

November 19, 2008

Graphic Design Program: Summary of 2007-2008 Outcomes Assessment Work

Outcomes Assessed:

1. Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and application of industry standard software.
2. Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and use of industry standard hardware such as scanners, printers, computers and portable storage devices.
3. Effectively participate orally in critical analysis of visual work.
4. Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and application of industry standard design software

Assessment Instrument - The Employer Survey:

The faculty in the Graphic Design Program at NECC were interested in finding out whether students were acquiring, through the program courses, the knowledge and skills relevant in today's job market, especially regarding computer-related skills. We were interested in what employers—not only in the Merrimack Valley, but beyond our area—thought to be important for anyone entering the graphic design or related work area. Further, we thought it important to try to obtain information which would help us identify trends, which would help us in maintaining program currency.

Towards these goals, the faculty created an Employer Survey, specifically designed to obtain employer importance ratings concerning skills currently being taught, as well as those that might be important to either include or give more emphasis. These included graphic design skills, graphic design software skills, as well as personal and professional skills.

Process: Creating and Distributing the Survey:

The first step was discussion within our department concerning skills that would be listed in the survey. Faculty ideas were used to draft the survey. Ultimately, skills were grouped into categories, such as "Graphic Design Software Skills" and "Personal and Professional Skills." Also, Part One of the survey included skills currently emphasized in the program, while Part Two listed skills currently considered as "optional." Four rating levels were used being, "1 -Not at all important", "2 -Mostly not important", "3 - Somewhat important," and "4 -Very important". Drafts were distributed to faculty and multiple meetings were held to further discuss and refine the instrument. The final version was ready in May 2007. (See survey included in this report.)

The Coordinator of the Graphic Design Program solicited company names and addresses from faculty teaching in the Art & Design Department, which includes Graphic Design. The Coordinator made copies of the survey, created a mailing list and mailed out the

surveys along with a cover letter. Approximately 100 surveys were mailed to graphic designers, print shops, and educators as well as related design businesses.

Process: Returns of the Survey:

The Coordinator of the Graphic Design Program collected all returned surveys and these were given to the Director of Academic Program Review and Assessment for further analysis. There was a total of 26 respondents representing a cross section of graphic design work sites.

Analysis:

The employer ratings were summarized for each identified skill. Tables showed the numbers of raters at each rating level for each skill, and tables and charts showed the percentages who rated the skill a "4", or either a "3" or "4." (See survey results included in this report.)

Results:

The results were shared with the Art & Design faculty in the fall 2008 semester. Several meetings have already taken place and more meetings are scheduled to look at the results from this survey. We are now meeting to suggest changes to our Graphic Design Program that will ensure our students are getting all the skills necessary to enter the work field or transfer to a four-year degree program.

Faculty were pleased that the Graphic Design Software Skills of In-Design, Illustrator, and Photoshop were all rated as very important, because these are the basic computer skills taught in the Program. We were surprised that Drawing and Illustration were not rated higher. The Personal and Professional Skills were very interesting as high percentages of employers rated "Writes Clearly" and "Oral Communication" as "Very Important."

Faculty Discussion, Employer Feedback and Action Plan:

The faculty discussion of the results of this assessment was positive and very productive. All faculty understand and agree that we need to work with students on oral communication skills. We are just starting discussions on how to address this by either adding Public Speaking to our program and/or increasing expectations for professionalism and the use of industry standard vocabulary in critical analysis of visual work.

Faculty discussion of the survey results will continue. The survey has provided us with an important opportunity for dialogue, affirmation of the work we are doing in our courses, and guidelines on how to improve the learning experience for our students.

Graphic Design Skills Survey

Graphic Design Associate in Arts
Degree Program

Northern Essex Community College
100 Elliott Street, Haverhill, MA 01830

Department Chairperson: Patricia Kidney
pkidney@necc.mass.edu
978-556-3389 Fax 978-556-3135

Name & title (please print) _____

Telephone & email _____

Company Name & Address _____

Briefly describe your business, and its graphic design functions.

PART ONE

The Graphic Design degree program at Northern Essex prepares students with respect to the following skills. Using the rating scale on the right, rank the skills according to their importance for entry level positions in your branch of graphic design.

