

The Complete  
Guide To:

# Working with a *Creative Team*

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## *Topics Include:*

- \* How to apply for a Creative Team
- \* How to choose the right Creative Team for your personal style
  - \* What kind of commitments are required
  - \* Dealing with rejection
- \* Understanding compensation packages
  - \* How to be a team player

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# Introduction

You are a creative person. You have lots of ideas and love creating beautiful things that inspire others. You also have a few choice companies that you find yourself drawn to often because you love their products and what their brand stands for. Did you know that many of these companies use a Creative Team to help promote and work with their products? Perhaps you are the perfect fit for one of these teams.



## Do you REALLY want to be on a Creative Team?

Here are eight questions to ask yourself to help you decide if you want to be on a creative team:

1. Do you work well with others?
2. Can you meet deadlines?
3. Do you have a unique style that others may enjoy learning from?
4. Can you follow directions?
5. Are you a good writer?
6. Are you detail oriented?
7. Do you have additional skills such as photography that help make your projects stand out?
8. Do you have a large or growing social media following?

Answering "yes" to most of these questions may mean you are the perfect kind of person to serve on a Creative Team.

## What Does a Creative Team Member Do?

This obviously depends on the company you are working with, but here are a few duties you may be required to complete during your service on the team:

- \* Create projects with products provided.
- \* Cross-market sales, promotions, and new products.
- \* Create instructions for publications, social media, and marketing purposes.
- \* Photograph and share projects through social media.

Each team will have its own specific requirements. You should request these list of duties before signing any kind of contract so you know what you're getting into.

# What Kind of Commitment Are You Getting Into?

Service on a Creative Team can vary from a one-time guest spot, to a six-month, or year-long commitment. Remember when you sign any kind of contract you are committing to serve on that team for the time specified.

Know yourself and your skill set well enough that you can define for yourself how much time you are committing to a team. Some numbers to think about:

- \* How long does it take me to typically complete a project?
- \* How long does it take me to create a set of instructions or a blog post?
- \* How long does it take me to photograph a project or share it through social media?
- \* How much time can I devote to correspondence including emails, social media responses, and creating new projects?

If you have a fair idea of how long each of these tasks take, then you will know whether a commitment you are considering is worth your time or not.

## Is THIS Team Worth It?

### What do YOU hope to gain while serving on the Creative Team?

- \* Financial compensation?
- \* Recognition?
- \* Work experience?
- \* Product compensation?

You need to determine what you're hoping to get out of serving on a team before you make any kind of commitment.

If you are looking for financial compensation, be sure that the commitment is really worth your time.

Here's a little equation to help you decide:

$$\text{Project Payment/Time Commitment} = \text{Total Payment Per Hour}$$

You may be surprised to learn that you are making less than minimum wage to complete some projects. You will have to determine if the additional kinds of compensation you are receiving make the job worth it or not.

While working for product compensation, recognition/personal brand building, and work experience are all important reasons for taking on a job, do not underestimate your own worth. Ask yourself, "If I take this job that pays little to nothing, will it keep me from another opportunity that may be worth more?"

On the flip side, do not overestimate your worth. Companies have their own expectations of what they hope to gain in a Creative Team member. And often industry payment standards exist that you may not be aware of. Do your homework and remember that this opportunity is a collaboration where both parties deserve to benefit. Ask others who currently work for or have worked for the team you are considering how they felt about their experience to get a better feel for how it might work for you.

# Are YOU Worth It?

As I mentioned before, companies also have a certain Creative Team member personality in mind when they are looking for new collaborators.

Some of these skill sets might include:

- \* A good writer who has a unique perspective and whose writing makes for a good read.
- \* A photographer that creates photos that matches their brand.
- \* A creator that makes their products shine.
- \* A marketer that understands the ins and outs of social media and building a brand.
- \* A professional who works well with others, follows directions, and acts professionally.

Often these companies are looking for the complete package. Again, do your homework! Look through the company's social media feeds to get an idea for the type of person they most often work with.

What can YOU bring to the table? How well would you fit into their brand and vision?

## My Unique Skills:

Take a moment to list out what YOU could bring to this company's table:

# Making the Pitch

Finding a company that is looking to hire Creative Team members is often difficult. Here are a few ways to find the right person to contact in a company:

- \* Ask for the Creative Director via email or by phone.
- \* Look for the name of the person posting on their social media outlets.
- \* Reach out to their current collaborators.
- \* Make connections at conferences, events, etc.

Now that you've determined who to talk to, let's talk about how to catch their eye.

## How to Create the Perfect Pitch

### 1. Quick introduction.

"Hi, I'm Suzy Social from [www.suzysocial.com](http://www.suzysocial.com)."

### 2. Share what you love: be specific and to-the-point.

"I really love the hip, urban feel of the Company Co. brand."

