

EPIISODE 076

INDUSTRIAL LIGHT & MAGIC

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Amy Hood and Jennifer Hood, Hoodzpah

AND

Rob Bredow and Jenny Ely, Industrial Light & Magic

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

ARMIN VIT

Hi, this is Armin Vit and welcome to episode number 76 of The Follow-up.

One quick announcement before we get into this week's episode: As we reached the milestone episode of 75 recently we decided that our podcast would be more beneficial if it were open to anyone that wanted to listen to it instead of being limited to Brand New subscribers. Starting with this episode you can share it more freely as well as access it on Apple and Spotify podcasts. Links to each of those platforms can be found on your account page on Brand New. For anyone listening to The Follow-up for the first time: Welcome! And we hope you enjoy it.

This week we are following up on Industrial Light and Magic, a leading visual effects company serving the motion picture, television, streaming, commercial production, and attraction industries. Founded by George Lucas to develop his own, previously unattainable effects for Star Wars, ILM began working with other filmmakers and studios after that trilogy, with early movies like E.T., Young Sherlock Holmes,

and Terminator 2: Judgment Day setting new standards of what was possible. The company now has over 1,200 employees across 6 studios worldwide in San Francisco, Vancouver, London, Mumbai, Singapore, and Sydney and has created effects for more than 350 feature films and television shows while being nominated for 50 Academy Awards, winning 16 of them, among other Emmy and BAFTA accolades as it nears 50 years of being in business.

The project, designed by Orange County, CA-based Hoodzpah was posted on Brand New on June 13, 2023. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast076 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast076, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Amy Hood and Jen Hood, Co-Founders and Principals of Hoodzpah; Rob Bredow, Senior Vice President of Creative Innovation for Lucasfilm and Chief Creative Officer of ILM; and Jenny Ely, Production Manager of the Office of the Chief Creative Officer of ILM.

In this conversation we hear about the challenges, as well as the benefits, of having one of the most creative companies as a client, which could be a potential nightmare but as Hoodzpah discovered early on, the ILM crew was eager to contribute and share their expertise without stepping on their toes. We also get a glimpse into the difficulty of the brief where the ILM wanted something like what it had but different but the same but new but... you get the gist. In the end, despite Hoodzpah knowing it was a relatively small fish in a sea of bigger competitors for the job, they stuck with what they do best, which is an obsession for design, pop culture, good vibes, and, unsurprisingly, a methodical approach and process to get things done.

Now, let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Amy, Jen, Rob, and Jenny.

BRYONY I can't think of many businesses that have had an impact on my parents, my siblings, and my children with similar impact for all. Founded by George Lucas, Industrial Light & Magic has fed our collective imaginations for almost five decades, and today we get the inside scoop on the recent rebrand.

Rob, Jenny, Amy and Jen, welcome to The Follow-Up.

HOODZPAH Hi.

ROB Thanks for having us.

BRYONY If you don't mind, since we have a larger group today, briefly introducing yourselves.

JENNY Hi, I'm Jenny Ely. I am a Production Manager at Industrial Light & Magic, which basically just means I'm a project manager for the Chief Creative Officers office, which is Rob Bredow.

ROB And I'm Rob Bredow. I'm the Chief Creative Officer of Industrial Light & Magic. I run the creative and the technology, kind of the innovation side of the company and I got to help with this rebrand.

HOODZPAH I'm Jen.

And I'm Amy and we're with Hoodzpah. We were the creative brand studio that worked with the amazing ILM team and are still pinching ourselves about it.

BRYONY Wonderful. Rob, I understand Industrial Light & Magic is nearing its 50th anniversary, which seems like a wonderful time to take stock, review, and perhaps rebrand. Can you share with us the internal thinking and what those conversations were that led to moving forward with this brand exploration?

ROB We looked at our current branding and how we were presenting ourselves to the world that had lasted almost 20 years before this rebrand. And it was developed in a time where we were one studio

in one country, we were actually all based in San Francisco. It was a different era in the early two thousands than where we were today. Today we're in five countries in San Francisco, in Vancouver, in Sydney, in London, in Mumbai. We have artists all around the world and we really wanted to lean into the values that were driving ILM today, which some of them have stood the test of time for the entire near 50 years. Some of those values have continued to evolve over time and the variety of people that are represented from all these different countries are really a lot greater than what we had.

We wanted that sense of inclusiveness to be front and center of our updated brand as we were looking forward. And then there were some practical things like what our logo looked like next to other logos as it gotten bolder and stronger and those kind of things. We knew we wanted to keep that in mind as we were looking towards the future.

BRYONY And Jenny, once that decision was made, what were the initial steps taken internally to determine how you would find a creative partner, and what were you looking for in that creative partner?

JENNY I think as far as initial steps go, it was probably pretty straightforward like anyone else would do. We went out to some design firms and asked to see a proposal. We sort of said, this is what we're looking for. We went to some firms that Rob knew of, some that Greg Grusby, our Director of PR and Communication for all of ILM. We just went out to a few different places, some really big firms, some smaller and asked to see, let us look at your portfolio and see what you can do for us. I think the really difficult and unique part about this was ILM is difficult and unique. We're a very well-known worldwide company in visual effects. Probably anybody around the world who's seen a movie, has seen a movie with something that we did in it, but we are also very much special and unique, so we didn't want just a corporate branded logo slapped together that didn't really have any thought behind it—but we also still needed a team that was very professional and had a really strong portfolio.

So it was kind of looking for that unique balance of someone who their culture and their values matched what we are, which was the inclusivity, but also the professionalism in finding the best fit that we could. We narrowed it down to I think two, maybe three. We shared those portfolios with some of our internal creative stakeholders and looked at process, a lot of what the design firms were saying that they could do. It wasn't just what does your portfolio look like? It was how did you come to this decision and how did you work with your client to come up with what you did? And then that's how we narrowed it down.