1	2	3	4
Not at all important	Mostly not important	Somewhat important	Very important

Basic Graphic

Design Skills

Drawing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Typography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illustration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Color	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Graphic Design

Software Skills

Dreamweaver	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flash	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
InDesign	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illustrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photoshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XPress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Personal

and

Professional

Skills

Writes Clearly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group Critique Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library & On-line Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PART TWO

These are optional skills in NECC's graphic design program.
Please rank their importance in your branch of graphic design.

1	2	3	4
Not at all important	Mostly not important	Somewhat important	Very important

Additional Skills				
	1	2	3	4
Design & Build a Basic Website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Photography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Asset Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Film & Wet Lab Photography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lettering or Calligraphy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Typesetting with Professional Fonts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Color Management and Calibration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Video	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital Sound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2D Animation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3D Animation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Important Skills (Please List)				

Additional Software Skills				
	1	2	3	4
Acrobat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Effects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fireworks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HTML Code Editing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PowerPoint	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Important Software (Please List)				

Please feel free to add additional suggestions or comments here, or on the back of the sheet:

How many people do you imagine hiring over the next year? _____

Would you hire someone with an Associates Degree in Graphic Design? _____

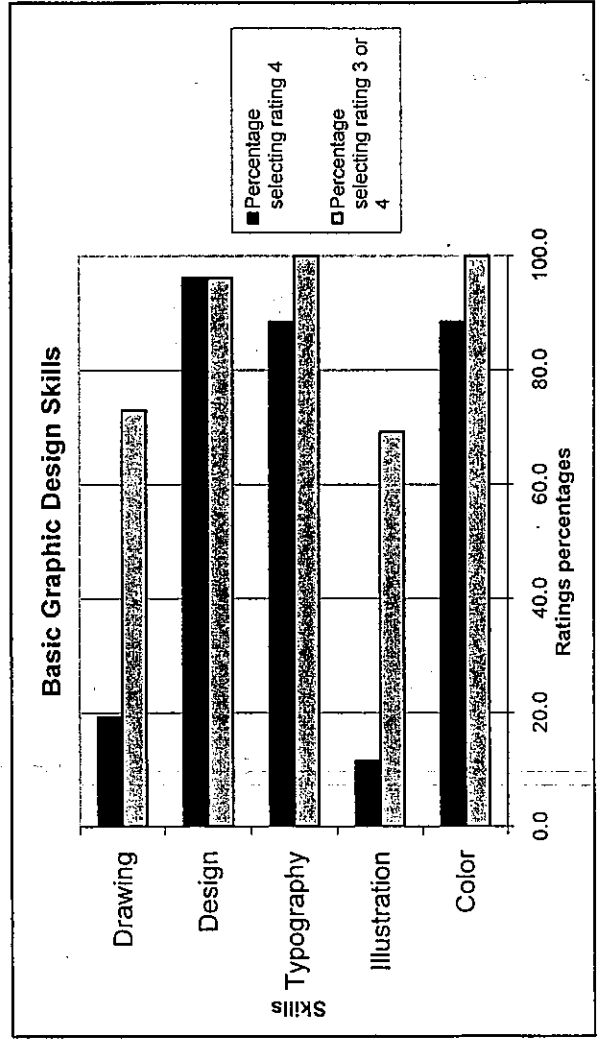
Have you ever hired a graphic design graduate from NECC? _____

