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## Chapter Profile: Northern California Chapter

September 29, 2010

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**DesignMatters:** How do you ensure working well together as a Board?

**Robi Kaseman:** We are fortunate to have fostered a strong sense of teamwork throughout the years that has continued on with each board. Everyone on the board is a doer and that really allows things to keep moving. We try to keep all our board members in the loop so they know what is going on and what to expect. We also rely heavily on each of our board members to perform their specific role. They all “own” their positions and know what is expected of them and each of them do a phenomenal job. We are also fortunate to have welcomed back several board members from last year. We have a mix of young and more experienced Members which allows us to actively nurture the next generation of leadership.

To keep our board effective and moving quickly with the



**Robi Kaseman, IIDA, Northern California Chapter President and Honoree Orlando Diaz-Azcuy at the San Francisco Leaders Breakfast.**

demands of the Chapter, we initiated a program last year where each board member either has a Co-Vice President or an Assistant Vice President. This person works alongside the current Vice President throughout the year. When the assistant takes over the position the following year they have already had a year's training and have a lot of information about what went on the year before. This allows us to maintain the “tribal knowledge” that in the past was lost when board members left. It also provides continuity to the board

should a Member need to leave the board during the year.

**DM:** What are you most proud of?

**RK:** I am most proud of all our volunteers that give their time at the board, committee or City Center level. Collectively, this makes our Chapter an incredible organization. Our Chapter is responsible for putting on incredible events, forums, CEUs and philanthropy all over Northern California. From the Chapter level down to the City Centers every year we continue to raise the bar and our events and programs get better and better. We couldn't do this without all of our volunteers.

**DM:** What's the composition of the Chapter?

**RK:** Geographically, the Northern California Chapter is the largest chapter in IIDA. Our Chapter is made up of five City Centers which span from the Central Valley to the Islands of Hawaii. While our Chapter is based in San Francisco, we have City Centers in Sacramento, Silicon Valley, Fresno, San Francisco and Hawaii. Because we are so spread out, our City Centers



The Northern California Chapter's 2010 Honor Awards and Pioneers in Design event on March 25 at the Fox Theatre in Oakland, California.

serve as critical conduits to our Members all over Northern California and Hawaii.

**DM:** Do you have any particular goals for 2010 that you can share with us?

**RK:** In August of this year our board of directors held its annual summer retreat and discussed our strategic direction and Chapter theme for the year. Last year the board established the theme of Secure in Change; Celebrating Community and Connection. We used last year to re-tool, re-evaluate and strengthen the foundation of our Chapter.

This year the board acknowledged that change is exactly what we need and not only are we secure in change, we are embracing it. The board adopted the theme for this year: "Designing our Future Together.....Be part of it" This year it is about moving forward and doing so together. It's about engaging our Members and encouraging involvement. We are looking at our Chapter with a fresh perspective and a renewed spirit.

To realize these goals, we are embarking on several major initiatives this year. This Autumn we will be launching our first ever Partners program. In



**Cheryl Durst**, Executive VP and CEO of IIDA, Distinguished Achievement Award winner **Jack Solomon**, and Honoree **Orlando Diaz-Azcuy** gather at the San Francisco Leaders Breakfast.

addition, we are currently in the process of redesigning our website to be more dynamic, intuitive and interactive. Dovetailing with the website, we will be updating our Chapter graphics program. Our Chapter has become larger and more complex and it is also our goal to hire an Executive Director to assist in overseeing the administration of our Chapter. As you can see we have a very aggressive agenda for this year that is sure to keep us busy.

**DM:** What is your favorite Chapter event of the year?

**RK:** This is a hard choice to make because I enjoy so many

of them. Probably my first favorite is Honor Awards because I always enjoy seeing the amazing design work that comes out of our chapter. My next favorite is our Membership appreciation luncheon which happens at the City Center level. It is a great event to reconnect with Members we have not seen in a long time and a wonderful way to show our Members how grateful we are for them by taking them all out to lunch.

**DM:** What three words would you use to describe the Northern California Chapter?

**RK:** Diverse, Innovative and Amazing.

**DM:** Just for fun, what are two things that Robi Kaseman can't live without?

**RK:** Well, besides my incredible family, I would have to say the amazing Members of my board. I truly count on them day to day for their expertise, skills and friendship. I have made some incredible friends in IIDA. It's hard for me to imagine not being around them.



The crowd of attendees at the San Francisco Leaders Breakfast