

let's make it
awesome.

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for Metal-Era

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Letter From the Editor



What is a partner?

When we started seventyseven two years ago, we hit the ground running with taking in anything we could get. This is certainly typical for any new company, and I think we did a good job at it; all the while knowing that our ultimate goal was to be much more. Our primary business model was essentially that we were the guys to give your overflow to. This is great from a business standpoint, and the demand for such work will always be plentiful.

But somewhere around year two our internal skill sets, strategies, and processes became much more robust. Agencies started recognizing this. They were willing to let us take the reins of many more aspects of a project — not just the development or design. PMs and producers started bringing us to the table, not covering us up as the “outsourced”. It is these clients that we consider partners.

But a partner is much more than that. A partner is one that doesn't keep you in the dark or bog the project down with telephone games and misunderstandings. They are considerate of your time, of your strengths and your weaknesses. They hold accountability for ownership and are eager to fix mistakes. A partner makes you feel like part of the team and continually strives to cultivate the relationship. These are the clients we are grateful for. These are the companies that we are proud to call partners.

We move into year three as seventyseven with the determination to only work with great people. We want to develop strong partnerships with both agencies and businesses, and always be in a position to walk away if it's not a good fit. We do this for the quality of the work, for the company, and for the team.

Let's be partners.

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3D Product Visualization Workflow


 luke wittig
motion design director

Photo Reference

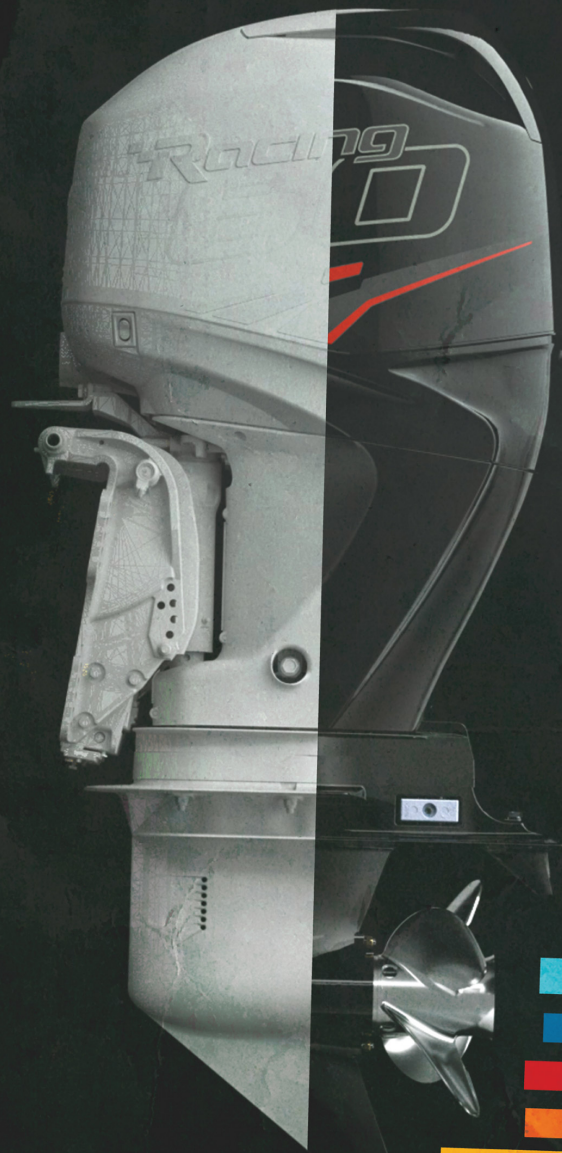
Take full product shots to understand the context of each part with the whole. Take close up shots to see the micro-surface imperfection. If possible capture the product on short video clips to see how the reflections react to lighting with movement.

Material Creation

Using all of the info captured from your photo ref, we create custom image maps that control the physical properties of the metals, plastics, and even objects found in nature that the product requires. These maps recreate the color, surface roughness, texture, subsurface scattering, bump, and displacement to create photorealistic materials.