Your signature _____ Date _____

**GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS
SPRING 2008**

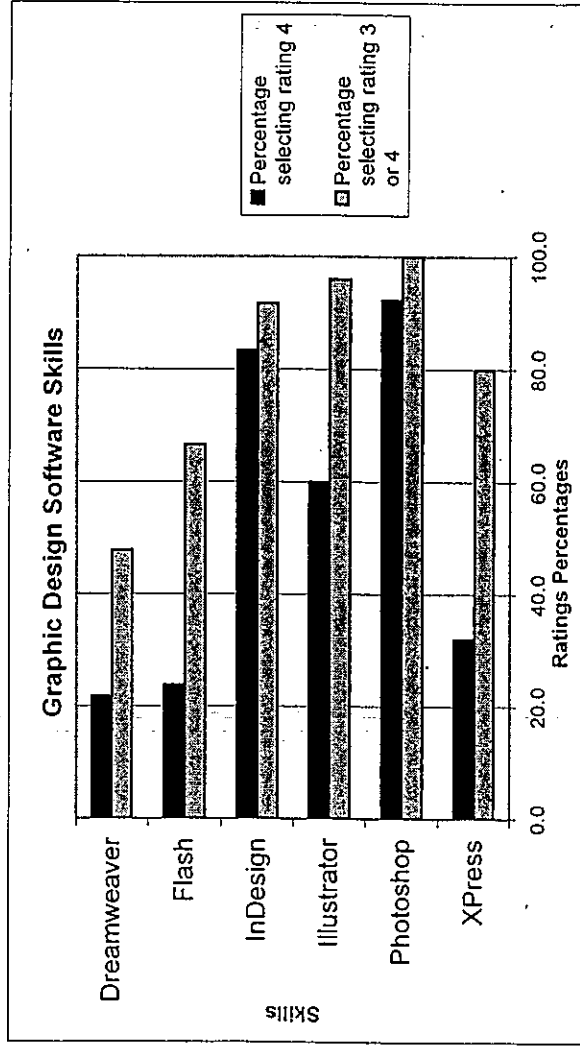
PART ONE (Number of respondents = 26)
The Graphic Design degree program at Northern Essex prepares students with respect to the following skills. Using the rating scale on the right, rank the skills according to their importance for entry level positions in your branch of graphic design.

Basic Graphic Design Skills	Number of respondents who selected rating ...					No response	Total number of responses	Percentage selecting rating 4	Percentage selecting rating 3 or 4
	1	2	3	4	Very important				
	Not at all important	Mostly not important	Somewhat important	Very important					
Drawing	0	7	14	5	0	26	19.2	73.1	
Design	0	1	0	25	0	26	96.2	96.2	
Typography	0	0	3	23	0	26	88.5	100.0	
Illustration	0	8	15	3	0	26	11.5	69.2	
Color	0	0	3	23	0	26	88.5	100.0	



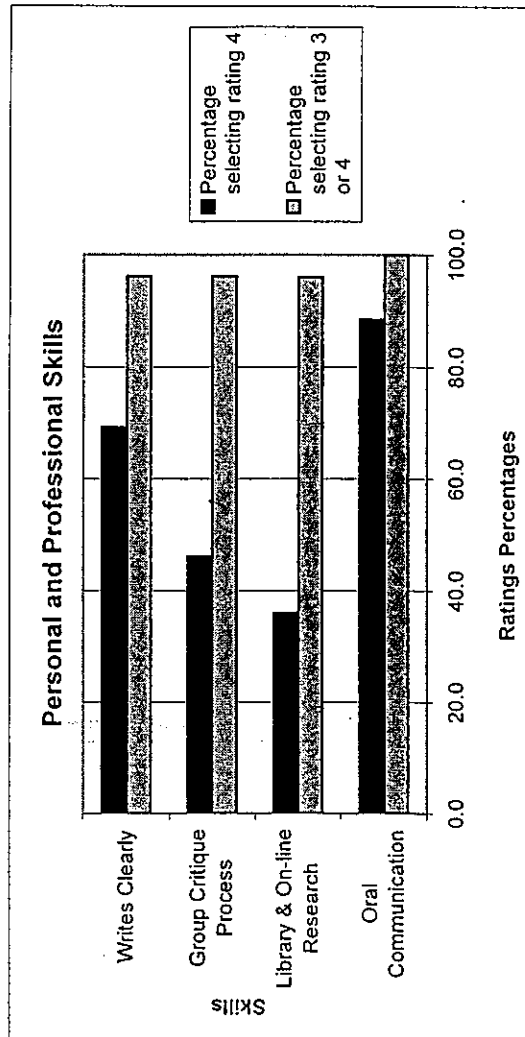
Graphic Design Software Skills	Number of respondents who selected rating ...				No response	Total number of responses	Percentage selecting rating 4	Percentage selecting rating 3 or 4
	1	2	3	4				
	Not at all important	Mostly not important	Somewhat important	Very important				
Dreamweaver	5	7	6	5	3	23	21.7	47.8
Flash	3*	4	9	5	5	21	23.8	66.7
InDesign	0	2	2	20	2	24	83.3	91.7
Illustrator	0	1	9	15	1	25	60.0	96.0
Photoshop	0	0	2	24	0	26	92.3	100.0
XPress	3	2	12	8	1	25	32.0	80.0

* One respondent noted, "unless Web designer."