### 3. Describe how you both stand out and fit in with their brand.

"I am a creative maker who has a unique and humorous approach to creating masculine-inspired office decor."

### 4. Ask for what you want.

"I understand that you are currently looking for team members to join your Creative Team. I would love to submit my portfolio for your consideration."

### 5. Leave your contact information.

"I would love to chat more with you about working together. You can contact me via email at [suzysocial@gmail.com](mailto:suzysocial@gmail.com) or by phone 1-801-345-7890."

### 6. Leave them wanting more.

"If you'd like to get a better feel for my style, you can find my gallery (or blog) here: [www.suzysocial.com](http://www.suzysocial.com)."

**NOTES:**

## Follow Up

Selecting a Creative Team takes some time. Give the Creative Team Leader a week before sending a follow-up email. Then if you haven't heard from he or she, take the time to send a quick and friendly email:

"I wanted to check back with you to see if you had made a decision about adding new designers to your team. I would really love to work with you. Please let me know if there is anything else you might want to see from me."

At that point, leave it in the Team Leader's hands and patiently wait until the decision has been made.

## Dealing with Rejection

A "no" can be a "no" for many reasons. Some of them might include:

- \* They already have a designer on the team that matches your style.
- \* They aren't hiring at the moment but might again in the future.
- \* Your style doesn't quite fit the look of their brand.

Take a moment to assess why you think you didn't make the team. Sometimes the reply from the Creative Team Leader will give you a specific reason as to why you weren't chosen, but often it will not. Ask yourself the following questions:

- \* Am I truly at the level of work this company is expecting?
- \* Did I send a true representation of myself as a designer through my pitch and portfolio?
- \* Was my correspondence well-written or were there spelling and grammatical errors?
- \* Am I consistently maintaining my social media presence and the company could easily observe this?
- \* Do I have a history of professionalism in the industry or do I have a reputation for being difficult to work with?

Many of these issues can be addressed and fixed for next time. And sometimes a "no" now can be a "yes" later so don't give up on a company after the first attempt. Take the time to make your portfolio or pitch even stronger and then approach them again after some time has passed. Continue interacting positively with them through social media and through the use of their products on your own platforms. Make sure to tag them on a consistent basis so they know you truly love their brand.

**“Our great weakness lies in giving up.  
The most certain way to succeed  
is always to try just one more time.”  
- Thomas Edison**

# How to Be a Great Team Player

Not everyone seems to know how to function on a team. While some companies work with only one designer, most have a team of designers at their disposal to help create projects, create marketing, and help to develop buzz for their brand. You need to quickly learn what kind of a team player you are and how you can further contribute to the team. Your ability to do this will help you stay on the team that you love and help you find new contacts in the future.

Here are several types of team players. Where do you fit in? Which team player do you think you should be?

## The “Dead-Beat”:

This team member liked the idea of being on a team but soon realized they weren't up for the task. Rather than bow out gracefully, they continue to accept new assignments only to miss deadlines, constantly mislead about their ability to accomplish said assignments, and then eventually disregard any communications. While this individual may think their "smoke and mirrors" tactic keeps the team coordinator in the dark, these types of individuals are very easy to spot. Their typical excuses have been well-used before, and a pattern quickly emerges about their less-than-stellar work ethic.

This individual goes on companies' "blacklist" as these designers use up resources that could be better used elsewhere. As most creative industries are small in nature, word often gets out about this designer's behavior. Rather than accept a commitment you can't follow through on, quickly and honestly notify the design team lead so they can find another designer.

## The “Know-it-All”:

This team member always has an answer for everything. She is the first to post an answer in the group forums. She points out every mistake that she can find both from the company and others on the team. She answers questions other designers post before the coordinator has a chance to answer. She feels discouraged when the team isn't run the way she thinks it should be and shares this often with the group.

This type of team member could also be labeled as "high maintenance." While involvement on teams is always encouraged, becoming overly helpful can negatively affect the team. Be careful to only share ideas that are truly helpful to the group or to the coordinator. Some questions may be better answered in private rather than in the group. Try not to step on anyone's toes when sharing "advice." Be a part of the team: supportive, encouraging, and make sure not to take up more of the coordinator's time than anyone else.

## The “All-Star”:

This team member seeks for celebrity status. He wants to share every success in his life often to the point of bragging. He not only links other team members to every blog post, article, etc. that he has ever written, he openly shares his statistics with the group without being asked. While team members should encourage and cheer on one another, having one team member point out every little accomplishment of their own alienates them from the rest of the team. Make sure you spend more time encouraging other members than in highlighting your own successes.

Any publication, opportunity, etc. that benefits the company/brand that you work for should be shared with your supervisor as it is part of their job to see that you are helping to market the company products. However, a long list of "I so rocked this" to other members on the team may only serve to annoy them.

