
I once answered these 7 questions as part of an agency exercise, and I think they are a great way to get to know me more.

1. Tell us something you believe in strongly, or something that motivates you.

I read something recently that said, “Art is nothing important. Where it’s important is where it connects people to people and people to events and people to things. It’s a social network of objects.”

I’ve been thinking about this ever since because I completely agree. As an artist and designer, creating things that people can connect to and identify with is why I keep at it. The connections we make are what make life worth living, and being able to create something that moves people toward a connection is the greatest thrill.

2. What are your greatest assets?

My background and curiosity.

Since I’m a curious person, my career has been shaped by doing the things I find most interesting. I have a BFA in painting and art history, but went to grad school for photography because I didn’t know anything about it, and loved the idea of melding it with the more traditional fine arts. While I was there, I became engrossed in video, shooting and editing constantly.

I became a designer after learning the tools of the trade for my Masters and thinking someone with my ability to work with the brush, lens and mouse could do some unique work. This special background directed me to teaching. Despite never having done it before, I knew I could share my approach to art and design for the benefit of others. I moved to New York City because it intimidated me, but was full of possibility.

Fascination with the unknown and fearlessness drive me, and the path I took into advertising has proved to be a tremendous asset in the way I think about things and approach work.

3. What is something you inspire in others?

I inspire creative confidence in others because I’m not very self-conscious in the way I approach projects. I like being out of my comfort zone, trying to figure out new problems, and feeling slightly over my head. I’m excited by the chance to learn. Earlier this year I took an intensive 10-week UX course because I’m interested in it—I know it’s where the world is moving and something new to dig into.

Collaboration is imperative because you never know where good ideas are going to come from, or from whom. When I’m working with others, I always say—If you want to do something, do it! It doesn’t have to be the greatest because to even create something, to try it in the first place is awesome. You can’t know where to go next unless you keep taking steps—trying things, and getting the ideas out of your head, onto paper, into a brainstorm. Seeing how far you can go, how good you can be and how much you can learn and connect with people is the whole point of all of this.

4. How would you describe your current role to an 8-year-old?

I work in New York City in a big huge building that used to be a chocolate factory!*

The **BAD NEWS** is that there's way less candy, no chocolate river, and the Oompa Loopas have grown into much taller adults who aren't quite as fun or orange as they used to be—although some are fairly orange.

The **GOOD NEWS** is that it's still a magical place because it's full of artists like me, who get to be creative all day.

I guess you could say that the Chocolate Factory has just switched gears. We don't **MAKE** the candy anymore, but we pick the colors, design the wrappers & boxes you see in the store, and sometimes we even get to make the commercials you see on TV!

To be honest, it's really not that much different than the 3rd grade if you got to do only the fun stuff for money. I spend all day with my friends, doing mostly art work on the computer, trying to solve new problems and talk to everybody about my ideas. Yeah, it's pretty cool. I like it.

*the Ogilvy building really is an old Chocolate Factory

5. If you weren't in this business, what would you be doing?

I'd be an art & design professor. I love teaching, and I spent a few years as an adjunct professor after graduate school. Eventually I wanted to still be the student rather than the teacher, so I switched gears into advertising, to keep on learning at a much faster rate.

That said, I still plan to teach a class again because I think it's really important for students to have professors who are working in the field.

I also really enjoy mentoring and working with other ADs and designers because there's a lot of opportunity that's similar to teaching, and I find that part of me is becoming more fulfilled as I grow in my career.

6. What was your first job? (don't worry, some of ours are embarrassing, too. But we learned a lot about work ethics. Did you?)

Dairy Queen when I was 14! It was a fun first job, but it's the many years that followed, working as a waitress and bartender that defined my work ethic.

All sorts of crazy things happen in a restaurant because there are so many moving parts. Stressful situations are inevitable. But as a waiter, a customer's experience and the reputation of the place are completely up to you. You have to take full responsibility. I still work the same way—if my name is on it, it is going to be the best I can do.

The other useful thing I accrued over my waiting years is the thousands of hours I've spent observing and talking to an incredible variety of people—both customers and coworkers. It's given me very useful insight into human behavior that's helped me tremendously in work and life.

7. Think about an advertising campaign you've seen recently that has inspired you. What type of strategic thinking led to that campaign?

I like everything that Casper mattresses is doing right now in NYC. The brand is everywhere—clever ads plastering the trains, “sleep vans” parked around neighborhoods as part of their “Nap Tour,” a swanky pop-up apartment, Casper delivery bikes—and maybe, most importantly, the people who buy these mattresses LOVE to talk about them. Trust me.

I think the strategy probably started with thinking about a typical New Yorker persona—the person with no time, money or space, and they designed the campaign to address these big city woes:

CASPER: Hi there. We have a great mattress. Really, it's an awesome, cool product.

NEW YORKER: Leave me alone, I have no time for this.

C: Just walk out of your apartment and hop into our sleep van that's parked out front. You can try it out right now!

NY: I'm soooooo stressed out, late for a meeting in the city, and the train's a mess!

C: Oh, poor you. Well, after your meeting why don't you stop by our “winter home” in Soho and take a snooze. The only house rule is “kick back and relax.”

NY: Ok ... Zzzzzzz ... gosh I feel so much better. Great mattress. I really like it but I have no money.

C: The one you just took a snooze on is only 800 bucks.

NY: Oh. So you're basically giving them away? Well, it would never fit in my weird apartment. The door is 4 feet tall, and the hallway's 11 inches wide.

C: No worries, the mattress comes in a small box and expands to full size once you open it.

NY: Weird. But cool. Oh, forget it. I have 47 bags and my dog with me. I could never get it home.

C: We'll deliver it—

NY: —no, no, no way, they're building overpriced condos all over my neighborhood. Ughhhhhh. . . The streets are blocked off, nothing gets through—

C: —on a bike.

NY: Ok, fine.