Personal and Professional Skills	Number of respondents who selected rating ...				Total number of responses	Percentage selecting rating 4	Percentage selecting rating 3 or 4
	1 Not at all important	2 Mostly not important	3 Somewhat important	4 Very important			
Writes Clearly	0	1	7	18	26	69.2	96.2
Group Critique Process	0	1	13	12	26	46.2	96.2
Library & On-line Research	0	1	15	9	25	36.0	96.0
Oral Communication	0	0	3	23*	26	88.5	100.0

* One respondent noted, "It is unimportant how good a designer you are if you can't present work."



PART TWO (Number of respondents = 25. One respondent elected not to complete Part Two.)
 These are optional skills in NECC's graphic design program. Please rank their importance in your branch of graphic design.

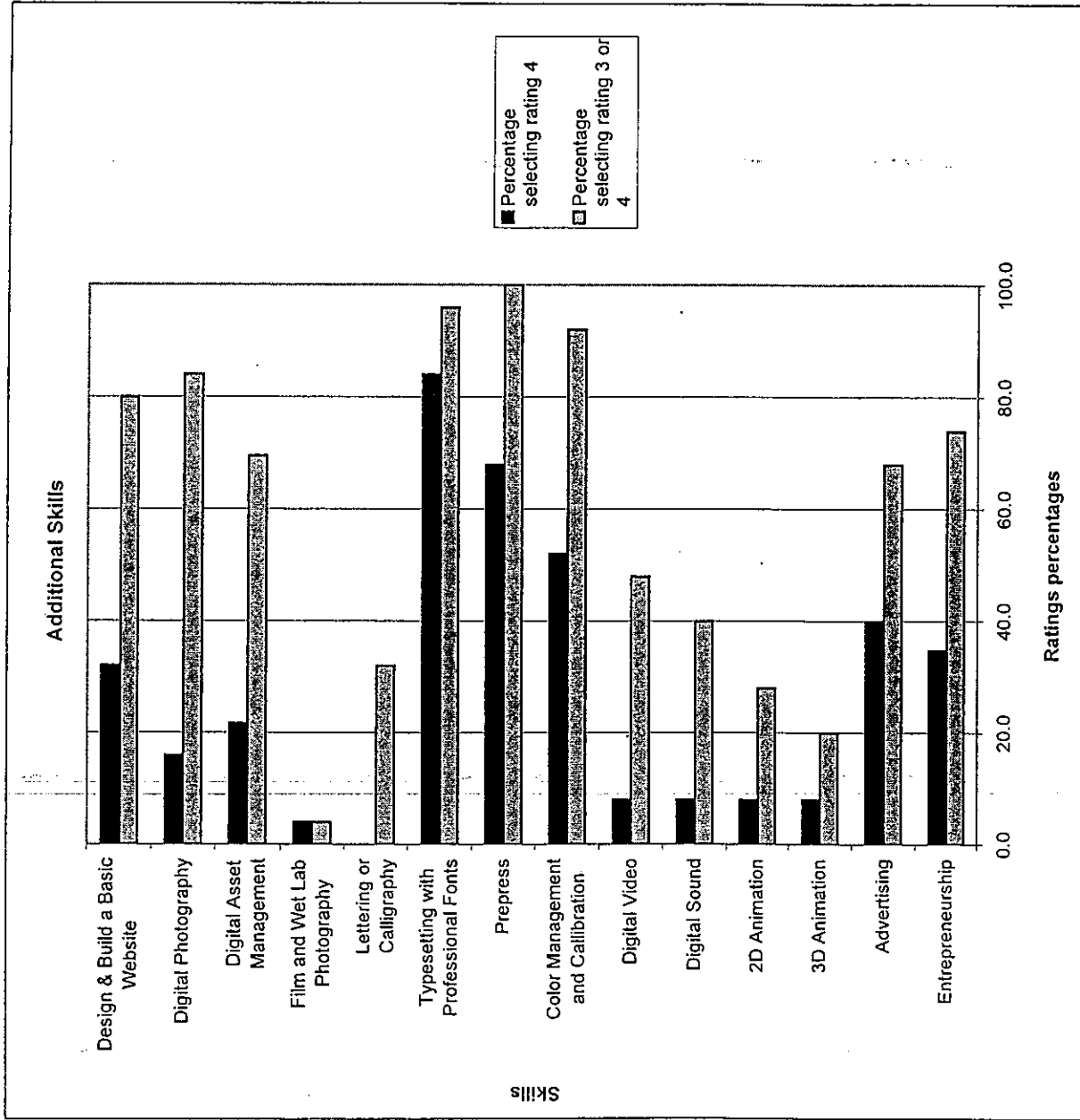
Additional Skills	Number of respondents who selected rating ...				No response	Total number of responses	Percentage selecting rating 4	Percentage selecting rating 3 or 4
	1 Not at all important	2 Mostly not important	3 Somewhat important	4 Very important				
Design & Build a Basic Website	1	4	12	8	0	25	32.0	80.0
Digital Photography	1	3	17	4	0	25	16.0	84.0
Digital Asset Management	1	6	11	5	2	23	21.7	69.6
Film and Wet Lab Photography	13	11	0	1	0	25	4.0	4.0
Lettering or Calligraphy	7	10	8	0	0	25	0.0	32.0
Typesetting with Professional Fonts	0	1	3	21	0	25	84.0	96.0
Prepress	0	0	8	17	0	25	68.0	100.0
Color Management and Calibration	0	2	10	13	0	25	52.0	92.0
Digital Video*	9	4	10	2	0	25	8.0	48.0
Digital Sound*	9	6	8	2	0	25	8.0	40.0
2D Animation*	10**	8	5	2	0	25	8.0	28.0
3D Animation*	9**	11	3	2	0	25	8.0	20.0
Advertising	2	6	7	10	0	25	40.0	68.0
Entrepreneurship	2	4	9	8	2	23	34.8	73.9

