

# Creatives' Collaboration of Global Proportions

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

Start with two graphic designers (well seasoned), add a heaping amount of lively internet forum discussion, mix in a focused mission and attainable goals and stir in a generous amount of talent and creativity. Then, let brew for four months. This was the recipe for a ambitious web-based project to promote a group of creatives located around the world. The result, called Creative Latitude, is a web site designed to promote these graphic designers, writers, web developers, photographers and illustrators. The site also serves to educate creative services buyers about the ins and outs of the creative process, business issues related to creative activities, along with providing one-stop shopping for talent. The site can be viewed at [www.creativelatitude.com](http://www.creativelatitude.com).

Creatives will find a wealth of resources to help them with their business. The site offers free downloadable files to aid with computing hourly rates, creating proposals and briefs, estimating, along with forms used in day-to-day operations.

Creative Latitude's in-depth Resources section features a rich list of links covering a variety of topics, including:

- Business links
- Copyright information
- Trade organizations, unions and groups links
- Useful publications
- Fonts
- Color
- Stock photography
- Marketing, sales and self-promotion information
- Web development and design information
- Writing links
- Inspirational resources

There is no cost for membership. Potential member sites are reviewed prior to listing, insuring that clients get quality talent who adhere to industry ethics and business practices. Creative Latitude members are also provided with a detailed, searchable profile and platform to publish

their practice news and articles.

The site serves both buyers and creatives with informative articles by well-known marketing and design authors such as Ilise Benun, author and internationally recognized expert on self promotion; Jeff Fisher, author, identity designer and recipient of more than 400 design awards and Joe Gillespie, a graphic designer working in London, and owner of the popular site, Web Page Design for Designers. Initial articles cover such topics as developing marketing lists, using industry awards as a marketing tool, the benefits of conducting a design audit and working from remote locations. Future plans include coverage of topics such as creative/client case studies, copyright issues, budgeting for creative projects and measuring the success of marketing projects.

To understand the global nature of the project, consider its management team of Catherine Morley, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darrussalam; Nigel Gordijk, Brighton, England; and Neil Tortorella, North Canton, OH. The team coordinated the effort across three continents with a web host, Yvonne Adams, located in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Despite the distance, the project moved seamlessly forward, as though each were simply in the office next door. Ms. Morley provides overall project management along with Gordijk's site design and content writing by Tortorella. Each has their responsibilities, but the three collaborate on all details and strategy.

The group of founding members hail from the across the U.S., England, Brunei, Canada, Scotland, South Africa and New Zealand. The site launched with 40+ members on board. New member profiles are regularly being added.

Creative Latitude's beginnings are traced to an email discussion between Morley and Tortorella about new ways to promote their design practices' web sites. Ms. Morley is the Founder of Katz*>* Design Group, located in Brunei and the UK. Mr. Tortorella operates a graphic design practice in North Canton, OH, U.S.A. From this discussion, an idea of managing link exchanges was brought to About.com's Graphic Design Forum for feedback from the forum members.

The idea snowballed with many forum members showing great interest in participating. The group jointly developed a mission statement, project goals, preliminary names and rough logo designs. It soon became

apparent that the concept was out growing the forum.

Mr. Gordijk, a veteran web and print designer, suggested moving things to a free web server until a final domain could be found. From there, members participated in polls for a management team, a name for the project and, eventually, a logo and site design. The process has been completely voluntary and democratic.

The Creative Latitude logo was designed by Carey Numme, Principal of Balance Design located in Greenwich, CT. The group selected this mark after a two-round poll of 27 potential designs submitted by several members.

During the development phase, the management used online meetings and email for most communications, along with the occasional phone call. Site files were shared using Macromedia Dreamweaver. Additional help came though Alina Hagen, principal of Alina Design, Los Angeles, CA, U.S.A.; Habib Bajrami, principal of Bytehaus Studio, Toronto, Canada; Celia Martin, Walla Walla, WA, U.S.A. and Maria Roth, principal of Maria Roth Design, Vancouver, Canada The group provides extra eyes for reviewing possible members submissions, proofreading other support.

The project has attracted the attention of a several well-known practitioners within the creative community who also lend their help and support. These include Travis Tom, founder of the Creative Postcard Club, John McWade, publisher of Before & After magazine and Von Glitschka, principal of Glitschka Studios.

Creative Latitude was produced along side of the team's regular projects. As such, it required early mornings, late evenings and weekends to keep to the schedule. The benefit of having team members on three continents was the ability to have someone keeping an eye on things day and night. "When I'm sleeping, Cat Morley is awake and so is Nigel for part of the time. When they're tucked away, I'm on duty," said Neil Tortorella. He added, "The downside was meeting at 5:00 a.m., but losing a bit of sleep was certainly worth it." Online meetings were conducted with AOL's Instant Messenger private chat feature. Low-tech, but very effective. The software allows for printable logs of the meetings. A handy feature for documentation.

Nigel Gordijk said of the process, "Designing and producing the site was a matter of practising what we preach – working methodically with open channels of communication to take the hassle out of having three principals on three different continents. Despite being hard work, in the end it was a lot of fun." Catherine Morley added, "What more could a gal ask for, working with two talented guys around the clock and around the world, knowing that while one is sleeping, the other is awake working with me on content or managing the site."

Detailed information about the project can be found on the site at [www.creativelatitude.com](http://www.creativelatitude.com).