Uncharted Success:
The Unintended Path to Career Fulfillment
It’s not the destination, it’s the origin story.

Career path. Career journey. Career map. Whichever way you choose to say it, the planning of one for a student or emerging professional isn’t always clear-cut, and not exactly user-friendly. The uncertainty that comes with wading through the waters of a newly chosen, or newly discovered, field can be intimidating, and it may seem as though the professionals you are inspired by always knew exactly what they were doing.

But that’s almost never the case.

In winter 2018, 14 design leaders came together at the IIDA Headquarters in Chicago for Uncharted Success: The Unintended Path to Career Fulfillment, sponsored by Gunlocke and Mannington, to uncover the truth of planning (and re-planning) a career. Because there aren’t just Points A and B when it comes to a professional journey, but in fact, Points C through Z and back again.

This event aimed to help students, emerging professionals, and those pursuing second careers understand that any career journey can be both mapped out and happenstance. The Uncharted Success conversations and explorations proved that a true professional path is just that: uncharted.

TO EARN CEU CREDIT

Listen to the prerecorded Uncharted Success webinar and write a 300-400 word essay on three (3) factors discussed by the panelists that impacted you the most. Please forward your responses to CEU@iida.org. Include your name and IIDA and IDCEC numbers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Attendees will learn how career paths emerged from a diverse group of industry leaders.

• Attendees will discuss where expected and unexpected career paths can lead.

• Attendees will have the opportunity to hear responses to the most frequently asked questions on career choices and paths.

• Attendees will be provided with “insider” tips and supplemental data.
THE UNCHARTED MAP

This map will help you navigate the terrain of several different design professionals' careers and describes the many job titles and roles you can take on in the A&D industry. Feel free to explore this interactive tool and use the key below as a guide.
There are (literally) a million things you can do in design.

EXECUTIVES
Own or co-own a firm, studio, or company that employs interior designers and architects, and in some cases, other creatives such as marketing, graphic design, and brand professionals. They are responsible for the management and dealings of the business and generally have over 15 years of work experience.

Common job titles: Principal, Design Principal, Studio Principal, Partner, Owner/Co-owner, Founder, CEO

DIRECTORS
Hold an advanced degree in design, architecture, or a related field and have substantial project and leadership experience. They are the main contact for clients and are responsible for leading a team or department in business development, design direction, and visual communication. They also strategize design concepts, delivery methods, and overall project planning, and have 12 or more years of work experience.

Common job titles: Creative Director, Design Director, Studio Director, Managing Director, Senior Associate, Junior Principal, Junior Partner, Creative Manager, Design Manager, General Manager, Regional Manager, Operations Director, Associate Partner, Design Strategist

SENIOR DESIGNERS / ARCHITECTS
Hold a bachelor’s degree or higher in design, architecture, or a related field. They have advanced capabilities in rendering, design, sketching, planning, and project administration/management. They participate in business development with directors and oversee junior designers’ work. Senior positions usually require a minimum of 10 years of design experience with increasing responsibilities.

Common job titles: Senior Interior Designer, Senior Designer, Senior Interior Architect or Architect, Senior Project Designer, Studio Manager, Job Captain, Associate

PROJECT MANAGERS
Manage projects, schedules, budgets, contracts, vendors, contractors, and oversee project and quality control. Negotiate deals with suppliers and vendors and identify cost-reduction opportunities while working to realize efficiency and savings.

Common job titles: Project Manager, Project Director, Facilities Planner, Facilities Manager, Associate Buyer, Buyer

INTERIOR DESIGNERS / ARCHITECTS
Hold an interior design, architecture, or related degree and usually have passed the NCIDQ certification or are licensed. They understand the design industry and can clearly communicate ideas through sketching, visualization, working drawings, and construction documents. They have knowledge of building and construction codes, interior finishes, and strong proficiency in CAD, Revit, SketchUp, and the Adobe Creative Suite.


PRODUCT DESIGNERS
Design, modify, and develop products for both specialized and day-to-day uses. Communicate complex design solutions by creating prototypes, mock-ups, process flows, and wireframes. They stay in touch with consumer trends and use a variety of market research and metrics to improve the user experience.

Common job titles: Product Designer, Product Manager
There are (literally) a million things you can do in design. (continued)

**JUNIOR DESIGNERS / INTERN ARCHITECTS**
Hold an interior design or architecture degree and are not yet licensed. They assist intermediate/senior level staff with basic-level design project work including production, space planning, research, presentation boards, and administrative tasks. Previous experience with CAD, Revit, SketchUp, and Adobe Creative Suite.

**Common job titles:** Intern, Intern Interior Designer, Junior Designer, Interior Design Assistant, Designer, Intern Architect, Architectural Assistant, Architectural Designer, Junior Architect, Materials Librarian, Purchasing Associate

**SALES**
Ensures market growth and promotion of architectural products and services by developing and maintain relationships with firms. Present product information to clients, drive product specifications, and provide samples and demonstrations.