## “Mr. or Miss Needy”:

This designer craves recognition. While they aren't like the "All-Star" in that they share every accomplishment, they do seek the approval of both other members on the team and the coordinator. This designer bombards the coordinator with multiple emails asking for approval on nearly every step in their creative process. Not comfortable with their own skill level, they look to the coordinator to hand-hold them through every project.

While approval is often required on projects, it is typically not necessary for a design team coordinator to walk you through the process. You were hired based on your skill level, and these leaders believe you are capable of the job. Don't give them an excuse to doubt that!

## “Gossip Girl (or Boy)”:

You might think it's on the down-low, but the things you say about the company/brand that you work for, or the supervisor that leads you, or the members on your team do make it to the light of day at some point. Save your criticisms, negative observations, and downright displeasure for discussions with those who have the power to enact change. Sometimes simply discussing your concerns with your supervisor may alleviate any issues. If the partnership truly isn't working, an appreciative "thank you but no thank you" notice can be given.

Don't burn any bridges. You may find someone that you worked with before ends up working with you again. Plus often you come off as a "Negative Nelly" no matter what the circumstances were. Disgruntled blogging and social media rants only make you look difficult to work with. Keep it to yourself and move on.

## The Perfect Team Member?

So is there a perfect creative team member? Does he or she really exist! Absolutely. We'll call them the "Design Team Member Extraordinaire." Continue reading to learn more about this person's qualities!



# “Design Team Member Extraordinaire”:

This designer knows their schedule and their abilities and only takes on assignments they can successfully and creatively handle. This person encourages each member of the design team, including sharing their work, commenting on their questions, and creating true friendships where possible. This designer responds quickly to their coordinator's emails and always positively. They give their best work and always meet their deadlines. They carefully read through their contracts or know their commitments so they can meet the demands of the job without constantly reaching out to their supervisor. They work to exceed the brand's expectations without becoming a "Know-It-All" or "All-Star." They are comfortable enough in their own skin that they don't need additional recognition for their success.

Are these designers difficult to find? Not at all! I've had the privilege of working with several of them. You can also become one of these design team members by identifying where your weaknesses lie and making improvements to become a better design team member.

I have found that designers who fit this bill are often asked to serve on other creative teams. It quickly becomes obvious they are good to work with, and design team coordinators will often share this information with other coordinators.

So what can you do to change from one of the more negative team players to one that truly contributes both to the team and the company? Below I've listed several qualities you should work to adopt. These qualities truly make for a good employee in any circumstance. While you may have some or many of these qualities, work to identify areas in which you might improve.

## Qualities of a Good Team Player

- \* Meets deadlines.
- \* Sends their best work (in writing, photography, and project creation).
- \* Is honest in their dealings.
- \* Is free of drama.
- \* Accepts assignments willingly.
- \* Truly helps to build buzz for the brand.
- \* Is kind and helpful to others.
- \* Is patient when things don't always go right the first time.
- \* Keeps confidences.
- \* Continuously improves and grows in their skills and talents.
- \* Is a self-starter and motivated to do bigger and better things.
- \* Supports others on the team.
- \* Quickly fixes issues and problems at the Creative Team Leader's request.

If you have questions about what specifically makes a good team player for a certain company's team, don't be afraid to ask. It's always best to understand exactly what a company is looking for in a creative designer than to just guess. You'll find that a list to work with is better than just fumbling around in the dark hoping to get things right.

## Notes:

# Working with a Mentor

If you want specific help for preparing yourself to apply to a Creative Team, consider hiring or working with a mentor who can help you determine areas in which you might improve. A mentor can give you an unbiased opinion on things like improving your writing style, taking better photographs, or even the best way to approach the Creative Team Lead. Look for someone who can be honest with you and truly help you attain your goals. Remember, however, that the final process will be up to you and you need to truly represent yourself in the most accurate light. Make sure the mentor you choose is someone who best fits you and the company you're looking to work with.

A good mentor might be someone currently working on the team or a peer in your industry who understands the Creative Team process. It might be someone that writes well, or takes great photographs. Identify the areas in which you most need help in becoming a great contributor and then look for a mentor to help you in that area(s).

Your mentor may be able to answer some of your more specific questions that may come up once you're serving on the team. Making friends in the industry you work in is important. Be appreciate for any and all help in getting the position you desire.

Pay it forward by helping others when asked. Industries ebb and flow and establishing relationships that will last will help you continue working in your area of expertise.

## Conclusion

Now that you understand what a Creative Team does and how you might best fit into a team, make a goal to either join a team or to become a better team player. There is certainly always room for improvement. And if a team doesn't work out for you, don't let it get you down. Every team is slightly different and sometimes it takes a bit to find the right fit for YOU. Keep trying, learning, growing, and improving as positively as possible. Often times a team that doesn't work right now could work in the future.

Working with a Creative Team is a wonderful opportunity for being compensated for what you already love to do. Understanding how a team works and how you can be a good team player will ensure that you get to do what you love for a long time.

## Goals:

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