* One respondent noted that these four together are "...a very valuable skill subset."

** One respondent noted that these two are, "Not important unless that's your focus."

Other Important Skills (Please List) (6 responses)

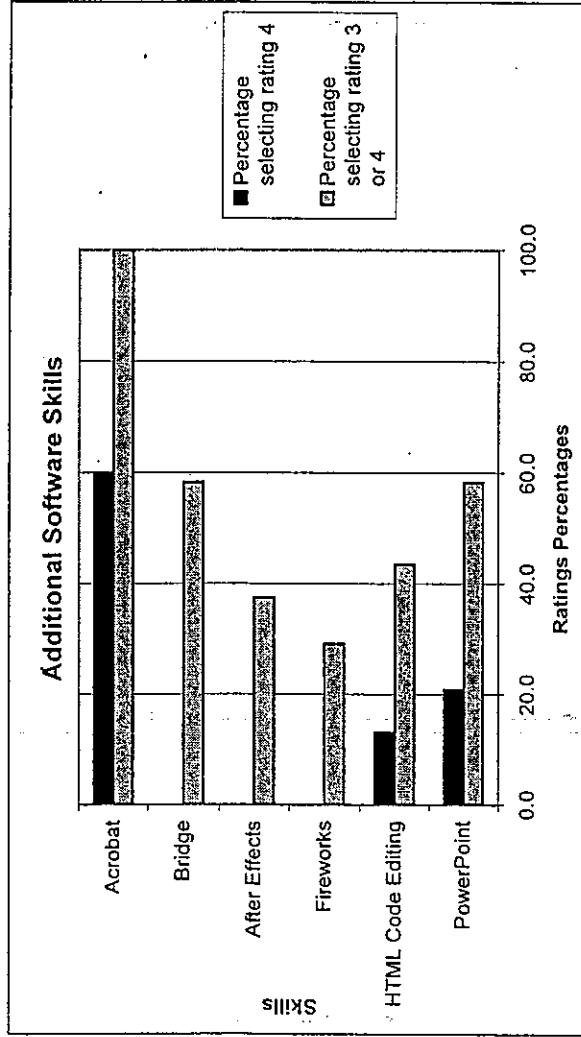
- 1 Sales and marketing skills; Resume and cover letter construction
- 2 Ability to track and manage multiple tasks and to accomplish them in a timely way. (Perhaps this is entrepreneurship in your view?)
- 3 Create a concept, follow-through, consistency copy writing, ability to express themselves verbally and through design.
- 4 Team building. Team work attitude.
- 5
 - ▶ Recognizing great copy
 - ▶ Usability
 - ▶ Campaigns, especially integrated campaigns
 - ▶ Concepting
 - ▶ Working with variables, such as variable data printing, understanding how databases work and relate to other databases
- 6
 - ▶ Understanding web standards & CSS, email design
 - ▶ Strategic application/ approach to projects
 - ▶ Working with clients - being able to present work