**Common job titles:** Sales Representative, Relationship Manager, A+D Rep, Showroom Manager, Sales Manager, Account Executive

**EDUCATORS**
Hold an advanced interior design, architecture, or a related degree. They are employed in the training and education of students in a post-secondary institution as an educator or instructor in interior design, architecture, or a related field or program of study. Often adjunct (part-time) educators will continue to practice design.

**Common job titles:** Assistant Professor, Adjunct Faculty, Professor, Design Program Director, Chair

**MARKETERS**
Bridge the gap between business, branding, and the creative side of design. Provide guidance and leadership for the marketing department through developing and implementing market strategy, overseeing campaigns, events, PR, and digital marketing, and staying on top of market trends and developments. Present market data in a dynamic way to assist with business and brand perception.

**Common job titles:** Marketing Director, Marketing Consultant, Strategic Consultant, Marketing Manager, Marketing Coordinator, Creative Strategist

**OTHER**
**Editorial Designer:** Works on the layout and visual aesthetics of books, newspapers, magazines, online publications, and various other media. Editorial designers understand contemporary market trends, have skills in programs such as InDesign, and are able to work on tight deadlines.

**Operations Director:** Oversees firm operations including business development, maintaining client relationships, and company-wide finances.

**Traffic Coordinator:** Responsible for the workflow process for projects within a firm or a department, including day-to-day job entry, timekeeping, job invoicing, and enforcing project deadlines.
Biographies

Take it from us. The design professionals who lent their valuable voices and shared unique professional pathways to the discussion come from many walks of life and work. They are living proof that getting to where you want to be is never straightforward.

ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

Verda Alexander, IIDA
Title: Principal and Co-Founder, Studio O+A, Owner, POD Office
Location: San Francisco
Education: San Jose State University; Harvard University; University of California, Berkeley; San Francisco Art Institute
Early interests: Installation art and performance art

Vincenzo Centinario
Title: Associate, Gensler
Location: Chicago
Education: University of Palermo; Polytechnic University of Milan; Polytechnic University of Valencia; Tongji University
Early interests: Medicine, illustration
Strategic career move: Studied in both Spain and China to experience design multiculturally.

Daniel Krause
Title: Regional Resource Librarian, Gensler
Location: Chicago
Education: Missouri State University
Early career move: Working for an art collector.
Very fun fact: Krause grew up working on his family farm in Missouri.

ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN (continued)

Tom Marquardt, IIDA, SBID
Title: President and founder, marquardt+
Location: Chicago
Education: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Early career move: Working as a welder.
Words of wisdom: “Always pay your interns. What we put into the world is what we get back.”

Kyler Queen
Title: Director of Marketing, Associate Partner, BKV Group
Location: Minneapolis
Education: Denison University; Harrington College of Design
Early career move: DJing for his college radio station
Words of wisdom: “When you’re at a low point, you can treat it as an opportunity to begin doing anything you want.”

Erin Ruby, IIDA
Title: Principal, Owner, Erin Ruby Design
Location: New York
Education: Virginia Polytech Institute and State University
Why interior design: “My family moved around a lot when I was a kid, so making my own safe spaces within new places was important to me early on.”
EDUCATION  
Dr. Pamela K. Evans, IIDA, Ph.D.  
Title: Director, Interior Design, College of Architecture and Environmental Design, Kent State University  
Location: Kent, Ohio  
Education: University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Oklahoma State University  
Recent accomplishment: Winner of the IIDA Educator of the Year Award  
Words of wisdom: “Even when trying new things professionally, I strategically always kept my foot in the practice of interior design.”

Debra W. Barnes, IIDA  
Title: General Manager, Henricksen  
Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Education: College of St. Benedict; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities  
Words of wisdom: “A career is not linear. I have gone in and out of the interior design realm and yet, here I am working in interior design.”

Michelle Boolton, Assoc. IIDA  
Title: Director, A&D Strategy, and Sales Enablement, Gunlocke  
Location: Cincinnati, Ohio  
Education: Bowling Green University; Harrington College of Design  
Early career move: Bartending after college.  
Words of wisdom: “Embrace the uncomfortable when it comes to creating a path for yourself. Feel empowered to try new things.”

Beth Gall, Ind. IIDA  
Title: Division Manager, North Central at Gunlocke  
Location: Chicago  
Education: State University of New York College at Plattsburgh; Northern Illinois University  
Early career move: Facilities engineer at Motorola.

MANUFACTURING  
Roby Isaac, Ind. IIDA  
Title: Vice President, Commercial Design, Mannington  
Location: Philadelphia  
Education: Temple University; Philadelphia University  
Early interests: Biology  
Early career move: Apprentice at the Fabric Workshop and Museum

RESEARCH AND CONSULTING  
Amanda Schneider  
Title: President, ThinkLab  
Location: Chicago  
Education: University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana; University of Iowa Tippie College of Business  
Early interests: Engineering, architecture  
Surprise career move: Writing a column for the Huffington Post on the future of work and work design.