Lighting the Thing

The truly creative part of every product render. Each camera angle requires a unique lighting setup. With light you can tell any story, draw attention to the craftsmanship as well as highlight technologies. From classic studio and colored to outdoor, moody, mysterious and loud lighting: everything is possible in CG.



GREAT WORKOUTS

FOR INSIDE YOUR HOME



SUPER SQUAT

Lift arms in front of you until they are parallel to the ground. Slowly squat down. Hold for 20 seconds. Feel the burn. This exercise works better with a visor.

POWER CURL

With a weight in one hand or both slowly curl weight up toward your body. If someone is watching DON'T look like you're struggling. Feel the burn.



Feel the burn with these time-tested exercises!

BIG SIDE STRETCH

Stand up tall and look cool. Very, very slowly reach your arms from side to side. Give your body a BIG side stretch. Hold each stretch for 10 seconds. Feel the burn.



LITTLE SIDE STRETCH

While seated in a fashionable sweat suit lock your hands behind your head. Stretch each elbow to your knees. Hold for 10 seconds. Feel the burn.



TESTED BY-seventyseven



≡ david solwold
digital producer

Quality Assured

This article will cover best practices, tools, and necessary steps needed to ensure quality of work. We'll also learn to mitigate costs and timeline inflation internally.

Quality Over Everything

Generally, we will work QA into a weekly effort. This helps us ensure bugs do not find their way into future deliverables and are fixed in the moment. But how will we cultivate the QA tasks and steps to take when we get to that point? I'm glad you asked.

Did I Pass?

First we will need to establish an idea that describes what passing QA means. We can accomplish this through scripts as well as generated design references through actual design files (such as JPGs or PDFs). This helps our team understand what to look for during QA. We will want to focus on what we are delivering but also gather this documentation throughout the project so we have a good amount of documentation that speaks to our QA effectiveness. We can always pull reports for issues to identify trends and other useful data for future projects.

If it Looks Like a Bug...

Now that we have everything we need to determine what passing QA looks like, we are ready to check things over. During each sprint we will have a designated time for doing QA for the current sprint's deliverables. During this time we will go through our user stories, while also reviewing any design reference documents to identify whether our task has passed QA. If it does not pass, a ticket is created. When creating a ticket we will want to provide as much specific information as possible to help the team resolve the issue. We will also want to make sure we tie this ticket to the current sprint so we can focus on a resolution throughout the remainder of the current sprint. This way we can ensure we are delivering solid work at the end of our sprint.

Can I Have Some Change?

There will be times where we (or the client) will determine something may need to be revised. These are change requests. We will want to generate a user story and add it to the backlog. These tasks can be great for tracking considerations for future phases of our project. It also arms the client with the awareness early in the development flow so they can make an educated decision sooner than later. This minimizes the amount of work needed later in the project.

Time is of the Essence

The best way we can track these change requests down is user stories. During sprint reviews, we will want to share these ideas with the client to get their buy-in and properly estimate these requests for future sprints or phases. It is extremely important to identify if these requests inflate our timelines and / or budget. No one likes getting a surprise bill or late delivery.

Committed to Change

Once we sit down and estimate the change request efforts, we will either include these within the current project or create a new one so we can track the costs and efforts individually. Generally, if our change request is a substantial amount of time, we will want to follow this route. Otherwise we will deem these change requests as being part of the initial project.

