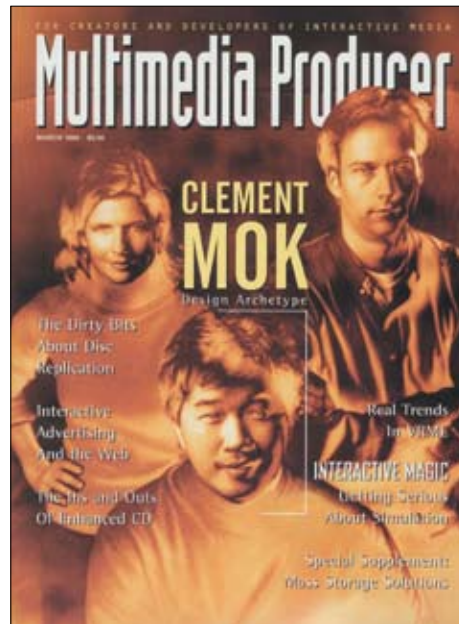


March 1996
Multimedia Producer

By Sam McMillan



Cloning Clement:

Clement Mok has reinvented his company to accommodate his expanded vision and his own human limitations.

Clement Mok is both a noun and a verb. Within the industry, the 38-year-old graphics designer and his company, Clement Mok designs, are synonymous with a standard of clean, conceptually rich, elegantly functional visual communication.

His work and influence in the media of print and electronic delivery spans more than a decade, reaching back into the primordial days of 1-bit Hypercard stacks and the first designs for Apple's QuickTime Starter Kit. He moved on to design CD-ROM titles, such as The Mayo Clinic Family Pharmacy. Then, in 1995, he put his mind to the task of demystifying the operation of automatic teller machines for Well Fargo Bank, the first of which can be seen in the Los Angeles area. Only last year his work went on exhibit to a huge international audience in the form of the interface for The Microsoft Network. Also last year, he designed and launched his own ultra-cool Web site.

Mok's been there, designed that. Today, clients such as Microsoft, NBC, Harper Collins and Nintendo continue -- as they have for years -- to ride the elevator to the penthouse office on Townsend Street in San Francisco's Multimedia Gulch to consult with Mok, the GUI guru, the don of design. But the name on the door has changed. The company has become Studio Archetype. Where, oh where, has "Clement Mok" gone?

Why would Mok dump his own name, especially considering its brand value and the role it has playing in building a company that will generate about \$7 million in fiscal 1996? And why remove himself from the day-to-day operations of a company that is synonymous with his personal talent and style?

Until Cloning

Speak to Clement Mok for a few moments and part of the answer emerges immediately. This

is a man who does not know the concept of "spare time." He remains very much the creative director at Studio Archetype, but also manages CMCD, his electronic clip media library. He recently started a new company, NetObjects, which creates authoring, design and data management software for Web site development. And he fills the gaps by lecturing at industry conferences and seminars, serving on the New Media Center's board of directors and working on a new design book for Adobe Press.

Mok's problem is this: With bits of himself spread so far and wide across the multimedia spectrum and his creative bandwidth stretched to the max, burnout becomes a very real possibility. How does an organization that is driven by the singular creative vision of one individual continue to expand beyond the capacity of that person? Short of cutting and pasting clones of himself throughout his business, how does Mok keep building while keeping what he built?

Threat of Success

Mok's is not a unusual dilemma. Hundreds of relatively small interactive design and production boutiques that were based on the ability of one or two talented people are — or soon will be — struggling with how to reach the next level of growth without killing off the founders with over-work. No shop wants to turn down work, but taking on too much, even one project too many, can cause a decline in creative quality and damage a firm's reputation.

This is an issue Mok has wrestled with for years, ever since he spun off CMCD to market a line of royalty-free clip photography. The CD-ROM series offers 100 images per disc of thematically grouped visual symbols, such as "Just Hands" or "Just Tools." Launched in an entrepreneurial burst of inspi-

By Sam McMillan



ration, CMCD proved to be such a success, it threatened to swamp his design business.

"A successful product doesn't remain successful without a constant need for maintenance, nurturing and the demands for capital required to grow the business," Mok says. As CMCD products took off, it became apparent that Mok would have to choose between running a clip-art business or a design firm.

In this case, his solution was to partner with one of CMCD's clients, Photodisc, a Seattle-based purveyor of high-end digital stock photography, has engaged in an exclusive worldwide distribution agreement to produce four CMCD titles a year for the next five years.

Professional Makeover

The inevitable restructuring of Mok's company began with his decision to distance himself from the day-to-day business operations of the 40-person company so that he could concentrate on his design work. Over the course of several years, Mok solidified the operational side of the business, brining in Amanda North as vice president and "identity architect," and Mark Crumpacker as creative director and CEO. When asked the secret to running a large and complex business, Mok looks at his two lieutenants and says laughingly, "Delegate!"

