



As a user-experience pathfinder, **Uday Gajendar, IDSA**, works on cross-product initiatives (life cycles, color/print workflows, etc.) within the Common UI team at Adobe. He earned design degrees at the University of Michigan and Carnegie Mellon University. His experience includes designing Web-based financial systems, healthcare software and enterprise integration tools at various Silicon Valley firms. He has also spoken at conferences for IDSA and DMI and at the annual Information Architecture Summit. Gajendar's latest diversion is reading the classic Dune novels while trying to plow through his Netflix queue.



# UDAY GAJENDAR

## **1. Has the recent surge in design popularity made a difference in your world? If so, how?**

Personally, it's made it easier for me to describe to non-designers what I do and why it's important. Target, Apple and Nike have nice examples that ordinary folks can relate to. Professionally, it has raised the bar in terms of the priority of design as a total success factor and the level of design quality expected in products, services and experiences that we increasingly demand.

## **2. If you weren't a designer, what would you be? Why?**

Design is my fundamental mode of being and thought. Sure, I aspire to be a comic book artist, philosopher or gadget guru, but no matter what, my internal design sense would be on and active.

## **3. Forget good design; what is great design?**

Forget great. Let's talk about creating the supreme masterpiece: fulfilling your inventive, empathic, creative potential to produce something that resonates with the soul and trembles in the mind long after you've interacted with it, taking on mythical qualities.

## **4. What new or different technique have you used recently to solve a problem?**

Coming from e-business software, I'm accustomed to a user-centered design methodology, which is systematic and rigorous, sometimes to a fault. At Adobe, I've used vision-inspired design, based upon imagination and intuiting what would be best for a user, to anticipate new ideas. Design axioms, manifestoes and painterly sketches can inspire a product team and uncover missed problems.

## **5. What's on your iPod?**

Which model? For my Nano, I just loaded up an eclectic mix from Godsmack to Sarah McLachlan to Public Enemy. But mainly electronica and vocal trance, like BT and Delerium. Whatever helps me achieve simulfow.

## **6. How did you come to be an industrial designer?**

It was pure serendipity. I was getting bored with engineering at UT Austin when a friend told me about product design. Meanwhile, I got a catalog for RISD's summer pro-

gram, so I signed up for a short course in ID. I loved it right away: it blended high-tech and artistic skills and dealt with lifestyles, and you could make cool stuff. I then went to the University of Michigan to earn my BFA in ID. As the Internet boomed, I migrated from industrial design to interaction design.

## **7. How would you use design to address the aftermath of an earthquake or hurricane?**

Strategic design planning could alleviate arcane levels of bureaucracy toward a more human-centric path of responsiveness: lines of communication, degrees of control and power, avenues of funding, etc. Next, post-disaster scenes are a huge opportunity to apply smart, efficient, sustainable/renewable designs for temporary housing, backup phones, ad hoc water treatment, etc.

## **8. How would you compare yourself to an architect, engineer or interior designer?**

It's easy to say that I deal with products, architects make buildings, engineers do machinery and interior designers arrange furniture and lighting. But fundamentally these professions all deal with design and facets of the human experience of the artificial world. Each is informed by a differing focus. We can learn much from each other; there needs to be more cross-pollination.

## **9. What's your biggest "designer" pet peeve?**

"Tom Kelly this, Tim Brown that." But seriously what gets me is how everyone thinks that interaction design is limited to digital media when in reality its principles and methods can be used for anything from toothpicks to logos. There's also the false belief that simply knowing Flash or Photoshop makes you a designer.

## **10. Make a prediction about the future of design.**

This is a trick question because design inherently is the future. But I do anticipate a few trends, such a shift from design skills to design sense. Mythology may empower methodology. And lifestyle will be augmented by life cycles. These terms suggest that design will become a more hybridized activity.