BRYONY A whole internal process that led to finding Hoodzpah. But I want to know—

JENNY Yes.

BRYONY —how was that process on your end Amy and Jen? in receiving this call and what steps did you take in order to eventually gain the project?

HOODZPAH I have such a visceral memory of getting the email and being like... you read it, and then you reread it. You're like, am I reading this right? Is this ILM in our inbox? Could it be? Sure enough it was! Jen was outside taking a break and I ran outside. I was like, Jen! ILM emailed! We were just so excited. We are huge pop culture gluttons. We just love behind the scenes. We love how movies are made. We love anything creative focused in on TV or movies. We're so into, we already were very familiar with the company as I think almost anyone is. It's pretty much a household name. Getting that call, just want to make sure you're ready and you're putting your best foot forward. So it was all hands on deck to get a really, really great proposal that showed off what we could do.

We knew we would be the smaller studio in the mix. We were guaranteed they're reaching out to Pentagram and Koto, some of these really great studios and we're going to have to really prove why they should go with maybe the lesser known agency—showing we're

big fans of what you do. We understand what you do to a degree, although we can't wait to learn more from you all straight from the horse's mouth. But yeah, we went through a bunch of Zoom calls, which was really fun, just testing how do we get along over the phone and that kind of thing, and it felt really fluid.

Rob and Jenny, you can chime in too. You all were saying, yeah, we need to rebrand, but we have this great history and we immediately were like, we cannot lose the bulb and the cog. We cannot lose the history and the recognition that's there. And they were like, yes, yes, you're getting it that we need to pivot ourselves for the future but also cherish and celebrate the storied past. How do we balance those two? I think that was something that we all really jived with, was yeah, how do we do that?

ROB The process that Hoodzpah pitched, and actually the last two companies that we were down to were both very values-based design processes where it was really about trying to get to the heart of what makes the company tick, and then design a system around that to try to be as reflective of the values of the company as possible. And that was really important to have it driven by the theme of what our values are. That included the legacy because it's such a rich legacy and the phrase that Patricia in human resources who came up with a phrase, "this needs roots and wings, it needs roots that go deep and it needs wings to take us forward". So we want to be looking both directions as we build this up. That was really important and one of the things that to Hoodzpah winning the project.

BRYONY I would like to know from both of the teams, what was the structure of the teams—of the people involved in the day-to-day—and the decision process at ILM, I imagine was not an easy one, so what needed to be done in that regards? And from the creative, what areas of creative were involved, how large of a team? And the overall timeline of the project.

ROB The first thing we told everyone as we started this because we've got 2000 people in the company, we said, "we're going to make all of you 100% happy. You're going to love every aspect of this." [Laughter]

BRYONY Wow.

ROB But you're right, figuring out how to involve the right number of people was something we were thinking a lot about from the beginning. Jenny, project managed this from the very beginning and the idea was to be as inclusive as possible. We opened it up to everyone in the company who wanted to participate in these focus groups, and we did this interview process which they can fill you more in on, which was fantastic, and we really wanted to get to the heart of the values of the company from everybody who worked in the company who wanted to participate in that. And draw as many of those stories out as possible that could drive this. And then it did filter up. We did have teams on top of that, you can't go to 2000 people for every iteration. We had a core design team that was less than 10 of us.

It was made up of key creatives around the company, representing all the countries that we work in. That was the hub where all of the day-to-day decisions would be made. Every few weeks we'd have a new iterative round. We would sit down and discuss the pros and cons and what notes we were going to go back to Hoodzpah with; and then if there were tiebreakers, I'd help tie break those and help manage it from that perspective. But in general, that small group was very cohesive.

There were two times that we perhaps quite dangerously shared the current work in progress designs, the leading designs with the whole company to survey them and to get their input on it as it was being done. Which is I think pretty unconventional in the process, but we were telling people the why we were doing it, what it was about, what values we'd heard back from them, how these values were being reflected in the iconography, and the fonts, and everything. And we

let people vote on it. What do you think? that input really aligned with what the core group was thinking, but it was really nice to involve people in the process.

JENNY Rob was right, it was pretty cohesive all the way up. That was something that shocked me about this process and made me re-energized and so proud to be part of this company. I mean, how often do, like Rob said, 2000 people across the globe from all these different cultures really align with what they're saying. I felt that I think maybe Jen and Amy did too in almost every single group and meeting, everyone we talked to had the same feelings about what our values were and what it to work for this company. So, the process was not as painful, I think, as it could have been at all. Definitely from our side.

HOODZPAH Oh, a hundred percent. I think you're right. We had never worked with a company that was so in tune with who they were collectively, and it was really pretty cool because what we did was we took the most input from the company and dove the deepest into who they were and what they were obviously at the beginning. And everyone had a chance to speak before we started designing to really make sure they felt like they were heard before decisions were made.

Knowing that we were able to use things that people had said across the company from all different levels to make a case for why our design decisions then fit the brief. Not just from a perspective of two people at the top but, from a perspective of the whole group. And it was really impressive to see everybody had those same general pillars of "this is what we need to reflect and communicate" because oftentimes as brand designers, you're coming in more because there's a crisis of identity, and you're trying to solve and create these pivots and figure these things out. Well, luckily ILM doesn't have that at all. They're very clear on who they are, and very proud, and there's a very positive culture. It was more just how do we now capture this lightning in a bottle, and show it in a way that's really reflective?

BRYONY How long did the project take from beginning to end?

