

# Make a big impact

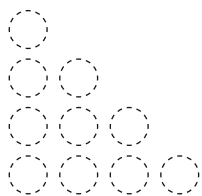
So will your campaign help you get work?

**Anne Wollenberg** speaks to three creatives who reaped big rewards

**From tweeting potential clients to sending them chocolates in exquisitely-designed packaging, there are numerous ways in which to catch a potential commissioner's attention.** But for all the website links and promotional mailers that might be saved by an impressed art director, plenty of others will be thrown away or simply forgotten. So how do you ensure your self-promo campaign is the one that hits the spot?

A combination of originality, talent and knowing your client is a good formula. But what makes an art director move from just admiring your work to commissioning it?

To find out, we've spoken to three creatives who used savvy self-promotional activity to snare new clients, as well as the people they won over. They've all gained work in very different ways: a handwritten gameshow netted Colin Kersley a sought-after internship at Mark Boulton Design and a concertina-style fold-out postcard brought Mark Ward illustration commissions for *The Guardian*, while Joakim Norman's chocolate business cards won him work for production company Lillasyster. Turn the page to find out just why these self-promo campaigns worked so successfully. →





## CASE STUDY 1

## MARK WARD



**Mark Ward**  
London-based designer and illustrator Ward is known for his Americana influences and skate- and snowboarding-inspired design style. Mark's work encompasses fashion, magazine covers, editorial design and installations, and he has undertaken projects for clients such as Nike, Pepsi, Stussy, Adidas, Red Bull and Burton Snowboards. [www.markwardstudio.com](http://www.markwardstudio.com)

**I produced a fold-out postcard mailer to send to potential clients – it's the size of a normal postcard, but it's also a concertina so it pulls out.** On one side there's a full-colour illustration, while the other contains various projects I've undertaken. A lot of people will just produce a standard postcard, which I imagine may get lost among the piles lying around on art directors' desks, so I hoped this would stand out.

It also gave me a canvas on which to showcase a number of different projects. I put in a variety of illustration-based work, some of it for high-profile clients I've worked with such as Nike. But I took advice from some illustrator friends who said I really needed to include something more personal. Illustrators may feel that everything they're showing needs to be commercial, but that's not true – some of your best work can be your personal creations. It's great to be able to show art directors that you have been trusted by others and demonstrate that you can deliver to their deadlines and briefs and produce something that's going to work for their brand, but there's definitely a balance



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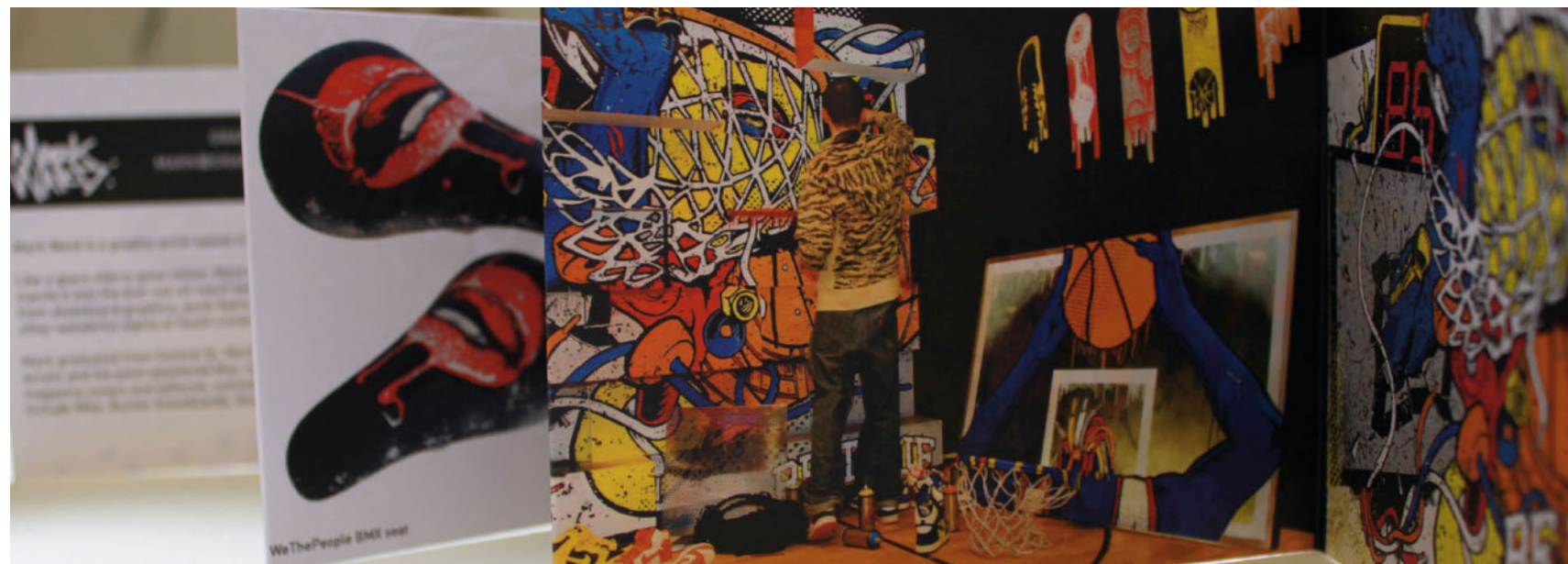
to be found. That's why I decided to dedicate one side of this mailer completely to personal work and the other side entirely to my professional projects.

