

ADVERTISING STAR



iH Design President and Owner Ignacio Hernandez

[By Robin Salisian]
“Whatever it takes.”

That’s this ad star’s attitude when it comes to his job.

As president and head designer of his own company, iH Design, Ignacio Hernandez describes his current company as the result of a lifetime of hard work.

“It’s just the natural progression. I just feel that I was ready to offer my concepts. I was done with committees. I wanted to have fun,” he says.

“I have always been and will always be a designer,” Hernandez continues.

And that’s how his career began.

“My first job was high-level design, almost right out of school. As I advanced I worked at several advertising agencies. This is where I learned to think in terms of how to communicate to sell a product or an idea.”

After graduating from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in 1986 with “only” an A.S., Hernandez continued his education by taking courses to improve his work.

“I feel like I went to school for 10 years,” he says.

The journey after cap and gown, however, was arduous. Filled with endless hard work, Hernandez’s career path weighed heavily on his mind.

He admits, “There were countless times when I seriously considered just getting into another career.”

“During my time with my last employer,

there were many instances where I was not permitted to present certain ideas which were clearly the best solutions for that client. It really bothered me that I was being limited. I felt held back at times, and as time passed this began to have a profound effect on new work — i.e., you become ‘gun-shy’ with new concepts.”

So when his tenure ended, he ventured off with a handful of clients. He took his passion for design, his talent for illustration, and his brilliance for advertising and in December 2003 started iH Design.

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. I train on my bike. I’ll ride 250-plus miles a week if time allows. It keeps my head straight and makes me look 10 years younger.

Q. Throughout your lifetime, what movie have you watched the most?

A. *Apocalypse Now.*

Q. What was the last book you read?

A. *Deeper* by Jeff Long.

Q. What music is on your iPod or in your CD player right now?

A. Justice.

Q. If you had an extra hour in the day, what would you spend it doing?

A. Billing and invoicing.

“It is the goal of iH Design, Inc. to give its clientele the most creative solutions possible for all assignments,” says the company’s [website](#). “We want to build valuable relationships with our clients and, in turn, help to enrich and grow their companies with innovative and smart creative work.”

“I stuck it out, realizing that there was nothing else that I really wanted to do,” continues Hernandez. “Money was never a motivating factor for me; I chose to do what I loved, believing that one day the money might come.”

And come it did. Now in its fifth year, iH Design is thriving — with only two employees. Officially, that is. The company consistently uses several other people for various projects.

“My title is ‘President,’” explains Hernandez. “I’m also the head designer. My responsibilities are too much to list. In a single day I’ll do design, creative direction, copywriting, accounting...whatever it takes.”

And with that attitude Hernandez has helped create numerous successful advertisements for a large clientele list ranging from Bertram Yacht, Celestron, and Ericsson to Lucent Technologies, Orca, and MasterCard. One of Hernandez’s favorite ads is a double-page brand ad created for Bertram Yacht.

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"It's very visually appealing and strongly reinforces the brand," he says.

But along with advertisements, iH Design specializes in creating collateral, branding, and interactive designs as well. Websites for [Denison & Daves](#), [Edward Beiner](#), and [HVAC Designs](#) are included among iH Design's Internet masterpieces.

"I enjoy the fact that I can do whatever I like— conceptually," says Hernandez about running his own company. "There are no committees or opinionated owners to get in the way of what's best for the clients."

And while inevitably challenges arise (such as maintaining the high quality of work, fulfilling expectations, and managing growth), Hernandez perseveres, "whatever it takes."

"Don't give up when it gets tough, because

it will," he says bluntly. "It will be hard for years. Just stick with it if it's really what you want to do."

Another company that demonstrates a "do what we want to" attitude is ad agency Crispin Porter + Bogusky.

Hernandez says, "I like how [the company] has utilized new tactics, like using bus shelters, buildings, fake ads, instructional beer ads — those things are great. However, many clients don't have the guts to do it."

But whatever the format, whatever the concept, Hernandez believes that no matter what the trend is, whether it's the advent of TiVo or the arrival of something new, it will come and go. It's ease of communication that needs to be the advertiser's goal.

"The faster, the better," he says. "However,

advertising will always be about selling. It's just how the sale will happen that will change."

A few things that will never change, however, are Hernandez's passions for art, advertising, and adventure. No matter the concept, no matter the design, Hernandez will persevere to satisfy not only his own artistic standards but, most importantly, the client's as well — whatever it takes.

His advice?

"It's the concept that matters much more than how it looks. If it's pretty, but the concept is weak, it won't be a good result. Concept is everything. Understand who you are talking to before you even start, and don't start on the computer — start in a sketchbook."

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