REAL ESTATE  
Kate North  
Title: Vice President, Workplace Strategy, Colliers  
Location: Chicago  
Education: Black Mountain College  
Early interests: Modern dance, Martha Graham  
Words of wisdom: “Take what you love, even if it seems unrelated, and bring it into your profession.”

Andrea Owensby  
Title: Vice President of Design, Sunrise Senior Living  
Location: Washington, D.C.  
Education: Virginia Commonwealth University  
Words of wisdom: “Recognize and capitalize on your strengths, and make sure you are able to grow in the position you are in.”
We know you have some questions.

The panel participants responded to questions and concerns brought to them by students and second-career professionals.

Does a creative mind need a design education?
A design education can be a critical starting point in molding a young, eager designer into a strong and capable professional. When companies and firms review resumes, they will often look for a candidate with a design education because they know it means confidence in a skill set and a wider sense of design discourse.

What are some absolutely essential skills that all design professionals should possess?
At all stages of your career, knowing how to communicate your ideas, whether through speaking, writing, or presenting, is critical. Properly articulating your vision to a client and being able to masterfully connect it with what they want makes all the difference. If possible, reach out to presentation coaches early in your career journey, or ask dynamic speakers in your life for tips.

How do you know when it’s the right time to make the next move in your career?
First, recognize what you want to get from your current position and if you have been proactive in getting it. Sometimes you know sooner than later that it is time to move on, but other times it’s good to take time and reflect on your current professional reality.

If the position you are in is no longer serving you or the person you want to become, it may be time to look for the next opportunity.

Can I find my way in design if I don’t feel creative enough?
With so many ways to fit into the design world, it’s important to remember that you have skills you can leverage to build your dream career. You might not be a strong graphic artist, but be skilled in sales, marketing, writing, or event planning. And at the end of the day, no one ever feels “creative enough.” Push through the doubt.

Is it important to seek out internships? Even for second-career professionals?
Unequivocally, yes. Aside from helping you get your foot in the door of the industry you want to work in, internships allow you to “try on” different companies, firms, and organizations to see where you fit in and what kind of work culture you are looking for.
Top 5 Tips

1. **Work/life balance is important. Self-care is necessary.**
   Designers are “yes” people and as their careers change, their priorities change with them. Learn when to say “no,” set appropriate boundaries, and regulate your time in a way that is realistic and healthy.

2. **Be multilingual. And we’re not just talking about Italian.**
   We know that design is a language in and of itself; it has a lexicon and it has a vocabulary. But it’s important to remember to expand your own professional lexicon and be able to speak the language of business, technology, and healthcare. These industries are where your clients will work.

3. **Always consider the “So what?” factor.**
   Whether you’re talking to clients, to potential employers, or to your parents, don’t forget to ask yourself “So what?” Mastering the art of persuasiveness and communicating about what you do and why you do it is critical for your professional present and future.

4. **Carpe Diem. Seriously.**
   The design industry is ever-evolving and fearlessly (but strategically) seizing (almost) every opportunity that comes your way is an important strategy for moving forward. So take that freelance gig, even if it seems a little “out there.” You never know where it could take you.

5. **It pays to ask.**
   Opportunities and promotions aren’t going to magically appear in front of you. You will need to be proactive in your path and in your work. If you feel like you aren’t getting what you set out for in a position, begin an honest conversation. Ask to be challenged, ask for guidance, and leave shyness at the door.

**YOU WILL NEED TO BE PROACTIVE IN YOUR PATH AND IN YOUR WORK**
For 25 years, IIDA, the commercial interior design association with a global reach, has been a leader in defining, supporting, and enriching the interior design profession. We support design professionals, industry affiliates, educators, students, firms and their clients through our network of 15,000+ members across 58 countries. We advocate for advancements in education, design excellence, legislation, leadership, accreditation, and community outreach to increase the value and understanding of interior design as a profession that enhances business value and positively impacts the health and well-being of people’s lives every day.

www.iida.org

Since 1902, The Gunlocke Company, based in Wayland, New York (USA), leads the industry in designing, manufacturing, and marketing private office and collaborative contract furniture for professional services clientele and other office environments. Specializing in casegoods, seating and tables, the company carries forward a tradition of quality craftsmanship, technical expertise and features the Gunlocke Advantage – legendary support for dealers, architects, designers and their clients, all backed by the industry’s strongest warranty. The Gunlocke name stands for lasting design integrity, uncompromising manufacturing excellence, and enduring substance, communicating status in meaningful ways.

One of the world’s leading manufacturers of fine flooring, Mannington Mills, Inc., based in Salem, New Jersey (USA) is engaged in the manufacturing and marketing of residential and commercial sheet vinyl, luxury vinyl, laminate and hardwood floors, as well as commercial carpet and rubber under the Mannington Residential, Mannington Commercial, Amtico and Burke brands. Mannington is a fourth generation family-owned business with values that include: CARE; DO THE RIGHT THING; WORK HARD/PLAY HARD; and CONTROL OUR OWN DESTINY.