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BIG Data

Smart Lighting Unlocks the Door

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Double Time

These multi-tasking lighting pros balance business and design

The lighting “cross-trainer” is somewhat elusive—there’s no preset LinkedIn option to describe a professional role that combines design work and financial management, for example. In fact, these skillsets are often associated with near-opposite titles: say, *lighting designer* versus *CEO*.

The juggling of more than one role—especially ones with opposite origins—can be demanding, and it’s certainly not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. But by experiencing the industry from more than one vantage point, the dual-purpose lighting professional benefits from a big-picture perspective.

We checked in with three accomplished lighting designers who have now incorporated business savvy into their everyday work. Here, each discusses what the balancing act entails, touching on topics ranging from continuing education to task delegation and the pursuit of passion.

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In a nutshell: My role involves thought leadership facing out to the design industry, as well as financial responsibility for monthly and quarterly targets.

On the balancing act: When I found myself doing more and more team and financial management, I started taking MBA classes. The skillset I needed was very different than the one I had been developing thus far.

Which comes first? Project work often demands immediate action as I work with clients on dynamic and time-sensitive issues. As a designer for the last 20 years, I have to remind myself that my duties outside of project work are equally important to the firm. Resisting the urge to fiddle with mock-ups when there is business development to do is hard! I got into lighting because I am fascinated by photons, not spreadsheets, but I also realized being a talented lighting designer wasn’t going to be my last stop.

The best business advice he’s received: A brilliant business consultant once told us about managing our own expectations and being able to delegate work. He said, “Expect it to be 10 percent wrong and 20 percent different than the way you would have done it.”

The best lighting advice: Don’t stare at the sun.

The secret to success: Set goals for yourself and your team, and be adaptable when they don’t go exactly as planned.