Pre-Workshop Question and Responses (Unfiltered)

**Question**
What abilities or characteristics make lighting designers successful? You may list as many or as few abilities and/or characteristics as you like. Please use an asterisk to indicate your top three choices.

**Unfiltered Responses**

**Response #1:**
- Ability to think with both sides of the brain. Be able to design (think aesthetic) as well as engineer solutions.
- Ability to juggle 12 different issues as they consider a design problem, and develop a solution that satisfies as many of those satisfactorily as possible.
- Ability to think in three dimensions, detailing lighting into the architectural composition, producing a system that delivers a three-dimensional output of light that illuminates the space and objects and people in a pleasing way, and keep annoying light OUT of the eyes of the users.
- Knowledge of how buildings go together.
- Someone who cares about people and the environment, not just their own ego.

**Response #2**
- Perseverance
- Broad-based knowledge and experience
- Unbound by convention
- Deep understanding of lighting
- An appreciation of the aesthetic
- Good and regular Communication
- Understanding of their client’s needs (not always aligned with desires)

**Response #3**
- **Interest in combination of art and science**
- Interest in architecture and environment
- Interest in culture (fine arts, theatre, music, dance-)
- **Visual arts skills – ability to visualize and represent 3D special ideas**
- Independent thinking
- Self motivation
- Self promotion
- Curiosity
- Teamwork
- **Ability to follow and develop other’s ideas, and sometimes transcend them**
- Business savvy
- Computer knowledge
- Math skills
- Understanding of psychology

**Response #4**
- **A working understanding of the science of light.**
- **A practical understanding of lighting as an aesthetic and psychological design element in the built environment.**
- **An working understanding of the impact of light - its generation and application - on living systems (humans, animals, ecosystems, etc.).**
- **A breadth of knowledge in the allied built environment disciplines - architecture, HVAC, electrical, acoustics, etc.**
- There are many others, but ultimately, they all stem from these.

**Response #5**
- **Visualizing the space in 3d**
- Understanding of energy codes
- Controls - all types from wall dimmers to extensive systems
- Appropriate controls for the application
- **Appropriate sources / fixtures for the application** (adjustable accent vs. wall wash, etc. halogen vs. low wattage ceramic metal halide.)
- General understanding of daylighting / electric lighting integration
- General understanding of daylighting principals
- **Communication of your design - written, spoken, visual, etc**
- Experience

**Response #6**
- Creativity and a deep interest in lighting are a must. Other skills we value include knowledge of lighting theory, sketch communication, command of the English language, computer graphics, CAD and calculations. These as listed ... are pretty much in the order of importance.
- With the exception of a few big engineering firms which have lighting groups in house, lighting design companies are small businesses. Thus I would add that a seldom seem but much desired attribute in a lighting designer would be business skills such as “good with money” and “sales ability”
Response #7

➢ Above and beyond the importance of creativity, exposure to products and technical prowess in the coordination, documentation and application of lighting equipment are issues of:

➢ Industry knowledge (understanding the typical “circle of life” – who are all the industry players and what are their short and long term motivations with respect to the designer and their specific project?),

➢ Contract knowledge (understanding the reasons for the design/structure of the LD contract, the client’s motivations, the appropriateness of the contract for the client and then knowing how to apply and enforce the agreement)

➢ Industry Connectivity (building the necessary bridges to be able to control, influence and/or monitor all of the various players in the industry on a job by job basis).

Response #8

In order of importance:

➢ ** a thorough understanding of and training in illumination engineering
➢ ** a thorough understanding of architectural design theory, architectural history, and methods and means of construction
➢ ** training in communication skills: drawing, writing, speaking with colleagues and project team members, etc

Response #9

➢ ** Knowledge (design, technical, international)
➢ ** Understanding of architecture and space
➢ ** Overview of the lighting industry (design and manufacturing)

Response #10

➢ ** Desire - The designer cannot view this profession as a job or even a career, they must have a desire to embrace it as a life. The best designers are looking at lighting in every aspect of their life. When they enter a new space, while they are on vacation, everywhere! Then they apply those subtle things to their designs. Most take this desire to also volunteer in IES, ILDA, or at a local theater. They explore photography or sketching to learn about light and shadow. Lighting becomes part of who they are. This is a passion that the designer must have with-in themselves. It can be fostered, nurtured, and expanded by good teachers at every level of their career, but they must be open to it.

➢ ** Communication skills - Nothing in this industry happens in a bubble and the best projects take lots of communication. From owners, architects, engineers, representatives, manufacturers, distributors, contractors, and many more the best designers know how to effectively communicate their ideas and listen to others ideas.

➢ ** Fearless creativity - Some people have a confidence in their ability that allows them think creatively and differently. They are not discouraged by having some ideas rejected. Rather they have the ability to take the criticism and utilize it to make better suggestions. They think beyond just light and look at shadows, textures, and objects making the most of their creative abilities.

➢ Of course there are other attributes such as technical ability, computer skills, etc. These types of things are easily taught. The qualities that make the best designers are are partly natural and partly inspired.

➢ I think the question is different when asking "what makes the best entry level lighting designer" or "what qualities provide the entry level designer the best start in the industry." That was not your question so I will let that go for another email.

Response #11

It is my belief that the most fundamental quality or aspect of success for a lighting designer (or almost any profession, for that matter) is confidence. While this may sound simplistic, the road to this confidence takes an investment of perseverance, commitment, ingenuity, frustration, near surrender ... the list goes on. When you know you’ve tried every possible avenue to meet a challenge and you’ve come upon a solution that you truly believe in, you are ready to engage the client in an informed and meaningful discussion. While my college education did not give me every answer (twenty plus years later there are only more questions), it challenged me sufficiently to learn what hard work and clear thinking could accomplish. I have had the opportunity of observing young designers faced with a seemingly insurmountable obstacle have the confidence to put their head down and continue trying another way and another, until at last progress in some form is made. I have also had the opportunity of observing world class teammates (architects, fellow engineers, owners) have the confidence to challenge the status quo, or perhaps more bravely admit that they didn’t know something and eagerly ask to learn...to the benefit of the whole team. I certainly don’t profess to be performing at a supreme level of confidence at all times, and others I admire are not either - it’s the edge of unease that helps me know I’m pushing my own boundaries. It’s awfully nice to come out the other side with something that’s going to be meaningful to the client and the team.