After I posted the mailer out, I followed it up with emails as it's usually more polite than cold-calling, though I did call some clients where I thought it would be welcome. The response was really positive – sending this out to art editors led to me getting work for *The Guardian Guide* and other magazines, and I also got some more commissions in the skate and snowboarding industry. So it was definitely worth spending the money, although in retrospect I could have done with agreeing a better price for having it printed, as it wasn't as cost-efficient as it could have been.

If I produce another mailer, I don't think I'll do a full-on concertina, or maybe I might do another one but not make it quite so big. I've discovered that, with postcards, if your work is good enough then art directors may hold onto them and pin them up. Mine was quite cumbersome to stick up on the wall – it did the trick, though.



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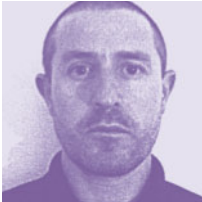
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## 01-03

Mark Ward's fold-out mailer. The aim was to **stand out among the stacks of standard postcards** art editors receive on a daily basis – Ward reports a positive response

## THE COMMISSION

# THE GUARDIAN GUIDE



**Stephen Jenkins**  
Stephen Jenkins is the co-art director of *The Guide*, *The Guardian's* weekly culture and listings supplement, and is passionate about championing good illustrators. After studying for a graphics MA at Saint Martins, he worked at *Dazed and Confused*, then at *British Vogue*. He currently splits his time between *The Guardian Guide* and *Wallpaper\** Magazine, as well as working on other ad-hoc projects. [www.guardian.co.uk/theguide](http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguide)

**Mark's mailer is absolutely brilliant – I've actually kept it on my desk, whereas a lot of what I get sent ends up going into the bin.** It blew me away simply because the artwork that he's put on it is absolutely incredible – that's what works at the end of the day.

I've commissioned Mark a few times now and I'd like to use him more often. He's done a few projects for *The Guardian Guide*, including several covers. The most popular was one that tied into our feature on the people who had ruined the decade. This was a typographic cover, and it was almost reminiscent of the stone lettering that *Monty Python's Flying Circus* used to use.

I often end up scratching my head over the things that illustrators send me, because I get these items in the post that have obviously been lovingly produced and really laboured over but the illustration style just isn't appropriate for what we do. So straightaway, you just think that if they can't even figure out what the basic style of the publication is, then how are they actually going to understand the brief if you do commission them?

I get electronic mailers from agencies about what people have been doing, and it's good to see illustration work being used in different ways. And it's so important to know your market. If you're an illustrator with a distinct style then really there will only be between 50 and 100 people it's going to be worth sending your self-promo items to.

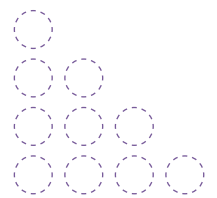


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**04**  
**The People Who Ruined The Decade**  
cover image for *The Guardian's Guide* supplement was a favourite with the paper's co-art director Stephen Jenkins



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**05**  
Mark Ward's illustration for a feature in *The Guardian Guide*. The piece imagined **what the music tastes of dictators might be like**

## CASE STUDY 2

## JOAKIM NORMAN



**Joakim Norman**  
Art director and designer Joakim Norman studied design at the Luleå University of Technology in northern Sweden before spending a year on the interactive art director program at Hyper Island, based in Stockholm. He then worked as an art director for Stockholm advertising agency Lowe Brindfors, part of Lowe Worldwide, before going freelance in 2010. [www.joakimnorman.se](http://www.joakimnorman.se)

**I decided to send chocolate business cards because I wanted potential clients to feel that a working relationship with me would be uncomplicated and fun – the opposite of being artsy and esoteric.** Also, as I'm mainly a digital designer, I wanted to show I could handle traditional design disciplines such as typography and simple packaging.