JENNY Our timeline I would say was fluid [laughter]. Because we had an idea of how long we wanted it to take, and Jen and Amy laid out this great timeline based on phases of when decisions needed to be made before we could move on to the next thing. But I think one thing that was great that Rob did guiding this project from our side was saying, “we’re not going to release it just because we hit a deadline, we’re going to get it right”. We made sure that every phase of it was right until we moved on to the next thing. All in all from start to finish, I think it ended up being almost a year from the time we started looking for a partner, until we did the launch. And obviously there was breaks in there for holidays and as much as we wanted to be Jen and Amy’s only thing [laughter] that they were doing, they had other stuff to do. Rob was globe trotting all over the place... From start to finish, end-to-end, it was about one year.

BRYONY That’s still pretty impressive [affirmative]—

HOODZPAH We cooked along , yeah!

BRYONY —for the size of the client.

ROB My favorite stage was the stage of Jen and Amy were just describing, when we were talking about values and we were asking people what inspires you? And we were hearing things about the community that I have experienced at the company, the kind of collaboration, and the knowledge sharing, all these amazing things about the culture of ILM. We were hearing that. And also John Knoll, our Creative Director in our San Francisco office and then also famously he and his brother created Photoshop. The people we get to work with are just so amazing, but he noticed that in our previous branding, magic was still part of the iconography, but it wasn’t as clear. It was mixed in with the gear, and it was not as front and center as we wanted it to be. And he’s like, this redesign needs to bring the magic back to ILM. It needs to be front and the center.

And that was such a nice touch point and hearing all these inspiring ideas and how consistent everyone's perception of the values was really encouraging. And then the hardest part of the whole process was what about four months in? Jen and Amy? and they were warning us. Once you get to the point where you're narrowing it down to pick the final icon, it's going to get really tough. And it got so tough because what I just expected—the whole process had been so great and there's such talented designers—I just expected to see something and go like, oh, that's it. We've done it. It's the new logo for ILM. But when you're in the process of adopting something new, there's so many trade-offs. You've seen so many versions. I don't think anybody on the core design team at ILM had that epiphany where you're like, yep, this is it! This is the logo for the next 20 years!

You just slowly worked through the reasons behind it all, all the technical and careful creative work that was going to it, until you believed that you had tried enough versions and you had seen things and it was encompassing enough of the values, to where it was going to be something that would grow on us over time and was going to be the mark. And fortunately here we are, about a year later after rollout, and it really has. It's gone from being that thing that was new and we believed in, but we never had that epiphany where we went, yep, this is it, we don't have to do another iteration, to being something that we could really grow and live with.

JENNY And Amy and Jen were such great partners. I don't know if you guys were screaming into pillows at night or what, but I felt so bad. I was like, okay, I'm going to go back to them: can you make it a little less wooshier, but a little more sparklier? We're getting feedback from visual effects professionals that have been doing whooshes and sparkles in films for 40 years. So it was like, it's a little bit this way... but we don't want it to stand out this way. And every single time they just took the feedback and they were like, "okay, I know what you're

saying”. And I was thinking good because I don’t know what I’m saying! [laughter] So, I’m glad that you know what I’m saying [laughter].

HOODZPAH I was just telling Jen, kind of remembering back and going through it, we were like the number of cogs and the swoosh angle was such a balancing act of, okay, the swoosh needs to just be a little bit more... You’ll have an incredibly talented creative effects team and everyone knows how this should go back into space. They are very aware of what it should look like. Trying to make it stylized, try not to add too much detail, but also balancing everything. And it really was quite a bit of back and forth, but I’m so glad I went back and looked through all the different proofs and I’m like, if we hadn’t done all that, we wouldn’t have gotten to the end result that was so dialed, and that’s because y’all’s creative team cared so much and they’re so talented.

We did warn them at the beginning, “don’t worry if you don’t love anything”. But the interesting thing was we went back and watched the round one; did a Zoom call, so we were able to record the walkthrough of the first proof. And when we watched it back, I remember after the call getting off and being like, that was incredible. They didn’t hate it, or they weren’t silent, or they weren’t scared. They generally were really pleased even though there was not a clear winner, it wasn’t like, oh, let’s pick this in and call it a day. But it was so positive, the feedback, but whittling it down... because then everyone starts to pick their favorite within round one. That was the hard part. And then getting everyone on board with just the one; it has to grow on you. There’s no safe feeling of this is exactly the right decision. I think at one point we just said It’s going to be scary. We all have to go for it. And we all were kind of agreeing, you know?

BRYONY How many did you present?

HOODZPAH I think supposed to do three and we ended up doing five, I think. We did four. Four, okay. Yeah, we did four. And the fourth one was a very safe evolution of what was already there [affirmative], and then one of

them was an attempt to keep the magician because there was a lot of love for the original seal, which was illustrated by Drew Struzan—and another illustrator [Michael Pangrazio]—but anyways, it’s a beautiful illustration and some people were like, let’s just use the illustration, which I get it, it’s gorgeous, but obviously it’s not scalable for modern digital world.

I wish we could, you know?

ROB Nor is a white guy in a top hat really feeling really 2020 for a global company.

HOODZPAH Yes...

ROB But it’s so amazing. I know we all love it!

HOODZPAH But you’re right, it’s got to be more inclusive, it’s got to be more representative of a whole of an idea. We did try and make magician work, but I think someone was like, it looks a bit like a cult leader seal [laughter]. There was something about it we were trying to shout, it was secret society a lot too secret, secret society. The hat was down and his face shaded so that it wasn’t specifically male or female, and we were just like, okay, we’re trying too hard to make the magician work. And then we tried a lot with the hat to allude to magic with the hat, but then we had what we called the haberdashery quandary, which was that it kept looking like an 18-hundreds hubbard ashery logo. We were like, that’s not right either. It was funny to go through these, how do we represent magic simply?

