APDF is a business management organization for design firms

Design firms join APDF to give their leaders access to an unequalled resource of business information, expertise and experience. Professional insights, successes, failures, challenges and inspiration are shared in confidence between members from multiple design disciplines, all time-strapped design business owners and managers walking in the same shoes. APDF is peer-to-peer interaction at its most valuable and effective.

Business focus:
Practical, tactical and actionable information and expertise about what contributes to maximum design business success

Top-tier peer-to-peer networking:
Only design firm owners, top-tier managers and decision makers, all intensely focused on improving their business performance

Established and growth-ready firms who mean business:
Member firms’ staff size ranges from 5 to 300; in business between 5 to 30+ years

Valuable cross pollination of ideas and expertise:
Members represent many different design disciplines including identity, experience, interactive, environmental, brand, packaging, interaction, innovation, product, engineering and industrial design

Members gain access to:
• Highly valuable benchmarking and best-practices resources
• Unique, confidential peer-to-peer information exchange
• The equivalent of a large expert advisory board of peers
• Relevant, timely resources specifically tailored to them

The APDF Exchange

The APDF Exchange offers platforms for peers to exchange best practices information and learning from thought leaders and each other. We then share the results of these exchanges for the benefit of the membership.

Exchanges cover one of four key topics per quarter:

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Events:
Four quarterly Exchanges—focused, topical events with outside expert presentations and intense, organized peer-to-peer sharing.

Webinars:
One-hour webinars expand on the topics covered at live events. Presenters include members and invited outside experts.

Discussion groups:
Immediate, daily peer-to-peer feedback and interaction between members takes place within the APDF Listserv group where members ask questions, share experiences, test ideas and inquire about timely issues.

Surveys:
Insider information and benchmarking tools including a financial performance survey, a unique tool for managing and predicting key financial metrics, and quarterly “temperature checks” that cover key indicators such as hiring, work in the pipeline, profit, etc.

Sharing:
In addition to the survey results, members have access to summary notes of live event presentations, webinar recordings and archive of Listserv discussions on the APDF website.

“I didn’t have time for an MBA, so I joined APDF.”
Mark VanderKlipp
President, Corbin Design, Traverse City

“The advice I received from the APDF Listserv helped me in making changes to the way I do business. By implementing the APDF member recommendations, my firm will see savings worth many years of APDF dues.”
Andy Moulds
Principal, MindFlow Design, San Diego

“APDF is unique because of an unbelievable level of sharing and transparency. Members know exactly what you’re facing in your business.”
Ronna Chisholm
President, CFO, Dossier, Vancouver

“I believe that APDF has had direct impact on our firm. APDF members care about the same things I care about. We encounter similar business issues and somebody has the answer.”
Bethany Haley
President, Brand Strategist, Savage, Houston

“In the early days of Cooper, we were figuring out how to make our business work while pioneering the new discipline of interaction design. Every APDF member we met was generous with insight into their best practices. Today, we still rely on APDF for continual inspiration on the business of design.”
Sue Cooper
CEO, Cooper, San Francisco

“APDF provides a forum for sharing a wealth of knowledge and insights that only design firm owners and leaders can provide. APDF is also an excellent resource for developing the next generation of leaders within our management team.”
Gary Baker
President, Baker Brand Communications, Santa Monica

“APDF offers a welcoming and open environment to discuss business issues with others that are walking in my same shoes.”
Brian Matt
Founder and CEO, Altitude, Boston

“I took the advice APDF offered at an Exchange and doubled my workload. The people and friends I made at APDF are close to my heart and always will be.”
Andrew Cantor
President, Cantor Design, New York

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