Additional Software Skills	Number of respondents who selected rating ...					Total number of responses	Percentage selecting rating 4	Percentage selecting rating 3 or 4
	1 Not at all important	2 Mostly not important	3 Somewhat important	4 Very important	No response			
Acrobat	0	0	10	15	0	25	60.0	100.0
Bridge	6	4	14	0	1	24	0.0	58.3
After Effects	6	9	9	0	1	24	0.0	37.5
Fireworks	7	10	7	0	1	24	0.0	29.2
HTML Code Editing	6	7	7	3	2	23	13.0	43.5
PowerPoint	6	4	9	5	1	24	20.8	58.3

Other Important Software (Please List) (2 responses)

- 1 InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator
- 2 QuarkEXpress



How many people do you imagine hiring over the next year?

0	8
0-1	1
Not sure	1
Possibly 1	2
1	2*
1-2	3**
2	1
5	1
10+ freelancers	1
DNA***	5

* One noted that hire would be in the UK

** One added, "Hopefully."

*** e.g., educator or technical writer, free-lancer, otherwise self-employed

Would you hire someone with an Associate's Degree in Graphic Design?

Yes	13*
No	1**
Maybe	4***
Prefer BFA	1
DNA ****	5
NR	1

* Respondents comments' were, "But experience is more important than a degree.", "If they were qualified.", "For a junior position.", and "...depends on portfolio. Usually look for BFA."

** One respondent noted, "We require at least a BA in another subject, & some certification in design."

*** "...but they would be competing against Bachelor's candidates in most instances."

**** e.g., educator or technical writer, free-lancer, otherwise self-employed

Have you ever hired a graphic design graduate from NECC?

Yes	1
No	19*
DNA **	5

* "We have used co-op students."

** e.g., educator or technical writer, free-lancer, otherwise self-employed

ase feel free to add additional suggestions or comments...(4 responses)

- 1 Skills may differ depending on the job. Web design is not as important if you have no intention of entering the field.
- 2 Aspiring designers and graphic arts must have a good understanding of:
 - ▶ Digital and offset printing processes.
 - ▶ Print terminology.
 - ▶ Print bid/ RFQ construction.
 - ▶ Manner in which to determine the most cost-effective process to print or manufacture a project that he/she designs.
 - ▶ Portfolio construction.
- 3 I've really noticed in my hiring & development of designers, that the ones who are trained to do stuff with their hands - be it knitting, calligraphy, playing the guitar - are better at coming up with more original ideas and pushing the limits of the computer & software. The ones who have never practiced a craft, are more impatient & seek out-of-the-box solutions.
Also, now there is a trend toward creating integrated marketing campaigns where a customer may get a post card in the mail, that drives him/her to a website that generates a confirmation email creating a unified customer experience, all in the same look-n-feel. I look for designers who can conceptualize that entire flow from end-to-end and design the entire look-n-feel across all media - print, web, email - and work collaboratively with more technical people but still have ownership of the HTML and CSS. It is more important to teach hard-coding in HTML than Dreamweaver since Dreamweaver creates dirty code. Happy to discuss more.
- 4 Should have strong knowledge of art history