BRYONY Jenny and Rob, what was your take on all of these different options?

ROB I was fully in, “hat” was going to be the way to illustrate magic, or certainly a wand or something. I was fully bought into getting magic more front and center was going to require some of this iconography that we’d relied on for the last 40 years. I was so glad they explored it because it proved, really clearly, what didn’t work. And what did. Being able to get the magic swoosh in such a prominent location, which

also had these homages to a global company, which is something we wanted to lean into, and also was reminiscent of the classic innovation we think of in the NASA logo, which we all love. We felt like once those pieces started coming together, and for a large number of our people, it already had a right feeling of some of those elements of innovation in a fresh way, but also leaning into classic motifs... That started to become clear that that was going to be the winner.

JENNY I agree. It was said quite a bit during all of the original stuff, all the original focus groups and interviews that people wanted the magic back. And they were like, well, why can't we use the top hat? Or God forbid somebody point a rabbit out of a top hat [laughter], any kind of magic whatever. And I think we did have to see it to know it wasn't going to work. Even though it was cool. The designs look great, but they weren't going to sell what we were all about. It was just a symbol of magic and we needed more than that. They were right on by saying "sometimes you have to see it to know it's not going to work".

BRYONY It was the wrong kind of magic.

ROB [Laughter] Yes!

JENNY It was black magic. And then for the rest of time people aren't saying, I don't understand why we didn't just do off top hat. Well, we tried [affirmative] and it didn't work.

HOODZPAH And I think we kept coming back to the thing of this is great, it celebrates the roots, it celebrates the legacy, but we have to remind everyone we were here first and now we're trying to remind everyone, we're still at the forefront. So we kept saying, how do we focus on magic in innovation? That's why we kept leaning away. We were like, okay, as much as we loved the magician, it's ol' timey.

It's leaning too much into the legacy and we want to remind, this whole rebrand is to remind everyone that we are still at the cutting edge. Leaning into innovation, I think that's when we were like, yeah,

the swoosh with that spark of innovation, that spark of magic. That's how we really encapsulate how we're moving forward.

BRYONY And once you had identified what the icon was, what were the next steps in the wordmark and future brand assets?

HOODZPAH We presented the icon and the wordmark together. This was all at the same time, but I think everyone's focus mainly was getting the icon right first, choosing that favorite and then seeing which type paired best with it. And we had done custom type for each option. And really because everything was based on the same principles and goals, the type could have worked interchangeably on any of the icons luckily. But at the end of it, a really solid sturdy slab serif that recalls back to that classic ILM slab that was in that original seal by Drew Struzan. I mean no one's doing a slab serif really these days and it could be a really ownable moment, and it feels really right, and really strong and sturdy.

And then we realized that in the ILM in that kind of slab serif, where those butterfly serifs have that natural curve to them, when you put the "I" next to the "L" next to the "M", it creates these natural framing devices almost like film cells. And that was so perfect because even though obviously ILM does much more than just film, it creates a framing device at least that speaks to the history but also just speaks to entertainment and that was one of the original ideas that we mocked up in the initial round one proof is like, hey, this could create a really great framing devices for you stills of the work that you're doing that lasted all the way to the end and is in the final case study. You see those. It was really amazing to see it in motion specifically on that final launch video.

That slab serif was really unique. It harkened back to that Drew Struzan seal. Nobody was doing that. Everyone that wants to go with a tall sans serif, that kind of a vibe and we were like, our whole goal was to balance the innovation and the history, and to stand out from the pack. The serif became a really obvious balance to the icon [affirmative].

BRYONY Now you mentioned that you made a custom type for each one of the options. Is that something that you do internally, or do you outsource it?

HOODZPAH We do it all internally. Sometimes you just kind of know what you want and instead of scrolling for the right font, it's just like we were able to just kind of sketch it out and create—we're glad that we have that we can offer to our clients, especially when there was a lot of really great inspiration that was provided from the history of all the different logo iterations from the past. We knew we wanted to recall back to some of those things and try to bring in as much as we could... "cause ILM fans, they're so loyal, and they're so aware of the details, and they're as dedicated as Star Wars fans... and it was fun to try to figure out the Easter eggs that we could hide but modernize, and how we could just make it a real delight for the fans but also the crew, uyou know? The team members. Rob you were constantly reminding us, "yeah, we want the audience to like this but also our team. We want everyone to feel really excited about this and finally feel like this is my company, I'm proud to wear this sweatshirt". I think you had mentioned everyone is still wearing the magician sweatshirt. We want people to be stoked [laughter] to get the new sweatshirt and you all do crew shirts every year, so it was how do we make this something that people feel represents them, and feel proud of, and that sort of thing.

JENNY I think you absolutely nailed that too. I mean just speaking as a person inside the company, a lot of people who work for ILM have always wanted to work for ILM. It's been like their lifelong dream and the second you get in there you're like, I want a hat, I want a sweatshirt, I want a coat, I want a tote bag, I want a coffee mug. And the logo that we had before was so thin and skinny, it barely shows up on anything; and I have every piece of rebranded clothing that we did and I love wearing it. I love my ILM sweatshirt 'cuase it's big and bold, and it really screams it, and puts it out there. So I think that that was extremely successful.

ROB We're seeing even more than the amount of pickup we expected in all sorts of different areas of the company. I mean I just love it when somebody's using the presentation template for just an internal meeting that they put together in 20 minutes, but they love having all the branding and the different color slides and they use the different color slides to mean different things. In the presentation you see pickup that we didn't even expect.