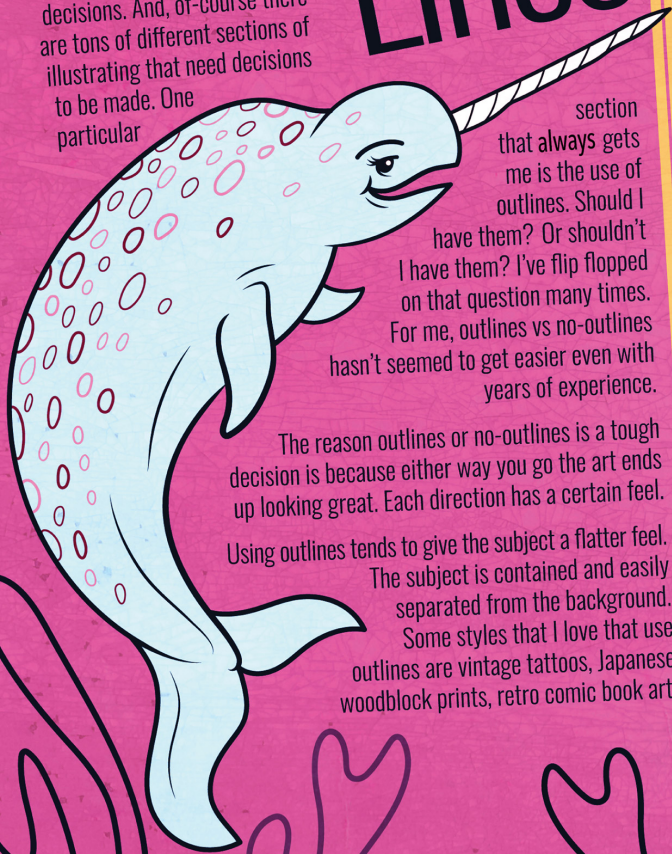
Like many things, when it comes to illustrating, often, the most challenging part is making decisions. And, of-course there are tons of different sections of illustrating that need decisions to be made. One particular

Lines or No-Lines

billy baldus
creative director

question I face every time I do an illustration.

Lately, my answer to this question has been... I'll use.. a little of both!



section that always gets me is the use of outlines. Should I have them? Or shouldn't I have them? I've flip flopped on that question many times. For me, outlines vs no-outlines hasn't seemed to get easier even with years of experience.

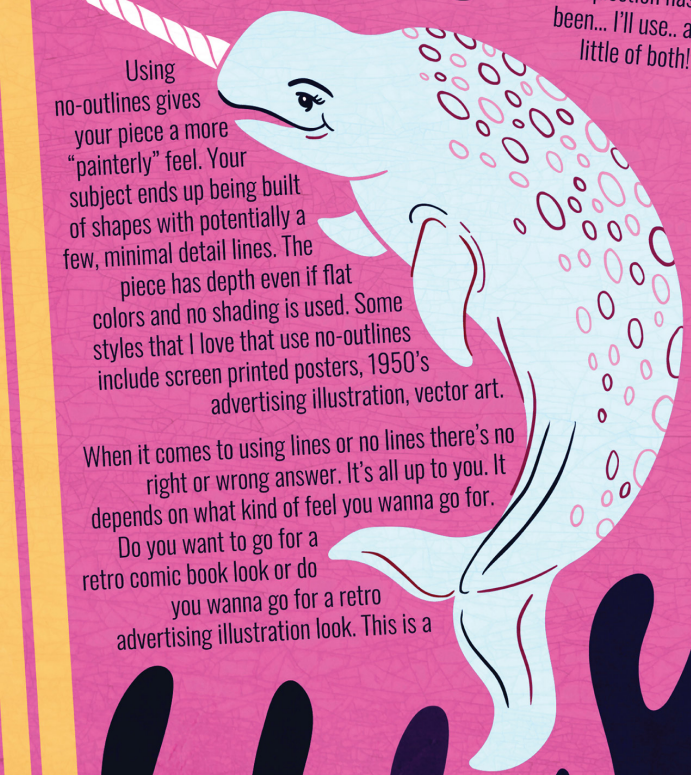
The reason outlines or no-outlines is a tough decision is because either way you go the art ends up looking great. Each direction has a certain feel.

Using outlines tends to give the subject a flatter feel. The subject is contained and easily separated from the background. Some styles that I love that use outlines are vintage tattoos, Japanese woodblock prints, retro comic book art.

Using no-outlines gives your piece a more "painterly" feel. Your subject ends up being built of shapes with potentially a few, minimal detail lines. The piece has depth even if flat colors and no shading is used. Some styles that I love that use no-outlines include screen printed posters, 1950's advertising illustration, vector art.

When it comes to using lines or no lines there's no right or wrong answer. It's all up to you. It depends on what kind of feel you wanna go for.

