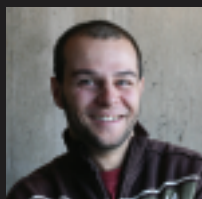


# THE LOWDOWN ON MOVING

# UP

## How to Score the Right Second Job By Brandon Knowlden



Landing that first job was tough—the portfolio-assembly frenzy, the résumé revisions, the repetitive interviews. But you got the gig.

Now that you've settled in and the gleam on that shiny new job has started to fade, maybe you're thinking there's something better out there. So, how do you approach it?

## KNOW

### when and how to move on

Knowing when to leave a job is a personal decision and is in no way an exact science. Frankly, most of my reasons for leaving jobs early in my career probably were only in my head. Most of us are beyond entry-level work within a year or two, but simply being in your first position long enough to replace the desk calendar once or twice doesn't justify heading straight for the exit.

For some creatives, a red flag signaling it may be time to move on is the ever-present erratic client. But even if clients seem unmanageable at times, I wouldn't recommend leaving because of them. Understand that every agency has difficult clients and that changing jobs will never guarantee avoiding them.

A more legitimate reason to start looking for new work is that you aren't learning or your portfolio isn't growing. Sometimes you can resolve this issue by being a little inventive. Do some freelance work, or take a few pro bono opportunities. Also be sure to enter as many awards shows as you can. Everyone sees what gets in, but no one sees what doesn't.

Unfortunately, there is one issue that resourcefulness won't resolve: salary. Many people just aren't satiated by the typical 3-to-5 percent annual bump for more than a few years, and you should know that jumping ship at the right time with the right knowledge can mean promotions and pay increases of 25 to 100 percent.

But before you start lining up interviews, do your homework. Sound research combined with a solid book will breed the confidence you need to make the most of your next interview. You'll need to go in knowing what your requirements are. Web sites such as Aquent's AIGA Survey of Design Salaries and Talent Zoo's Salary Monitor are good resources for finding out what the design and ad industry should be paying in a given market. Even more important is knowing how much you need to sustain your quality of life. Cost-of-living calculators can show you what your salary will mean in different cities. The New York Times, CNN Money and other sources have accurate online calculators that can even break down the cost of groceries from one city to another.



# KNOW

how to negotiate

# KNOW

how to look

I don't know about you, but when I made the decision to start looking for a new job, the only thing I saw was a book that hadn't been touched in two years. I had made mental notes about what was worthy of space in the plastic sleeves of my 20-page aluminum résumé, but where were they when I needed them most? Low-res here, lost on the server there—it was a mess. Polish your book before you start looking. At this point in your career, don't even worry about whether the work has been produced. If it's good, put it in. If you don't, you're never going to be able to move on to the next step, which is getting good shops to look at your work.

If you, like most young creatives, don't have a lot of connections, start close to home. When I did, I was surprised to learn that even in my small-town, super-regional agency, I had coworkers who had been at nearly every reputable agency I had on my "How the hell am I going to get my foot in the door?" wish list. My only warning would be to tread lightly. A casual comment at happy hour is one thing, but you don't want to go up to every Tom, Dick and Harry spouting off about your grand exit and asking them to give their old creative directors a call.

Another very untapped resource is blogging. Did you know that Technorati lists nearly 3,800 blogs on graphic design? More than 8,300 on advertising? These blogs rack up millions of hits every month. And they thrive on examples of original solutions from creatives around the globe—just like you. So submit to them. I personally have seen work picked up directly from blog submissions for use in international publications. Some bloggers even get hired right from their submissions. The beauty of a blog is that it is the exact opposite of the normally intrusive nature of advertising. Blogs aren't force-fed down the throats of your peers but, rather, sought out by them the world over. Best of all, submitting to a blog is always completely free.

Another simple suggestion: Pick up an awards annual, and find some work that you like. The credits are right there. Google the designer. Track down the art director. Hell, focus on the executive creative director. Go to agency Web sites to find e-mail addresses or figure out their e-mail formats (first name plus last initial, etc.). Be resourceful. You make your living coming up with solutions out of thin air. Use that skill. And once you've reached someone, be honest. Tell your potential employer that the work the firm does is the kind you aspire to be a part of, and ask how you can get him or her to look at what you have to offer. More often than not, you'll hear: "Well, why don't you send me what you've got?" So, again, have your work ready. I've been in touch with people all over the world who have won every accolade this industry can cough up using this same approach. They've all been in your position. Remember that, and use it to your advantage.

I'm always in favor of hitting a problem from as many angles as possible, so in addition to pulling favors and e-mailing our industry's celebrities, learn a little about recruiters. Releasing a recruiter with your book in hand is like releasing a three-legged man in an ass-kicking contest. The concept is simple. Recruiters get either a flat fee or a percentage of your first-year's salary as compensation. But not from you. That's something your new agency will pony up.



1



2

- 1. Motivation**  
Client: AIGA Pittsburgh  
Art Director: Brandon Knowlden  
Writer: Brandon Knowlden
- 2. Bliss**  
Client: XANGO  
Art Director: Brandon Knowlden  
Writer: Rich Black
- 3. Lush**  
Client: Lush Lawn and Property Enhancement  
Art Director: Brandon Knowlden  
Writer: Rich Black



offer comes in a little low, move on to what rules they can bend. One of the most important is a six-month salary review, which does two things: It tells them that you know what you're worth, and it gives you a fair advantage to move up quickly. Other attainable goodies could include moving expenses, signing bonuses or even realtor fees for finding a new home. Also discuss things like vacation day rollover policies and 401(k) vesting schedules.

I wouldn't push too hard, but when the smoke clears, you will have a better job with better pay and a new boss who will respect you for sticking up for yourself. And once an agreement has been settled on, the next thing to do is to get it in writing. There is nothing worse than putting in your two-weeks' notice only to get a call from your new employer with the unexpected bad news of a hiring freeze.

So whether it's deciding to start looking, getting your work out there, or negotiating that great deal, you need to understand that job hunting is an art. ■ CMYK

So you've almost made it. You've found a place you want and people who want you. You've done your research. Now it's time to negotiate. The first trick of playing the negotiation game is knowing that it is, in fact, a game. The initial offer made is the starting point, not your final offer. Also know that it is the job of a human resources director or talent recruiter to fill positions as inexpensively as possible. Although it is bad manners for them to ask what you are currently making, it may come up from time to time. Evade this question. What they are really asking is: "So, how little do I have to offer you to take this job?" You don't need to lie; simply tell them "not enough," or give them an accurate number based on your research. To get that figure, take your salary, freelance income and money from that occasional lawn you mow and adjust it for the cost of living in your new city. Going from \$30,000 a year in Cincinnati to \$60,000 a year in San Francisco is actually a step backwards, but an experienced human resources director will tell you that a 100 percent pay increase is practically unheard of. If you're working with a recruiter, things get easier. Simply explain to the firm that the negotiations are between the employer and the recruiter.

Not everything needs to be settled with salary. Some agencies have strict budgets and can't deviate from them. So, if your final



3

Brandon Knowlden is currently an art director at Struck in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he works on the Deer Valley Resort, KUER FM90 (public radio) and Ski Utah accounts. He has served as board member for AIGA Pittsburgh and his work has been recognized by the One Show, Adweek, STEP, the ADDY's and the AIGA 100.