

For immediate release

## **DESIGN INDUSTRY VOICES SURVEY OF UK DESIGN AND DIGITAL AGENCY EMPLOYEES REVEALS 38% ARE PLANNING EXIT WHEN MARKET PICKS UP**

*- Industry employees voice dissatisfaction in their agency's performance  
in the areas that matter most to them -*

(London - 3 December 2009) The Design Industry Voices Survey 2009 by Fairley & Associates, Gabriele Skelton and On Pointe Marketing, reveals that nearly two-fifths (38%) of UK design and digital agency staff are either definitely or possibly intending to change employers when the recession ends. Research for the report was carried out online between 15-24 October 2009 amongst people who work within UK design and digital agencies.

### **Day-to-day client satisfaction at risk**

The report further highlights that the likeliest people to consider leaving their jobs are those that are responsible for day-to-day client satisfaction and delivery:

- 36% of directors, 53% of managers and 47% of coordinators and assistants intend to change employer when the recession ends, compared to only 19% of the executive team.
- Strategists are least likely to change employer (21%). Designers (43%), account managers (44%) and those working in other roles in the agency (36%) are most likely to leave.
- Of those intending to leave, almost three quarters (73%) intend to stay in the same field. The rest either don't know or intend to do something different.

A substantial change in those responsible for the day-to-day client satisfaction and delivery may have an impact on the agency's ability to service and farm existing clients. There is also a risk of losing knowledge and experience. Agencies are likely to face the need for financial and time investment in the recruitment and training of new talent which they can ill afford.

Stef Brown, Managing Director of On Pointe Marketing, says: *"Agencies are all about people. Building relationships and satisfying existing clients is one of the best ways to weather any downturn. If agencies start losing the key staff that delivers the work, they risk damaging those relationships to the point where clients may decide to look elsewhere. They also risk being so stretched that they're unable to seize new opportunities as the market begins to pick up."*

### **Perceived agency delivery gap is major factor in deciding whether to stay or go**

In the survey, respondents were presented with a series of attributes listed as statements. They were first asked how important each attribute is to them personally. Respondents were then asked how well they feel their agency is currently performing against each attribute. An agency delivery gap is defined as the difference between an attribute's level of personal importance versus the respondent's perception of how well the agency performs against it.

All respondents broadly agree on which attributes are important to them personally. However, employees who intend to change job perceive bigger agency delivery gaps than those who wish to stay.

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The median delivery gap is 19% for all respondents. However, for those intending to leave the median delivery gap is 36% while just 13% for those intending to stay - an average difference of 23% between those intending to leave and those intending to stay.

The five attributes in which there is the greatest difference of opinion between those intending to leave and those intending to stay are: 'rewards people for going the extra mile' (39% difference); 'has a management team that demonstrates strong leadership skills' (35% difference); 'helps employees to manage stress' (33% difference); 'supports professional development and growth' (32% difference); and 'is quick to change in reaction to new situations' (29% difference).

Rachel Fairley, Managing Director of Fairley & Associates, says: *"Employees agree on what makes a good agency and on how their agencies are letting them down. For two-fifths, enough is enough. It isn't about money; everyone knows money is tight. It is about respect and appreciation. Agencies must empower their managers to lead, coach and nurture their teams so employees are involved in ensuring their agency's and their personal success."*

#### **Crucial deficits in agency performance in the psychosocial work environment**

For those intending to leave, the attributes where the delivery gap is greatest are in the psychosocial work environment such as job demands, job control and workplace support/training. Jobs with high demands and high control are generally considered the most rewarding whereas jobs with high demands, low control and poor workplace support are worst for mental and physical health.

The five attributes with greatest perceived delivery gap for those intending to leave are: 'rewards people for going the extra mile' (64%); 'supports professional development and growth' (60%); 'provides training' (55%); 'helps employees to manage stress' (55%); 'appropriate workload for staffing levels' (53%).

Karina Beasley, Managing Director of Gabriele Skelton, says: *"As a recruiter, of course we are reliant on people moving from one agency to another. However, we also want our agency clients to thrive, and from the results of our research, many are risking their future success by not paying attention to nurturing, and therefore, retaining their employees. Bearing in mind the level of redundancies in the first half of 2009, many agencies are now down to teams comprised entirely of their key people - the very people they can least afford to lose when the upturn comes. It is vital that they look at how to reward and recognise their people - something which doesn't have to cost a fortune."*

Agency owners and senior management teams will be invited to a series of breakfast seminars taking place in January 2010 by Fairley & Associates, Gabriele Skelton and On Pointe Marketing, which will provide practical, implementable and cost-effective solutions to narrow the delivery gap, thereby increasing likelihood of employee retention and positive word of mouth, as well as growing the agency's internal and external reputation.

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#### **NOTES TO EDITOR:**

**For further information please go to [www.designindustryvoices.com](http://www.designindustryvoices.com) or contact:**

Stef Brown

On Pointe Marketing

M: +44 (0)7773 886 543

E: [stef@onpointemarketing.com](mailto:stef@onpointemarketing.com)

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**Methodology:**

We asked people who work within design or digital agencies to anonymously share their views on how it feels to work within their agencies right now.

The research was carried out online between 15-24 October 2009 by Fairley & Associates, working in collaboration with Gabriele Skelton and On Pointe Marketing.

567 of a possible 4746 people invited to participate did so (12%).

The majority of questions were statements where respondents were asked for their point of view on how important an attribute is to them personally (very important, quite important, not important, not sure) and how well the agency they work for currently or most recently is performing in relation to each of the attributes (very well, quite well, not well, not sure).

**About the participants:**

Management function: 19.2% are on the executive team, 40% are director level, 25.6% managers, 3% coordinators, 3.2% assistants and the remaining 9% describe themselves as 'other'.

Role: 45.9% are designers, 8.3% strategists, 13.9% work in account management, 8.3% in production, 7.2% new business/marketing, 5.8% human resources, with 10.6% classing their roles as being in other parts of their organisation.

Employment status: 94.6% of respondents are permanent employees; 5% are freelancers and 0.4% currently not working.

Length of service: 46.3% of participants have been with their employers for more than five years; 8.5% less than five years; 13.2% less than four years; 13% less than three years; 10.5% less than two years; 8.6% for less than a year.

Location: 97.5% are UK based; 1.1% work in mainland Europe; 1.4% in the rest of the world. For the purposes of analysis we used only the responses of those based in the UK.

Age: the majority of respondents were aged 30-50 (42.9% aged 30-39 and 36% 40-49), 7.6% are 18-29 years old, 12.3% 50-59, 1.3% over 60.

Gender: three-fifths of the sample were male (61.5%) and two-fifths female (38.5%).

**About us:**

*Fairley & Associates* works with companies and agencies to effect change, solve immediate business challenges and build long term capabilities in brand, marketing and engagement. Our clients report greater traction within their organisations and in the marketplace. <http://www.fairleyassociates.com>

*Gabriele Skelton* is a specialist design and digital recruitment agency. We're matchmakers; we connect the right candidate with the right client to create something new. We love working with creatives, account handlers, consultants and thinkers, techies and developers. It's about making the right connections to get the right reaction - unusual combinations that make the magic happen - that's what we mean by chemistry. <http://www.gabrieleskelton.com>

*On Pointe Marketing* works with agencies to build external and internal reputation to drive the business development pipeline and retain and attract talent. We create business and brand-led marketing plans and ongoing implementation consultancy. In a world where agencies sometimes wear the worst shorn shoes, On Pointe Marketing is the cobbler. <http://www.onpointemarketing.com>