I took some time trying to figure out the whole concept, narrowing it down to just using chocolate bars as business cards and giveaways, and then other candy-inspired items to complement those. I decided against being nostalgic and imitating retro chocolate styles – it was tempting, but being contemporary was a key ingredient in achieving the feel I was aiming for.

As for the design, I started by creating the pattern that's reused across the various items, and added the typography. During the whole process, I probably designed about 50 different styles for the

items before I chose the final versions. I spent quite a lot of money, mainly on buying a whole load of chocolate to repackage.

The design was printed on thick, luscious paper. I fitted about 40 copies of the packaging on one piece of paper and spent hours cutting them out. Then came the repackaging process, which was trickier, and I realised I needed to include a warning about nuts because some people have allergies.

Some bigger chocolates contained a Willy Wonka-style 'golden ticket' with a discount on my hours, and I transported the whole kit inside pink paper boxes that I gave as gifts to clients. I think it was successful because it goes beyond what people expect. As far as I know everyone loved it, and pretty much everybody was surprised by the effort I put into it. There's no hating chocolate and candy. Nobody's going to look at that pink chocolate bar and think: "Hmm, that typeface should be better kerned."



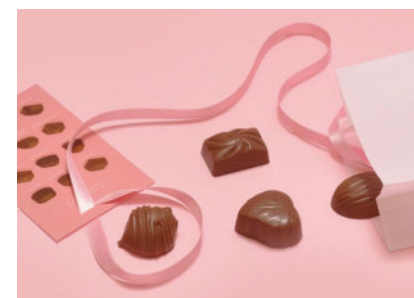
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Joakim Norman created promotional chocolates complete with bespoke packaging: "Most freelancers give you a nice portfolio and a cool-looking business card and that's it"

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Joakim Norman bought hundreds of chocolate bars and repackaged them while **perfecting his self-promotional concept**

03-04

Effective self-promotion isn't about perfect design, it's more about **making the right impression**, says Joakim Norman

## THE COMMISSION

# LILLASYSTER PRODUKTION



**Jonas Mattsson**  
Jonas Mattsson is a partner, CEO and producer at Lillasyster Produktion (meaning Little Sister Production), a production company based in Stockholm, Sweden. Lillasyster produces commercials, music videos and motion graphics. The company's ethos is to create high-quality films that look and feel good, including work for DJs Swedish House Mafia and TV shows *Efterlyst* and *99 Things To Do Before You Die*.  
[www.lillasyster.se](http://www.lillasyster.se)

I really smiled when Joakim first gave me his promotional mailer. As soon as I saw it, I figured out that he must be a guy with a great sense of humour and that he was going to be perfect for some of the projects we had going on. And the chocolate he included with the mailer even tastes good as well.

Joakim has been involved in two of our projects so far. We chose him to work with us at Lillasyster because of his style and great ideas. The first project he worked on was for a classic Swedish television show called *Efterlyst*, which is a collaboration between the channel TV3 and the Swedish police. The brief that we gave to Joakim was for him to update the graphical parts of the show, including the logotype, bumpers (voiceover segments) and so on. Joakim helped us develop an exciting new hi-tech look for the show's visual identity, with broken glass that appeared to be floating in the air. We had the letters in the logo built as a circuit to create that hi-tech feeling, then we added the circling blue lights from a police car behind the letters. We shot the blue lights in the studio with a lot of smoke to get a realistic look, and we also added some optical flares in post-production. On top of that, we added broken glass built in 3D. We wanted the viewer to feel the logo was reflected in the glass, which was quite a challenge to get right. As a nice extra detail, we added some fingerprints on the glass.