HOODZPAH That was a big thing we were worried about because everyone's a creative, and everyone wants to make creative decisions. And that was one of the internal goals was to make sure that everyone's presenting a strong united front when they're presenting decks to these great creative collaborators, whether it's Spielberg or whoever, it's making sure that that's a consistent presence. And I think Noc warned us, he's in the art department there at ILM, he was like, "I'm going to warn you because everyone here's a creative and they're going to want to redesign everything you did even after you launched it". And I have to say Rob and the team, Greg, Jenny, you all did a whole educational moment with the group. When it was launched. It was like, all right, everybody, here's the templates. This is why brand consistency is important. There was an educational moment as well so everybody knew like, all right, we're not just going to do whatever we want, we didn't relaunch this whole thing just so that everybody can just riff. There's room to play, but here are the tools so that you can play in a way that still keeps a strong brand identity present.

JENNY It's an ongoing education. [Laughter]

HOODZPAH It's hard! Oh, I see it used now and it's so fun seeing you all pop up on my feed and I'm like, it looks amazing. You all took it, and ran with it, and it's just, it's really cool to see. Yeah.

BRYONY Because there's also a series of sub-brands, am I correct? [Affirmative] What was your main guiding point in applying it to the sub-brands, and creating a toolkit that can be flexible but yet structured?

HOODZPAH With the sub-brands, it was interesting 'cause there was a few that they had a lot of equity in them. There was just a lot more eyes on them too. For example, ILMxLAB which then turned into ILM Immersive. They are a whole direct-to-consumer interfacing company. They had a lot of eyes on that, whereas something like Technoprops was a lot smaller, more internal, which had only a few eyes on it and there wasn't as much equity in the Technoprops logo that they had.

Certain ones we had to be a lot more delicate with and make sure took into consideration the audience that was a lot more familiar with it, but generally some of them, for example, xLAB which turned into Immersive, they had a really beloved icon that really still suited what they were looking to do. And it still felt in keeping with the new parent logo and glyph, we really just updated Immersive and then Technoprops and Art Department were kind of the ones where the question mark because Art Department had a completely different look and feel to what we were doing. In the end because Art Department was more of an internal arm of ILM as the parent, they shared the same glyph with the parent, and then for Technoprops we just updated the line weight. Same thing with StageCraft, we updated the line weights and everything just to make it feel more harmonious. But I think Technoprops was the only one that we really redid completely. Everything else we just refreshed it to match.

It was like an evolution—an evolution, yeah.

BRYONY And how is that system being implemented internally? Are you finding any challenges? Have you had any surprises?

ROB It has actually rolled out quite smoothly. What I was hoping might happen was that the main ILM brand, that's our strongest brand. it has the most name recognition and it's the one we want to use in the most places and that has actually happened and then the nice thing is that now that all the sub-brands point back and tie in to the main brand so cleanly, it actually helps achieve that goal. We still make StageCraft

jackets and there's people who work full-time in our virtual production division who are really proud to wear that brand, but it always has an ILM logo on it too, which is fantastic. Doing the right thing, which is selling the company as a whole, and that's what we really wanted to bring the whole global company together with this and we've actually seen that happen partially because people felt involved in the creation of it.

'Cause everyone's voice was really part of the creation of it. Everybody helped make this new logo. Jenny and Amy had a larger part than most of us, but everybody helped weigh in on this new logo and I think everyone does feel a degree of ownership and rightly so.

HOODZPAH As far as y'all's day-to-day though it was interesting because everything you do is so digital that the needs that you had as far as deliverables and use cases on the day-to-day we're very straightforward. We just need decks. That's all we do. That's right. We use decks, we present work pretty straightforward that alright, we just need to make some that are in Keynote and some that are in Google Slides because different people, depending if they're on the creative and they have Adobe or if they're more on the admin or production side, use the Google. We just had to make sure that they had a great deck system.

That's kind of it besides your press team that works more on the marketing side and does social media. So we had social media templates was a big part of it and then of course the website was a big touch point. We were thinking we might just lightly refresh it and we just kept pushing, but what if, and I think we did the rough comp of this could be the homepage at some point and then everyone was like, "yeah, we got to do it!" Then we went deeper into the website.

ROB That pitch on the website was transformative because the website had had the same structure for many years. It was not a tall scrolling page, it was lots of different pages, which was something that was more common 20 years ago and less common today. And Jen and

Amy pitched back how our values could be illustrated with the main things we're doing right on the homepage. It was such a great brand pitch, but it was also such a great company communication pitch and everybody saw that initially and was like, yeah, we have to do the website. It was a fantastic idea and very grateful that we didn't just re-skin the old system, but we actually decided, okay, instead of 45 main pages, there's actually going to be 16 and they're going to be structured like this. It was a really well thought out approach.

That was something that I thought we knew from the beginning we wanted to be a value-based redesign where we could point to everything in the look, and point back to our values and how it tied to it so people who understood the story would know it literally, and people who didn't understand the story would maybe be curious to learn more or at least get the impression of what we're about. But what I didn't realize was how much clarification on the communication—the outward facing comms—could be affected by this and that was something that Jen and Amy really brought to the table and just kept capitalizing on the whole time we were engaged together.

HOODZPAH That was actually one of those moments I think where you were saying there were not as many at the early stage where it's like light bulb, it feels like, yes, this is good, but the website and then do you remember when we got in that mockup of all the different colored booklet covers on one page? You could tell we were all a little hesitant, and gun shy, and there was this mockup of all the booklets using the color scheme and everyone was like, wait, this is perfect [laughter]. It wasn't perfect, but I think that was a big win. Seeing the color support the logo, it was a win.

