

GABE CONNOR

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INDUSTRY ESTABLISHED DESIGN DIRECTOR

Creating Positive Customer Impact ♦ Driving Peak Sales ♦ Leading Iconic Trends

Prolific designer recognized as an expert within the industry by creating iconic moments for world class brands and growing and evolving business products. Proven track record re-establishing an organization as a trend leader that drives peak sales and editorial acclaim for providing innovation and going beyond customer expectations. Strong creative vision, original ideas, fresh point of view, and brand knowledge resulting in products that *'grab attention'* and elevate customer awareness. Communicates vision by successfully building teams, providing a clear concept and setting direction for design departments with high success rates.

Areas of expertise:

- Identify & Analyze Trends
- Extraordinary Eye for Color
- Establishing Brand Identity
- Growing & Evolving Products
- Original & Fresh Ideas
- Developing Design Concepts
- Designing Campaign Centerpieces
- Influence/Direct Products & Teams
- Forward Thinking
- Establishing Signature Colors
- Elevating Customer Awareness
- Intuitive of Cultural Climate

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

POLO INC. – New York, NY

1987 to Present

Director of Color, Concept & Trend Brand (1987 to Present)

Established an overall clear color point of view for the entire brand by capitalizing on market trend potential through “speed to market” action plans, reinforcing season direction with heads of design of all global divisions, and bringing leadership, direction and focus to the company’s new pipeline process. Achieved by building staff and a process pipeline for all preseason activities that allowed all color, print and fabric development deadlines to be met.

- Led the **implementation of a clear creative brand message** for all Polo global design visions and markets. The direction gave teams structure to use the same starting points and encouraged teams to share and leverage ideas, resulting in brand ideas easily emerging for the different market needs. Key outcomes included:
 - The season/brand had a focus and handle that could easily be marketed to the customer.
 - Improved customer appeal by 90% by designing concepts in tune with the cultural climate and trends.
- **Ensured brand consistency** by creating a meeting format to present concepts and color direction. This involved building a three dimensional concept room showcasing the color palette, print and yarn dye direction, silhouettes, fabrics and trims and conceiving and initiating seasonal collaboration meetings with the heads of design that addressed seasonal concepts and strategized brand direction.
- **Reduced costs by \$90,000** per season by creating an in-house user friendly communication tool/ palette system for all 14 divisions within Polo Global Design and Merchant Divisions. Key outcomes included:-
 - Increased productivity by 85% by allowing global design and merchant teams to effectively make changes/updates to color points of view during key phases of the development process.
 - Improved communication by 100%, with all teams communicated with physical updates within 24hrs.
- **Improved productivity by 100%** by building design teams that supported seasonal and brand direction, resulting in each divisions palette changes solved and updated within a 24-36 hour period. Interaction among color and design was also improved by having teams that supported and provided color communication to design and merchants during their new pipeline work process and deadlines.

Director of Color Adult (2004 to 2005)

Played an integral role in defining new President’s vision and management philosophy by providing fresh color point of view, season color direction and mood, and creating streamlined efficient work processes focused on customer delivery. Achieved objectives by building team partnerships, injecting energy and optimism into team palettes, establishing core colors, collaborating to build the new pipeline work process and assisting teams during roll out testing.

- **Exceeded sales expectations** by redefining the lifestyles of the men’s customer. Partnered with the men’s team to develop strategy and reestablish core colors for classification and lifestyles by injecting energy and optimism into their palettes. Key outcomes included:-
 - Men’s business made plan in the Spring of 2005 for the first time since 1998.
 - Stronger and exciting product color ranges, with improved team understanding of color audience impact.

- **Surpassed sales benchmarks** by developing a new disk print based on the original artwork/iconic Gap logo and driving conceptual direction and co-branded products, resulting in a range of limited edition products that customers identified with to celebrate Polo's 35th Anniversary.
- **Delivered fresh color point of view** for Polo women's spring and summer 2004 by creating a concept that was an optimistic take on the fifties/futurism. Designs were well received and gained excellent media feedback. Women's Wear Daily wrote a cover story raving about the new design teams 1st collection and color palette, commenting extremely favorably on the brightness, freshness and trend.
- **Drove conceptual thinking** for women's summer designs by executing an amazing range of layering tank tops which became the focus for the summer advertising campaign and received phenomenal sales results.

Director of Color & Research –Adult, Body & Accessories (2002 to 2004)

- **Increase revenue by over \$1.3 billion** by re-introducing another version of the crazy stripe concept for the holiday advertising campaign (scarves, hat, gloves and bags). The brand sold like the concept "crazy" and was provided with an iconic pattern that customers identified with.
- **Generated 11 months of competitive sales** by creating clear, inspirational and relevant concepts and color palettes for each season utilized by adults and kids. Key outcomes included:
 - Transformed a declining brand to a strong color dominance by creating emotional color stories and strong positive colors for each season.
 - Adoption rates in women's and men's were 85% above plan throughout the year.
- **Re-established Polo as a trend leader** by creating an optimistic color point of view for customers by establishing the pink trend for spring 2003. Key outcomes included:-
 - Exceeded ROI by creating a pink version of the mac coat with more pop versions of the palette colours, which became an instant customer favorite and caused a media frenzy.
 - New York Times claimed Polo had initiated the season's trend towards creating the feeling of a happier time following 9/11.

Director of Color & Research (1999 to 2001)

- **Exceeded revenue and ROI expectations** by introducing the crazy stripe in the 1999 holiday season concept direction. The crazy stripe became the centerpiece for the 1999 holiday advertising campaign and was utilized by the women's, kids and baby team. Key outcomes included:-
 - Crazy stripe was Polo's most iconic pattern and became one of the most recognized items in Polo history.
 - Products were sold within weeks of hitting the stores, with huge waiting lists for reorders. One UK store had a list of 1500 people waiting for the scarf alone.
 - Received extensive positive media coverage worldwide on the scarf and sweater.

Designer of Women's Knits, Active, Swim & Intimates (1993-1999)

- **Grew women's active business to \$40 million** within 3 years. Designed and launched Gap women's active line by entering the brand into the performance tech apparel market. Over the next two years the line was transitioned away from the workout gym lifestyle towards an active/street denim lifestyle that could be worn easily with jeans. The launch was a success and became the focus of Gap's spring and holiday 1998 campaigns.
- **Led the design and launch of Gap intimates and swimwear**, resulting in intimates growing into its own store concept and swimwear receiving the largest editorial coverage for a summer season product line. Overcame challenge of no experience in intimates and swimwear by comprehensively researching the product line and establishing relationships/partnerships with leading industry leaders and vendors.

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

Bachelor of Fine Arts (Fashion Design) - New York University, NY

AFFILIATIONS

Board of Directors, AEIC

Member, American Institute of Graphic Designers (AIGA)