



FOX DESIGN CO.  
KEEP YOUR EARS UP

Dear Jeff,

Thank you for your letter. I'm excited to hear about your interest in the field of graphic design. Let me see if I can help answer some of your questions.

**1. Significant Statistics.** Because I work in the Memphis area, I am not up on my Jackson job stats, but I can tell you that Advertising Age estimates that in 2005 in the United States, advertising alone accounted for 9.5 billion dollars of revenue. Graphic design is a necessity in advertising, and if we just look around, advertising is everywhere. Through innovations like wireless technology, advertising is moving into places it has never been before. That means plenty of jobs for graphic designers interested in advertising. More good news is that advertising is not the only field that needs the skills of a graphic designer. I am positive that wherever there is a healthy business community, there is a job there for good graphic designers.

**2. Working Conditions.** As I just mentioned, there are many different jobs a graphic designer could fill. Some are: advertising designer or art director, in-house designer for a corporate marketing department, and illustrator. I've chosen to pair my graphic design abilities and training with a marketing position to, hopefully, be better rounded for the business world. My current job, marketing manager at an online software company, is an 8 to 5 job. I work in an office with about 10 other employees. Before I had my current job, I ran my own small design business, and had to be more flexible on my work hours. I also had to work out of my home and spent a lot of time on my Apple laptop in coffee shops around town. After doing both, I can honestly say it really helps me to have an office outside of the home.

**3. Role of Technology.** Computers are something that are an important part of any job today. In graphic design, computers are a powerful tool allowing designs and messages to be exchanged over the internet and e-mail, and broadcast in the mass-media. Most graphic design today, if not all, relies heavily on computers and the latest software for production. However, I see computers as just one tool in my toolbox that allows me to create unique designs that work. I also spend a lot of time sketching with pencil and paper and taking photos to help me think more openly about my projects.

**4. Opportunities within the Field.** After being a graphic designer for around 10 years, I can say that there are many different entry points into this industry. I worked at a t-shirt screenprinting shop as a student designer while I was in college. After graduation, I went to work at a big advertising agency in Memphis. Then, I started my own small business, and now, I am a marketing manager for a small software company. So you can see, there are many paths a graphic designer can take. There are infinite opportunities for job advancement, but I would say that in order to advance, particularly in the Southeast, a graphic designer should gain a pretty good understanding of general business and marketing. That helps to give a graphic designer more marketability over the long-term as a prospective employee or an entrepreneur.

**5. Advantages and Disadvantages.** I don't travel much at this point, but when I get to, I do find inspiration and renewal, particularly when I go to big cities for conferences or on vacation. Sometimes I do have to work on the weekends, particularly when I ran my own business, but I try to keep weekends open to be with my family (wife and two kids).

**6. Kinds of Communication.** I present my work both graphically and verbally. As designs are created, open communication with my clients is key. Being able to have a clear, intelligent conversation with someone about the design I am doing for them is just as important as the design itself. Listening to customers to find out who they are and what kind of design they need is also very important.

**7. Cerebral or Hands-On.** One thing I love about graphic design is that it is a good mix of thinking and doing. When my brain gets tired of thinking, I can always switch gears and work out an idea with paper and pencil or work through a design challenge in Adobe Illustrator on my Macintosh, and vice-versa. That dual aspect of graphic design keeps things interesting and fresh.

8. Scholarships, Grants, and Schools with Outstanding Programs in Graphic Design. I can only speak what I know from experience. I attended Mississippi State University (my apologies if you're an Ole Miss fan) and feel they have one of the best graphic design programs in the region. Like almost any college, they offer many different scholarships to high-school students based on academic performance and test scores. When I attended MSU, the Art Department had a special scholarship for entering art students as well. That particular scholarship was based on the entering student's portfolio. I might check with state organizations like the Mississippi Arts Commission and other colleges to see what kind of grants and scholarships they can offer someone like you.

Jeff, thanks for all your great questions. I hope I helped. Feel free to call me at 901.634.7432 or e-mail me at [carl@keepyouearsup.com](mailto:carl@keepyouearsup.com) if you need more information, or if you're ever in Memphis. I'd love to meet you in person.

Regards,

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