The second project we commissioned Joakim to work on involved a brand-new TV show called *99 Things To Do Before You Die*, which features Erik and Mackan, two popular Swedish TV hosts. The programme sees the pair travelling all around the world and doing various crazy things: climbing a volcano, being a superhero for the day, sleeping at a cemetery, farting in outer space and so on. The brief for this project was to assist us in creating a unique world for Erik and Mackan, and Joakim helped us to devise a wonderful visual world that was inspired by retro movie posters.



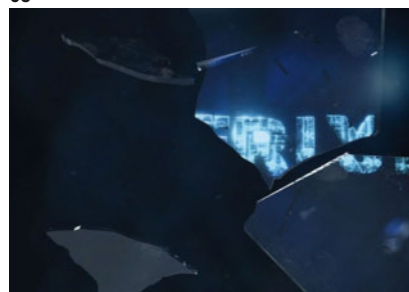
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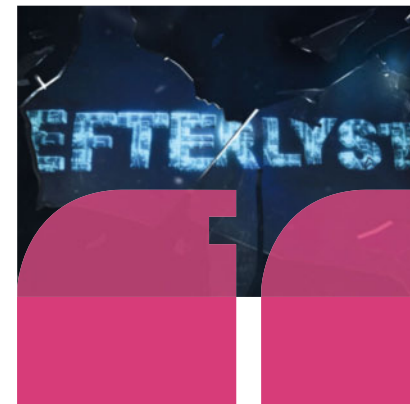


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Joakim Norman's **glass- and circuit-effect lettering** for Lillasyster's updated graphical identity for Swedish show *Efterlyst*

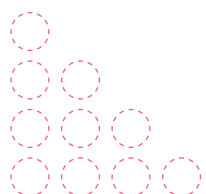


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05-07  
Swedish TV show *99 Things To Do Before You Die*. Joakim Norman helped Lillasyster create its visual identity



As soon as I saw the project I knew Joakim would be perfect for some work we had on. 



## CASE STUDY 3

## COLIN KERSLEY



**Colin Kersley**  
Illustrator, designer and photographer Kersley graduated with a degree in fine art from the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff (UWIC). He pursued his passion for illustration by producing T-shirts under the alias Alternative Aesthetics, before landing an apprenticeship at web design agency Mark Boulton Design. [www.alternativeaesthetics.co.uk](http://www.alternativeaesthetics.co.uk)

Mark Boulton Design requested a handwritten application for their apprenticeship, leaving things pretty open as to what candidates could create. I knew I wanted to make my application completely different from anything else they might receive. The main driving force came from wanting to convey my personality and what I could bring to the company – I wanted to get the job without seeming needy. So, with this in mind, I broke down each thing I wanted to tell them: who I am, why I wanted the job, what I'd do to get the job, a few questions for them and a little something extra.

I thought the best way to break this up would be a system of rounds, which led

me to think of a gameshow format. I created host's cards to present the basic information, and also provided five envelopes containing bonus items for each round. I made full use of my illustration skills to convey my personality and skill in the hope my application would catch their eye. I told them as much about myself as I could, as openly as I could, in the hope they would think I was a good fit.

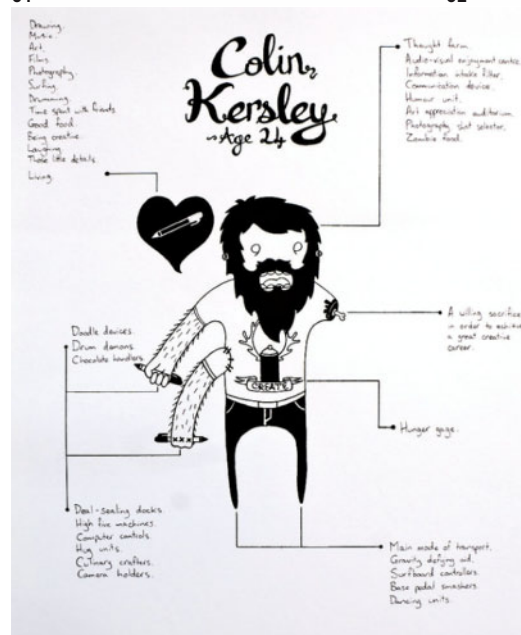
It took just over a week to make – I was furiously working until 3am every night to get the application just right. Everything was hand-drawn or written and the cards and envelopes were all handmade. All in all, the application cost me about £10 for several sheets of A2 black and white card, double-

sided Sellotape, several pens and one Superman toy. I wasn't happy with sending something I'd put so much time and effort in through the post, so messaged Mark Boulton Design on Twitter and asked if I could drop by and hand it to them.