Do you want to go for a retro comic book look or do you wanna go for a retro advertising illustration look. This is a



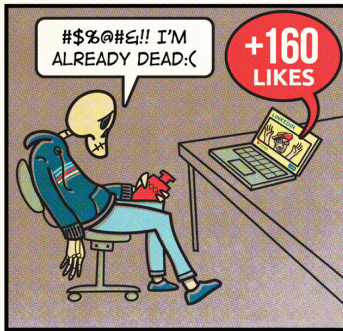
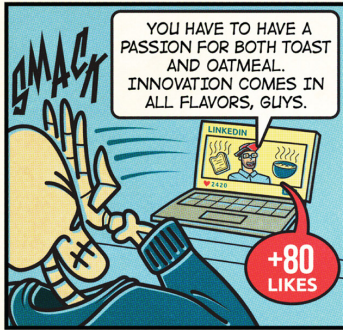
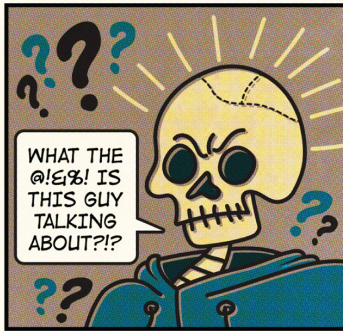
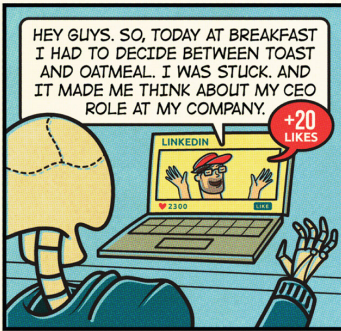


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#3





zach nelson
partner / interactive director

JUXTAPOSE

You know what's inspiring? Creating. It's contagious, like yawning, except rather than leaving you feeling like you want to lie down or binge watch some Netflix, the act of creation gets you energized and craving more creation.

This last month I had the opportunity to assist on a project with an exceptionally creative and unique talent - my 11 year old daughter, Zaida. She took part in an event put on by the wonderful Kelcey Kalumbula of Cloud 9 Workshop. Called the Kidpreneur Fair, it's essentially a makers market event specifically for kids to sell their creations and learn about entrepreneurship first-hand.

Zaida chose to create unique collages and turn them into coasters - an idea inspired by her Auntie Madeline - using inexpensive tiles, mod podge and an epoxy resin. Nights and weekends, instead of our usual routine, we thumbed through thrift books and magazines, collecting cutouts of interesting images, until we had a diverse collection of colors, textures and subjects.

Next was my favorite step - juxtaposing the image cutouts to create the collage. We found that often the combinations of black and white/color and old/new generally produced the most striking effect. Other times it was the subjects themselves, or the flow of shapes and lines, or the contrast of textures that would feel right. In the end there were around 30 - 40 unique collages from which to create the coasters themselves. Cut to size, the collages were pasted onto the tiles, then carefully covered



in epoxy resin, which hardened to a glossy protective finish. After affixing rubber bumper pads to the undersurface so the coasters themselves wouldn't scratch wood surfaces, Zaida's products were ready.

The event was a hit, and Zaida made enough profit after expenses to buy the iPod Touch she'd been coveting. Getting a taste of entrepreneurship has inspired her to want to make more, and we are now collaborating on creating her own brand and online store to continue the learning and creating.



Client Metal-Era
Product Calculator App, Product Configurator App, Animated Info Video
Skills Art Direction, 3D Modeling, 3D Animation, Script Writing, Information Architecture, App Design, App Development, Illustration



A Complete Package

Metal-Era is a leader in the commercial roofing industry. They are the largest and most accomplished edge metal systems manufacturer in North America. They came to seventyseven with a few different needs and goals.

They wanted an app version of their existing website calculators to further aid in roofing projects.

They wanted an interactive product configurator to better showcase their products while in meetings, conventions, and trade shows.

They wanted an informational video on the subject of labor shortage affecting the commercial roofing industry and how Metal-Era's products are a cost effective solution to this shortage.

Using our wide array of skills, knowledge, and creativity we were able to create each one of these projects.

Calculator App

The Metal-Era mobile app is a helpful resource for architects, roofing consultants, contractors, and any professional in the commercial roofing industry. It features a variety of calculators that will provide helpful information for your specific roofing projects and help you determine which edge metal systems are right for you.