ROB A hundred percent [affirmative]. Those were two important moments and then the other thing when you were talking about the rest of the collateral. You cannot overstate how bad it gets after 20 years of people not looking at the previous brand guidelines, which were really good by the way, but over time it's hard to keep 'em fresh in

everybody's mind, and all the tools had changed. Our typography was so mixed, there were people using an array of fonts in the same documents that were going out on our letterhead that just did not belong together; and it was not well presented altogether. That freshening of all of our tools, both in Keynote, in Google Slides and also in Google Docs. Jen and Amy fought with all of those technical systems to make it when you type and you change header styles and everything, it makes a pretty pleasing document. Unless you really get in there and try to break it, it works really well [laughter]. People do still break it, but on the whole the typography that's going out has that professional touch on it that you just have to keep on that to maintain that and I was really, really happy to get to roll that out to everybody.

BRYONY Jenny, was there a moment or an item that stood out to you?

JENNY The website is definitely one of them. And a lot of these things, because we've been living with them for so long, we didn't really realize how bad it needed a refresh, but I think the website was a big one too. My role in this as Project Manager was just to keep things rolling, so I was looking at the designs, but I was not as focused on trying to help make creative decisions as I was trying to make people make creative decisions quickly [laughter]. There were a couple of moments when I stood back where, wow, I haven't been paying attention to the details of this through the process, but once we get something complete and done, it looks fantastic. Because graphic design is not my area of expertise, nor is any kind of traditional art, when everyone was making decisions about the type that we were going to use and what the word mark was going to look like, that was not something I was very much involved in.

But then when I saw it all land together with the logo and particularly in the amazing launch video, but when you had ILM, and you have the logos, and the subdivisions scrolling by the ILM, I was like, this is really quite powerful and overwhelming. I got to benefit a little bit from not having to be so much involved in creative decisions and just getting

to see the little pop of wow that was coming out for everything that we did. I would say that definitely the website was a huge one. When I look at it now, I'm still like, God, this looks so good.

BRYONY So you just gave me the perfect segue. I was going to ask about prepping for, and then the launch, and the reaction from people based on the launch and yes, THAT video.

JENNY The launch video was one of the last things, if not the last thing that we did. I was shuffling things on so many different levels trying to get business cards ordered, and trying to make sure we had merchandise, and make sure the website was finalized... so Chris Hawkinson, who's on our ILM PR team was working directly with Jen and Amy to get them material for the launch video and making sure that the music was what we wanted. I was sort of keeping an eye on the schedule of that but not really paying attention as it was coming together. When I saw that video for the first time, my jaw dropped. It was so good. It brought everything together. We were seeing everything and these little pieces, which is how I look at stuff as a project manager, and then seeing it come together as a whole, it was incredible!

When we launched it online, just me personally from friends and family, everybody was reaching out and saying, this looks amazing, this looks so good, is this what you guys have been working on? This is so incredible. A lot of internal positive reaction too. I mean everybody we work with can be very, very critical because it's what they do for a living most of the time, and I was surprised at the overwhelmingly positive reaction to all of it. Even some specific people that I know of that tend to be sort of grumpy about everything. They loved it! And I was like, if we're impressing these hardened visual effects artists [laughter], then we've done something right. I still watch it from time to time. We have it on our internal database and for me the reaction was really, really positive and good.

ROB I think the video did bring things together really nicely and we did get a really nice initial reaction. Credit definitely to Jen and Amy who had that in the very first set of deliverables. I was kind of wondering how it was going to play for us because we do a lot of videos at a very high level of production and I was wondering whether it was going to work or not. You could imagine a bad version of that, which is a flying logo video that doesn't work. right? And so, in the back of my mind I'm like, well, we'll use it if it makes sense. And then as it came together and it did such a good job telling the story of the why—which was the heart of the project from the very beginning, which is values-based design—and then it was inspirational, had great music, it felt energetic, and then it also told the story of a little bit of the how, which is really important for getting it rolled out to so many people around the world. Which is this is how you use the new system, this is how flexible it is. You can have fun with it. It has the pages with the different colors that we all loved and fell in love with.

People could see that they could express themselves. They hopefully felt like they had some ownership into how it got to that phase and then it did the roots and wings. It called back to the past, led with some Jurassic Park and some Terminator 2, but then also had shots that we just finished six weeks before. So we're talking about the current work and how really we are all part of the legacy of Industrial Light & Magic, which is part of the legacy of filmmaking, which makes you feel good to be able to be a part of that.

HOODZPAH Totally.

ROB I imagine Jen and Amy, you had a similar set of reactions on your side. It does tell the story so clearly of what you brought to this project.

HOODZPAH We knew it would be important, especially you were saying you really wanted the company to feel good about it. We knew from the beginning that we weren't going to please everyone, but we were predominantly, we want people to feel good about it. Like Jenny said, having a moment where everything can come together and you can

see the system as a whole instead of just looking at a few things was really important. You all put together a really great team launch and we did a couple of them throughout the day for the different time zones, and we launched it live with a live chat and it was kind of like, okay, let's see how it goes [laughter]. Let's see how the chat goes, and I think there was a one minute delay, so it's [hard breathing] just a little bit of panic, but it started flowing in what? Whoa. Oh my gosh!

As soon as the music hit, it kind of comes in with this eeeeeee like twinkle. Yeah, it's like a little twinkle and then it's just like BONG! Once people started being "the music goosebumps!" It's funny, we employed all the tricks that you use in filmmaking to make people fall in love with something. And I think that as a brand designer you're constantly looking for ways to make an emotional connection because it is change, and it is scary, in any ways that you can. We stole from their own playbook to try and speak their language and really communicate in a way that would win them over. Someone in the Brand New comments were like, not fair, you're using John Williams music? Of course they're going to love it, and I was like, no, it's stock [laughter]. This is stock music people, anybody can do it.

