

Melissa Ernst

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Artfully Creative. Creatively Analytical.

Talented right brain-left brain marketing and design professional with 14+ years experience in entire creative process.

My ability to manage creative people while meeting corporate needs, combined with my passion for design, enable me to produce on-time, on-budget innovative projects that appeal to the customer.

Proven results generated by process improvement; it has been said that I "create organization out of chaos," resulting in significant efficiencies in both cost and project management.

Education

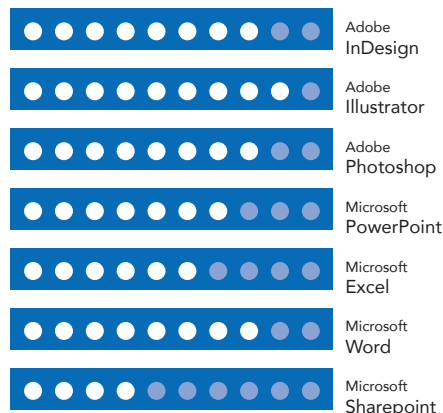
Bachelor of Arts, Journalism

cum laude • Graduate of Honors College

Minor: Graphic Design

Valparaiso University,

Skills



- Brand Development & Management
- Graphic Design & Art Direction
- In-Store Marketing & POP
- Print & Color Management
- POP & Corrugate Prototyping
- Large Format Print Capabilities
- Vendor Relationship Management
- Strategic Process Creation, Improvement & Implementation
- Project Workflow Management
- Process Improvement
- Budget Planning & Reporting
- Timeline Creation & Implementation
- Product & Print Fulfillment
- Communications Development

Professional Experience

CLAIRE'S, Hoffman Estates, IL
Senior Art Director, Claire's Brand

June 2014 – Present

- Create & execute in-store signing, POP, for a cohesive, international brand experience; manage and traffic all Claire's signage and advertising collateral.
- Direct external agencies on concept direction for North American and United Kingdom direct mail, periodical advertisements, in-store consumer catalogs, (including Holiday catalog), and PR event signing.
- Present conceptual design for 1500 stores to executive management and direct implementation across the chain.
- Consult with Procurement Team to ensure signing meets specifications and material requirements.
- Implement & update BrightSign Digital Signing to replace paper signing with strategically placed monitors in 30+ prototype stores.
- Perform process review and development within department to improve internal/external project flow.

OFFICE MAX, Naperville, IL
Visual Merchandising Manager (VMM)

Oct 2008 – May 2014

August 2013 – Present

- Developed visual presentation strategy for 28+ visual off-shelf placements for entire retail chain; Coordinated cross-functional marketing, branding & POP teams to maximize captivating visual presentations.
- Maximized shelf space for optimal visibility and maintenance, created binder presentation at end cap with 15% more products displayed.

Advertising Manager, Retail Graphics and POP

Oct 2008 – August 2013

- Developed in-store marketing and visual merchandising POP for 900+ store locations; ensured support of initiatives from design to final in-store execution.
- Responsible for \$1.2 million end cap flipbook and fixture roll-out, focused on corporate "value initiative." Coordinated with marketing & merchandising to ensure POP effectively supported value perception for high visibility, high impact project.
- Streamlined, documented, and executed POP projects. Greater efficiency saved \$300,000+ in shipping cost.
- Defined and executed print & color standards for all seasonal vendor corrugates and 50+ vendors. Sharing brand strategy and artwork templates enabled vendors to create their own corrugates for significant savings.
- Analyzed past data, organized purchase order coding, and revised 2011 Marketing and Seasonal POP budget for more realistic expenditures. Realized savings of over \$150,000 with improved planning and maintenance.
- Executed 2010 RACIE award-winning multi-level POP presentation: identified key store areas for POP, developed brief concepts, established parameters, worked with designers, and monitored through execution.

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Professional Experience continued

HONEY-CAN-DO INTERNATIONAL, Berkeley, IL

Feb 2008 – Oct 2008

Brand Manager and Senior Art Director

- Hired at this start-up with private-label home organization products to develop/implement strategic marketing plans with creative packaging for 200+ retail items sold in multiple retailers including Menards & Container Store.
- Created and supervised the execution & quality management of all package printing from China-based printers. Ensured brand standards were maintained while saving \$50,000 per product in print costs.
- Supervised transfer of all completed design files from private design firm to in-house design studio, for \$150,000+ annual cost savings. Established package design, website maintenance, & collateral creation.
- Created brand standards for corporate communications, marketing pieces, and tradeshow messaging.

HAVI Global Solutions, Downers Grove, IL

April 2007 – Jan 2008

Senior Art Director- HAVI Brand

- Hired to establish in-house art department and execute HAVI Global Solutions brand management.
- Developed/ implemented internal processes, established vendor list, and built relationships with print and color correction vendors for internal Design Studio.
- Researched and implemented digital asset management program. Documented branding guidelines.
- Project-managed internal communications from concept to completion in dynamic workplace.

ULTA, Inc., Romeoville, IL

May 2005 – Jan 2007

Senior Art Director

- Managed, designed and trafficked all in-store POP, seasonal signing, ad signage, private label packaging, brand collateral, and email blast/direct mail design. Managed staff Graphic Designer.
- Coordinated and executed 25+ concurrent, complex projects in fast-paced environment: assigned/ monitored projects, provided art direction, collaborated with multiple print vendors regarding job/print specs, timelines, and attended press-oks.
- Responsible for research & design for private label packaging for Ulta jar candles, ensured substrate and print standards, and helped improve merchant's packaging quality (metallic inks & upgraded corrugate).
- Tested/implemented new window banner size & substrate (saturn vinyl) for optimal store presentation.
- Ensured that print vendors provided print-ready files and eliminated pre-flight costs, saving \$300+ per job.

SEARS ROEBUCK and COMPANY, Hoffman Estates, IL

Sept 2000 – May 2005

Go to Market Manager (Sept 2003– May 2005)

- Monitored projects valued at \$5 million; acted as liaison between Merchandising, Creative/Production, and Marketing teams for signing creation and implementation.
- Received "Visual Merchandising Award" in 2004 for innovation of Sears' Home Services campaign.
- Project-managed storewide and licensed business jobs from concept to completion: designed signing campaigns based upon brief, hired photographers, attended/directed photo shoots, and went to print.
- Created and implemented monthly "Drive Time Marketing Plan" for 800 stores to streamline the execution of in-store programs; included visual merchandising & POP info, seasonal planograms and in-store change-outs. Resulted in significant labor savings of approximately 16,000 hours across 800 locations.

Graphic Designer

March 2001 – Sept 2003

Junior Graphic Designer

Sept 2000 – March 2001

- Prioritized 20+ projects per week. Strict compliance with deadlines and brief parameters.
- Created cohesive and engaging large-scale seasonal presentations for Back-to-School and Holidays.