

# Ross Popoff-Walker

annoyingdesign.org

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## PROFILE

Heart of a **designer**, brain of a **strategist**, spirit of an **entrepreneur**. Skilled with **emerging tech**, ad creative, **strategy pitches**, and breakthrough **product design**. Expertise in **user experience**, **social media**, and the written word. Weekly blogging at [annoyingdesign.org/blog](http://annoyingdesign.org/blog).

## EXPERIENCE

### **Modernista! LTD / Director of User Experience** 07.08 – current

Provided creative and strategic leadership for clients and internal teams on all accounts, including Palm, Cadillac, TIAA-CREF, and (RED). Evangelized design thinking throughout the organization.

### **Forrester Research, Inc. / Customer experience author & consultant** 6.06 – 6.08

Wrote top-read research reports and delivered strategic advice and webinars to Fortune 1000 clients on topics like web strategy and UX design. Clients included Capital One, JC Penny, John Deere, Hewlett-Packard, Office Depot, Microsoft, New York Times, US Postal Service.

### **Harmonix Music Systems, Inc. / Game Designer** 5.05 – 4.06

Designed multiplayer experience for Guitar Hero I. Prototyped concepts for new products, and reported directly to Creative Director and CEO.

### **PeaceMaker (ImpactGames, LLC) / Designer, Entrepreneur** 9.04 – 5.05

PeaceMaker is an educational simulation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Responsible for ideas, proof-of-concept design, pitching for seed funding, and testing.

## EDUCATION

### **Carnegie Mellon University Entertainment Technology Center / Master of Entertainment Technology** 2006

Masters degree in interactive design. Storytelling and narrative, rapid prototyping, project management, emerging media design. Intensive experience in iterative development with small-teams. Design studies with Randy Pausch.

### **New England Conservatory / Bachelor of Computer Music and Education** 2003

Led over 30 live performances of original music. Taught elementary and graduate level classrooms.

## SOME WRITING EXAMPLES

### **The Gen Y Design Guide / 12. 07 / Forrester**

*Summary:* Gen Y consumers are a unique breed. But what exactly makes them different from their elders? Our research unearthed nine attributes of Gen Yers' social, emotional, and mental makeup that shape their perception of interactions. To reach these young consumers, we've identified four design approaches: immediacy, Gen Y literacy, individualism, and social interactivity. To truly engage Gen Y, firms should create a Gen Y advisory board and apply Gen Y design approaches across touchpoints.

### **Desirable Online Experiences: Taking Web Sites Beyond Useful And Usable / 08. 07 / Forrester / Awarded Best Marketing and Strategy Research Report, Q3 2007**

*Summary:* Consumers are spending more and more time online, seeking out experiences that are relevant, engaging, and personal. However, many Web sites make users struggle to complete simple goals, have little to no emotional punch, and fail to embrace the diversity of consumers' wants and needs. To make matters worse, today's Web organizations must often backburner projects that would improve their sites' desirability factor in order to fix more pressing problems. As a result, the topic of desirability largely remains a mystery in the user experience community. We've explored three tactics for creating desirable online experiences: 1) providing engaging content and functionality, 2) focusing on aesthetics, and 3) incorporating elements of game design.

### **Advertising's New Mantra / 07.09**

We experience the digital world as timely, relevant, useful, and personable. I can find out exactly what my friends are doing as they do it via Twitter or Facebook. Or grab directions to a restaurant and concert tickets on the go through my mobile phone. This is how technology (when it works), has fundamentally altered the way we behave, work, and live.

But when it comes to advertising the focus is currently on disrupting culture, not augmenting it, and advertisers have focused on crafting messaging rather meaning. For this industry to thrive as technology continues to shift behavior, and during tough economic times, the model of experience design must move front and center.

UX in its basic form is information architecture: organizing content logically. But at its most potent, experience design has the power to transform brands and products. OXO changed cooking products by emphasizing ergonomics. Nike Plus transformed running through community. The iPhone redefined "mobile phone." All of these examples stem from understanding and designing for peoples' needs.

Experience design focuses on individuals, rather than customer segments, and it levels the playing field between people and brands. Because people want to talk to each other, not to technology, and not to advertising. Just momentarily think about this: if corporations treated individuals like humans, would ads exist?

For decades we've been saturated with marketing messages from all angles and channels. Messaging that is surface-y rather than cerebral, comical rather than emotional, and usually based on popular cultural symbols, rather than deeper human truths. What we really long for as individuals are meaningful connections — emotional, personal, and significant moments.

After all, some of today's strongest brands, from Whole Foods to Google, have made their way into culture without a dollar spent on ads. They've built permanence by focusing on customer experience. They've designed for people, and that is the treasure chest for any agency moving forward. And this is the mantra: redesign the experience.