JENNY There's so much to love about that video from start to finish, but the button at the end with the animated logo, it's just so great. I mean because so many of those animated logos like the Netflix logo with the noise, and the Disney Plus with the click, and all that stuff, it kind of sticks in your brain and the animated aisle and logo has that. It has the perfect little end and just watching people's faces because you're ever come with emotion watching this great basically trailer for the company and then it ends. It's like when you watch a trailer and then there's a surprise actor at the end, and they're like, oh my gosh, this person, it's like that logo animates so you're just like, oh, it's great. That was beautiful. I loved it.

BRYONY In this entire process, can you each identify what was the most satisfying aspect?

HOODZPAH

I know off the bat working with other creatives, it's a different level because they're very talented and you know that everyone's going to have a very high and discerning sensibility, especially when it's someone like ILM. We were obviously nervous and really wanted to perform well, but I think the tone that the ILM team set from the get-go really speaks to the culture of the company, which it's not gatekeeping at all. Everyone said people stay there for a long time, which you don't get that in modern corporate America, especially not in VFX. No, it's a very tough industry. These people are working incredible hours, which is why it was insane that we got so much time with people as we did and that Rob, and Greg, and Jenny, and the team made time to make decisions when they did when they are working 12 and 14 hour days as a culture from working so well together day to day on their own work for their clients, they taught us a lot about the most ideal creative relationship.

They were so respectful Every single meeting they would come in, listen to everything politely thank us. Everyone was like, "thank you so much for your hard work". It was always verbally said by someone, "thank you so much for your hard work". Almost shocking to hear it. It's a simple thing, but you don't really get that all the time, not like everybody deserves it. Everyone's doing a job. I get that. But I think everybody's so used to working with creatives and they know how much heart and soul that they pour into their work. They would always acknowledge the work and then they would honestly talk about feedback. They would listen to other people's feedback. It was never aggressive. It was like, oh, thanks for sharing that. Let's take that into consideration. But at the end of the day, it was whoever was the person leading the project would be the final decision, but everyone's feedback was considered very respectfully and I think the working relationship from start to finish made it to where even if there was hard times or tight deadlines, you just felt so appreciated that you really wanted to perform the best possible for these people. Yeah.

ROB I remember that first review where we saw the four logos. There were also a lot of sketches. If I remember correctly, you showed a bunch of sketches on the board. You had the very nice organized slides and the why for each one, but you said, but we've also done a lot of other exploration. I think probably to make sure everybody knew this wasn't just four things that we designed. We actually designed a couple hundred and I remember you scrolling through that, and walking through the logic of it, and that's when I knew we'd made a great choice and that we were going to be in a great spot on this project—even though I didn't know how hard the next few months were going to be about finalizing to that final glyph. Initially I'm like, oh, all four of these are great, or I have my favorite or I have my two favorites, but all four of these are great.

This is actually going to work for the company in an exciting way. That was really satisfying. And then the other thing was getting to geek out on type. I didn't train as a graphic designer, but I love graphic design and I work with so many people who have taught me so much about it over the years and getting to work with Jen and Amy where everything they show you looks so good and you're just like, this is the touch of professionals who really, really know their craft. At the beginning, we did talk about whether we should do this internally. We have amazing artists who have trained in brand design and mostly they're doing concept work or other things as their specialties, but they have these backgrounds. We have really great talent in the company that we could have done this. There's no way we would've gotten to this level of polish. Certainly we wouldn't be done with a project by now. It probably never would've finished without the drive and the structure and everything that was around there. Those are a couple of highlights for me.

JENNY And I would've gone crazy by now if we had tried to do this internally [laughter]. As I said, my role is trying to make people make decisions... that would've been horrible. I think for me the best moments were the bookends. So, when we started the project and listening to everyone's

feedback and then the reaction at the end from all of those people that were so passionate about sharing how they felt. And at the end seeing them feel seen and know that they were heard and that we put something together that was for everyone, and not just a few people. When it was done, that sigh of relief that we got it out there. Jen and Amy had worked so hard on this. I didn't want it to be like we put it out there and the world loved it, but the company was like, well, what if we had had that rabbit? [Laughter] It made me proud the reaction from inside the company, and it made me happy for Jenn and Amy that all of their hard work paid off. We are not an easy group people to please.

HOODZPAH Literally everyone is: you got to work with ILM, and we're like, we know! And they're like, what was it like? And I'm like, we've never had a better client because they're creatives and they're so respectful of each other. That permeated over to us, but I'm with Jenny, my favorite parts were some of those beginning meetings. I know more people with Oscars now, everyone is the best at what they do, and just hearing their story of how they always wanted to work for ILM, and the movies that they loved growing up, and hearing these really personal stories from everyone. It's not just a job to anyone. It was very personal and there was so much passion there.

You can't help but get amped about it. You're like, that was amazing! It was just so fun to get the inside baseball on this industry from the best of the best. Those beginning meetings got us so amped and then we were just like, we know exactly what to do and we're sketching. There were so many sketches... and it just felt so clear after those meetings.

BRYONY Final question for Hoodzpah. From when you got that first email to launch, what were all of the emotions that you went through?

HOODZPAH We have these photos of me the night before we're going to present the first round, and it's just like head-in-hand, this crazy bun. We felt so confident. I think it was because we got to talk to so many people and it was just so clear, the goals and what we needed to do was so clear

the roadmap. But then the night before you have that moment, you just think, should we rethink everything? Do we throw it all out and your nerves, that's normal. That's just your nerve.