This is the first self-promotional project I've created. Most agencies require some form of experience, which I haven't had – this is why I put so much into the application for this apprenticeship. It paid off and I got the job. I'm blogging throughout my apprenticeship ([www.markboultondesign.com/blog](http://www.markboultondesign.com/blog)) to share my experiences and I hope other agencies follow suit in taking on their own apprentices.



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01-03  
Colin Kersley's application to become an apprentice at Mark Boulton Design took on a gameshow format

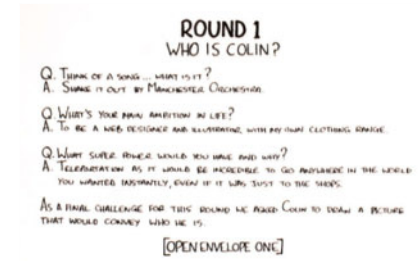
04-07  
Colin Kersley used his illustration skills in his application, but broke into a new area with the web agency



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## THE JOB

# MARK BOULTON DESIGN



**Emma Boulton**  
Emma Boulton is director and user experience researcher at Mark Boulton Design, the studio she runs with husband Mark, which specialises in user-centred design and simple, beautiful solutions. Emma is also director of their publishing imprint, Five Simple Steps. She previously spent seven years working for the BBC and worked in online advertising prior to that. [www.markboultondesign.com](http://www.markboultondesign.com)

**We're very keen on craft and on good design skills at the agency.** Mark Boulton is very much known for his clean and simple design style, and he comes from a traditional background. So one of the things we wanted from our apprentice was to find someone who had that innate design ability. We weren't necessarily interested in finding people who already knew HTML and CSS, because you can learn those. Colin is clearly a very talented illustrator and artist who didn't have much web knowledge to start with, and he's been throwing himself into everything we've asked him to do. He'd clearly put a lot of thought into what he wrote on the application and how it was packaged, and it was full of personality – it had us all in fits of laughter.

He started off working within the publishing side of our business, Five Simple Steps. We launched this imprint as a side-project after Mark wrote and self-published his first book – we've had lots of people asking to publish books with us. Mark's brother, Nick, comes from a print background and designs all of our books. So Colin spent the first three months of his contract learning that business end-to-end, including being taught how to typeset books and to use e-publishing formats. Now the next stage is getting stuck into the web side of the business, which is the majority of what we do. We do a lot of work for news and media organisations, often working on content-heavy websites, and Colin is going to be involved with that kind of work in the next stage of his training.

Colin's application has attracted a lot of publicity. It went viral after we blogged about it and thousands of people have viewed it, which is really positive for Colin. We're really glad we employed him.

## CITIZENS THEATRE

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David Greig's wildly imaginative musical comedy returns for a run at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2011.

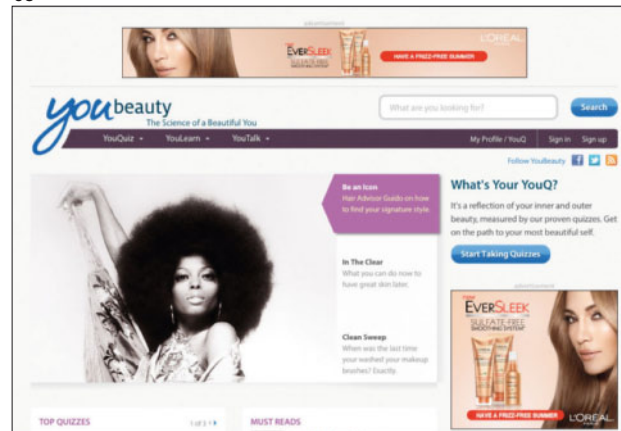
**TRAVERSE THEATRE**  
Traverse 2  
4-28 August 2011



**ORPHEUS IN THE UNDERWORLD**  
8 Sep 2011 to 11 Sep 2011

BOOK NOW MORE INFO

08



09

**08**  
Colin Kersey landed an **apprenticeship at Mark Boulton Design** where they recently rebuilt the Citizen's Theatre website

**09**  
Apprentice Colin has been learning every aspect of web design. **One of the company's major projects has been You Beauty**

We were looking for innate design ability over experience – you can learn HTML and CSS