey in conjunction with STC Austin




# UXPA

- Diary studies workshop
- Happy hour
- Building long-term research relationships
- Multiple panels and talks with AthenaHealth
- Design thinking workshop

# UXPA

- Membership is assumed to be ~35% UX people, ~45% researchers, ~20% recruiters/managers
- If you attended a UXPA event for the first time tomorrow, recent events have been an even split between new attendees and members
- Many regulars attend every meeting, and many of them are very experienced designers or researchers

# UXPA

- A seven-person volunteer board organizes UXPA meetings and events
- Membership and sponsorship questions should be sent through the “Contact” link on Meetup
-  [www.meetup.com/Austin-User-Experience-Professionals-Association/](http://www.meetup.com/Austin-User-Experience-Professionals-Association/)

# AIGA

- Chapter of AIGA, the Professional Association for Design
- 600+ paid members
- Joining means joining the national AIGA and choosing Austin as your local chapter
- AIGA membership is tiered starting at \$50 yearly

# AIGA

- Multiple events may be held a month, each focused on an interest group, such as UI/UX, type and lettering, or printmaking
- Traditionally focused on print and graphic design-related professionals
- “Interactive” events focus on needs unmet by other groups, like studio tours or transitioning from other design specialities



# AIGA

- “Break into UX” with General Assembly
- Creative Mass happy hour
- Bowling tournament with various studios
- Local speaker series w/ Tamara Becerra Valdez
- UI/UX speaker series w/ Phunware

# AIGA

- Membership is > 75% design professionals, with only a handful of non-designer members.
- If you attended an AIGA event for the first time tomorrow, you'd find an even split of members and non-members. Most events are paid events if you're a non-member.
- Smaller venues will fill up with AIGA members

# AIGA

- A twenty-person volunteer board organizes AIGA meetings and events
- Membership questions go to the membership director:  membership@austin.aiga.org
- Sponsorship questions go to the development director:  development@austin.aiga.org



# Beyond the Big 3

- There are over 20 other design meetups in town
- There are several big-name agencies and firms
  - Frog, R/GA, Razorfish, IBM, Pentagram
- There are tons of small studios, agencies, and mom-and-pop shops that nevertheless do design work for big-name clients

# Different strokes

- Every design group and meetup has its own audience
- People tend to find meetups that have topics or people they like and stick with them, and there isn't a lot of overlap
- To find your people, whether to befriend or to hire, you have to visit all of them

# Other resources

- STC Austin
- ADVAnet
- Refresh Austin
- UT School of Information
- UT College of Fine Arts
- Austin Content
- Agile Austin UX SIG
- ATX Dribbble
- General Assembly
- Wrkshop
- AMADAG
- Lean UX Austin
- CreativeMornings/Austin
- UT Visual Arts Center
- UX Book Club: Austin
- AI for GA
- Hot Topics in UX
- Ladies That UX - ATX
- Austin UX Researchers
- Fresh to Design in ATX



AustinUX.org

also @AustinUX on Twitter



slack.refreshaustin.org

#design-talk



designerhangout.co

#local\_austin

So you want to be a  
designer...

# Learning design

- Design — including user experience and interaction design — is a studio art
  - Do work
  - Get structured, critical feedback
  - Throw it away
  - Do it again

# One-off classes

- All meetups will occasionally offer hands-on workshops, training, studio sessions, in various subjects, but none offer them regularly enough for you to practice, get critique, and improve
- If there aren't senior enough people at work to mentor you, find or hire someone from the community to review your work on an ongoing basis



# Austin Center for Design

- Founded by Jon Kolko, taught by practitioners
- Interaction design + social entrepreneurship
- Year-long program, nights and weekends, \$12k
- 10-day intensive for executives, \$10k

# The Iron Yard

- Vocational school teaching programming and web design
- User interface design course includes discovery, UX, design principles and fundamentals and ideation
- 12 weeks, full time, \$12k

# General Assembly

- Vocational school teaching a variety of technology-related subjects, including design and business
- 10 weeks, full time, UX design immersive, \$9.5k
- 12 week, evenings, UX design, \$4k
- Also one-day and one-time workshops

# UT School of Information

- Originally library sciences
- Graduate-level courses in interaction design, information architecture, HCI, research, and more, varies by semester
- Can be a non-degree graduate student
- May be able to audit classes, but then you also don't do homework, papers, or get graded

# UT College of Fine Arts

- Department of Art + Art History
- Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design
- Extensive cross-media undergraduate program including graphic design, product/industrial design, film/animation, and architecture

# Austin Community College

- Visual Communications program
- Certificates and associates degrees with specializations in graphic design, and web and interactive design
- Course times and availability vary by location and semester, most are 3-5 hours a week
- Courses are \$85/credit hour

So you need to hire a  
designer...

# Hiring designers

- Lots of Austin companies have trouble hiring tech professionals, not only designers
- All have the same core issues
  - The tech market isn't like other cities'
  - Your expectations and "requirements"
  - It's an employee's market



# Design has specializations

- User research, interaction design, visual design, front-end development, usability testing, are all independent skills with different mindsets
- Junior designers who have done all of these things once will be learning on the job using your project as a testbed
- Senior designers who have spent years on each one in turn will be incredibly expensive

# You don't need a unicorn

- Hire consultants and contractors as specialists
- Hire multiple junior designers and train them up
- Hire junior designers and contract a senior designer to mentor them and critique their work
- Hire senior designers to review portfolios and interview full-time candidates

# Unique tech market

- Designers in Austin don't need your job
- Large percentage of Austin talent lives in Austin but works remotely for companies/clients
- Austin companies want butts-in-seats, which isn't what many designers live in Austin for
- Many designers living in South or East Austin effectively see the Domain, Parmer, Round Rock as South Dallas

# Hiring must be a priority

- Hiring managers, senior executives, potential future colleagues all need to be out in the community in force, not just HR reps or recruiters
- Actively demonstrate commitment to Austin and its communities with sponsorships, events
- Actively demonstrate commitment to the role and the person by having senior management recruit them in person, repeatedly

# Common challenges

- Finding a space large enough
- Finding food and drink sponsors
- Finding speakers
- Finding volunteers to help organize events

# A little commonality

- Every design group and meetup controls access to its members
  - Some let you post your jobs to a forum or dedicated list for free, but not all members will read that
  - To get sent through their main list, or to promote your open positions at an event, you need to sponsor them
    - Hosting an event (seating for 50+)
    - In-kind (beer, equipment, supplies)
    - Food and/or drink
    - Cash

# Companies of note

- Idean
  - Threw a housewarming party for themselves, invited the entire design community
  - Hosts one-day, local design conferences and brings in big-name speakers
  - Sponsors meetups and their entire staff can be seen around town

# Companies of note

- Funsize
  - Volunteers their time for multiple outreach programs
  - Trades office space with other designers and other companies to learn new practices
  - Hosts a podcast and sponsors meetups



# Create community

- Sample the meetups, organizations, and people Austin has to offer and find your tribe
- Stay active and keep in touch
- Help others

Questions?

# Thank you!

Vitorio & Annette

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