That's honestly the most scary part is presenting round one. And if you get even the slightest positive reaction in a round one review, you're like, it'll be okay. And what's great? Sagi Haviv from Chermayeff & Geismar & Haviv, a very famous brand agency, he presented at Adobe Max a few years ago and said, "these are the best slides we've ever added to our deck", and they're slides that pretty much say you won't like it at first. And we've added those since to our deck. I was looking back at the one we presented to ILM and it said, "Don't worry if you don't love it at first sight, that's normal. You won't like it". And it's almost reverse psychology because you're preparing them to be like, have kind of low expectations. Oh geez, okay, I guess well, let's just take this and grin and bear it, and I think it actually grounds everyone before they go in to be like, okay, but there's stuff we can work with. This is not so bad.

ROB Oh, yeah. It was a very good strategy and it was a very good warning because you do have high expectations [affirmative] and you're working with really talented people. We've looked through their portfolio. If you look at Hoodzpah's portfolio, you're like, yeah, everything they do is amazing. You can begin to have those expectations. So I think the secret happiness is setting low expectations [laughter], but no, it was a useful trick. It was part of the process, and also the reassurance of trusting the process. It's the same thing in working on a film. It's the same thing in writing something. There is a point where you know enough, you've gotten far enough along the process to where it's no longer better than you expected, it's about what you expected or it's not quite as good as you expected. 'Cuase you have really high expectations of yourself. You're enough of an expert. You have to work through that and then know, okay, well this is just one part of the process and then we're going to compliment it with the woodmark. Then we're going to bring the color, and then

we're going to bring all the rest of the packaging by the time it's on. One of the things they designed for us, what we call the touring t-shirt, which is every Oscar and VES, which is Visual Effects Society and BAFTA nomination or win, actually, we had to cut it down to just the wins in order to fit on one T-shirt from Star Wars in the 1970s all the way to today, the back of the concert T-shirt was all the award-winning movies and TV shows. When it was on there, and it had the 1970s missprint glyph on it and everything. You see it in full context. You're like, oh yeah, this is going to work. And we did get there.

BRYONY And so final question for Jenny and Rob, now that everything is being implemented, you have all the tools, everybody excited, but at the same time moved on from the launch date and that euphoria moment, what is the most exciting aspect of this project moving forward?

ROB The first indicator is that it worked because people are using it. There's adoption. People other than me are encouraging people to lean into the templates, to check the brand guidelines. I'm not the only one who's saying that. So that's really encouraging. And when we see it in more applications, it's actually growing on us more, which is what you want to see happen with something like this over time.

JENNY It feels so commonplace. I think we launched at the end of May last year, so we're coming up on the one year mark and it first, it was not jarring, but it was weird, I guess to see something new. And now that it's all in the company store and people have bought the hats and are wearing the shirts, and it's like Rob said, it's in all the presentations that we see. It's just our logo now. Like they said, you might not like it at first, but once you get used to it, I couldn't imagine it being anything else. They had such a difficult challenge because we went in saying, "we want something new, but we want it to be exactly the same" [laughter]. We want the light bulb, we want the cog, we want the magic, but we need it to be new. How much can you do with a light bulb and a cog?

And they did all kinds of things with it. I was in that camp. We need to get back to the magic. I love that Drew Struzan piece, it's my desktop on my laptop right now with my screensaver, but I knew we needed something new and we have that now. So we're just living with it and it's out there and it's spreading. Now that it's gotten in there, everybody has it on their T-shirts and it's going on print materials. And now when I see the old logo somewhere else, even if it's an internal database, I'm like that has to go!

HOODZPAH Get it out of here!

JENNY I think just seeing it permeate our culture. It's what we have now. Everybody has it. Everybody loves it.

BRYONY Well, in listening to all of you, it is very clear that you found the perfect partnership because...

JENNY Absolutely.

BRYONY ILM is values driven and it is a very positive culture. It is exactly what I see in Hoodzpah, and I have seen over the last half decade. They're extremely positive and very focused on culture, but with a very deep understanding of where that culture is coming from. Being able to look back and modernize those things. I don't know who brought Hoodzpah to the table from your team, but I hope they get a high five because you did end up with something that is truly unique, stands out now more so than ever on that screen when that logo comes up. And as you see all of those applications, as you go deeper into the website and other items that you have produced. Job well done.

HOODZPAH Thank you so much.

JENNY There was so much fun to work with. I missed you guys. I was talking to you at least once a week, sometimes multiple times a week, and then you were just gone. And I nowhere near have the amount of meetings that Rob does in his life, but meetings can be so tedious when you have a ton of them a day. And I always look forward to those meetings.

They were just fun and positive. And then the few weeks after we launched, I was like, what's missing in my life? [Laughter] Oh, it's Amy and Jen. I haven't seen them in a while.

HOODZPAH [Laughter] We had so much fun. I know. It was a blast. It honestly was. It was a bit of a comedown after all. It was like all back to life.

BRYONY Well, I'm glad to have orchestrated this little get together.

HOODZPAH There it is. There it is. Thank you, Bryony.

JENNY Yes, thank you.

ROB Thanks for hosting this.

HOODZPAH Thank you so much.

JENNY Thank you so much. This is great.

ARMIN One of the most refreshing things to hear in this episode was Jenny and Rob acknowledging that, yes, they could have done this project in-house as lack of talent is clearly not an issue but that it would have most likely not gotten done right or in time or without plenty of headaches. This episode also served as a reminder to give props to project managers, especially if they are as cool as Jenny. When she said, "I was not as focused on making creative decisions as I was on trying to make people make creative decisions quickly" had me standing up and cheering because more often than not, whether they are on the client side or the agency side, it's the PMs that make sure projects don't implode, especially when feedback can have designers screaming into pillows. We also got an excellent tip in setting client expectations and let them know upfront that it's okay if they do not fall in love with an idea right away and that it's a process where it may not be love at first sight but going through it will lead to happily ever after.

Today, thanks for listening, until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.