Product Configurator App

To better showcase Metal-Era's quality, expertise, and variety of products during meetings, conventions, and at trade shows we built an interactive application for use on tablet devices such as an iPad. The product configurator is a stand alone application, no internet needed to operate and pull data, everything you need is right there. We designed a simple and easy to use interface. Each product features a 3D spinner with a "break apart" view, a 3D animated installation video, a color picker, product specs, and product a description.

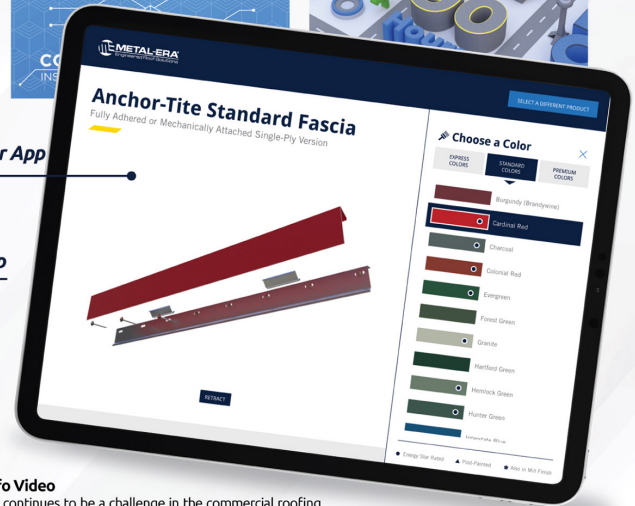


Calculator App



Info Video

Product Configurator App



Animated Info Video

Labor shortage continues to be a challenge in the commercial roofing industry. We created an animated informational video to address this issue and communicate why Metal-Era pre-manufactured edge metal is a cost, and time-effective solution. We dove into the numbers and research articles. We then took that research and wrote a knowledge based script and facilitated a professional voiceover. We put together a storyboard and art direction. Then we created the 3D models, illustrations, and graphical elements and put the animation together to create a professional, informational video. The video has shared their knowledge and communicated their message leading to sales growth and industry recognition.

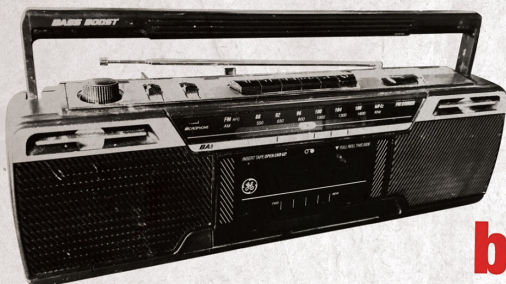
These three projects successfully met Metal-Era's goals and helped further garnish their reputation as a leading expert in the commercial roofing industry.



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Talking to the Clouds

matt knickelbine
full-stack developer

If you came across someone at the park, lying on the grass and mumbling at the clouds, it may come off as mildly concerning. You pick up the pace a bit to avoid them and think how bizarre that was. In our world of code and content, things are a bit different! Applications are constantly talking back and forth with the cloud in order to deliver premium, efficiently served data. With Google's Natural Language and Cloud Vision APIs, the gap between human and machine communication can be bridged.

Imagine this scene - of a group of friends holding an invitation to their NYE party. Using the Cloud Vision API, the Cloud can determine the context of this scene - several humans are standing together. Face detection has determined these humans are excited for some reason! Why? And why are they dressed so fancy? Perhaps a party? OK - definitely a party... The Cloud wants in on it but does not know the details. Here is where the Natural Language API comes into play. The Cloud then scans the invitation. Several entities are found - a block of text inviting guests to a party (it totally guessed correctly). A date and time are also present - this must be when the party is. Finally, the API has determined the last bit of text is actually an address. Next thing you know, it's December 31st and the Cloud shows up ready to have a grand ol' time!

The combination of these two powerful APIs has proved invaluable for client projects. What once required heavy processing on the application-side for common OCR tasks can now be processed in a matter of seconds with minimal client resources. Next time you see someone talking to the clouds - ask them what the clouds are saying back, it might be pretty cool!