The process reached its apex about a year ago, when the swell of the company's Internet-related projects became a tidal wave. "The nature of the new projects was about identity and marketing communications, and also product enhancement capability for clients and systems," Mok recalls. "Those things required particular skills, a particular kind of infrastructure support, and they demanded we look at the organization and ask 'Where are the strengths and resources to bring all of these together?'"

Both Crumpacker and North have been tested in the crucible of Silicon Valley startups, having served on the client side for companies like Global Village and RasterOps.

Crumpacker, 33, who most recently worked for design firms Primo Angeli and Landor Associates, proudly admits that, in the course of his nine years working in Silicon Valley, he held nine different jobs. He feels his client experience provides a definite advantage. "It's very stressful, but very valuable experience. And it is really critical, when clients are hammering on you to get something done in a particular time frame, to understand the kinds of constraints under which they operate," he explains.

"We are now describing our company not as a design firm, but as identity and information architects," North says. The term "information architect" has its genesis in Richard Saul Wurman's seminal book, *Information Anxiety*, and refers to the way information can be structured to reveal meaning. It is a phrase that will become increasingly common as designers and writers become more sophisticated about communicating in an interactive, electronic medium, she says.

For North, the repositioning effort at Studio Archetype has everything to do with "strategic contributions, helping clients think through the whole process of communications, and then recommending the media types most appropriate for the communication programs they have. We help them think through the process, how they integrate all their communications planning. That's a service we provide above and beyond what you normally think of when you think of a design firm."

The name Studio Archetype, like most products of Mok's shop, is the result of a thoughtful, considered process. It speaks to the

Who would Mok design his own logo, especially considering the trend today and the fact that Mok himself is building a company that will generate about \$7 million in revenue next year, even before he starts the day-to-day operations of a company that is synonymous with his personal values and style?

World Cloning
 "I agree to Clumpacker that a few months and part of the summer (summer immediately). This is a time when you know the concept of 'open time'." He remains very much the creative director at Archetype S.F., but also manages CMC's art directorship and media library. The recently started a new company, Next Media, which is a creative advertising design and data management software for Web site development. And he fills the gaps by teaching at industry conferences and seminars, serving on the New Media Center's board of directors and working on a new design book for Adobe Press.

Mok's problem is that while his clients appear to be well-versed in the multimedia spectrum and his creative flexibility is second to none, he has become a very busy professional. How does he manage to do it? Mok says he delegates a great deal of his work to his staff, but he also has a very strong sense of individual creative responsibility. He says that throughout his business, he has been able to find big while leaving what he had.

Threat of Success
 Mok is not an unusual dilemma. Hundreds of talented small business owners and producers find themselves that are based on the stability of one or two talented people. If those people leave, the business will be in trouble. Mok says he has to be very careful about who he hires, and he has to be very clear about what he is looking for. He says that he has to be very clear about what he is looking for, and he has to be very clear about what he is looking for.

AT A GLANCE
Archetype S.F.

FOUNDED: 1988 as Elements Media Design, rebranded Archetype S.F. in 1992
INDUSTRY: Creative Arts
CEO: Mark Crumpacker
IDENTITY: ARCHETYPE, Archetype North
OFFICE: 1000 Pine Street
ADDRESS: 1000 Pine Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94108
PHONE: 415-774-8888
FAX: 415-774-8888
EMAIL: info@archetype.com
WEBSITE: www.archetype.com
PERSONNEL: 15 employees (100 employees between SF and SFO offices)
FINANCIAL: BOULDERBROS INVESTORS, Strategic design brand and corporate identity, branding and interface design in print, radio, TV, CD-ROM and Web sites.



"We are designing our company not as a design firm but as identity and information products," says Amanda North, vice president.



Part of CEO Mark Crumpacker's job is identifying Archetype's "value strengths as a company."

recognition of the company's core capabilities, and represents an attempt to get involved in the creative process early. The name of the game, according to North, is to understand client businesses, and their communications needs, then provide a strategic consulting service that integrates the power of the client's brand across all their media communications disciplines. Reaching for a dictionary, North reads the definition of archetype: "An original model upon which all things of the same pattern or type are based." We think that Archetype addresses our role as identity and information architects. And we believe that the work we do transforms our clients into archetypes in their fields."

The volume of incoming work has inundated Studio Archetype with "more work than we could ever do, and has allowed us to chart our own strategic direction," Crumpacker says. Studio Archetype now has the luxury of turning down work that it feels is inappropriate to its strengths, or presents the wrong production model. Crumpacker says that Studio Archetype can now control its own destiny, and steer the business toward a product mix that consists of 50/50 electronic design and traditional print projects.

With only a slight tinge of regret, Mok recounts turning down IVI Publishing in a deal that would have swelled Mok's corporate coffers but turned his office into something resembling a digital factory. For Studio Archetype, taking on new work "ultimately comes down to producing work we can believe in," Mok says.

Meanwhile, North, whose day-to-day job is an amalgam of new business development and coordinating strategic planning for Studio Archetype clients, spends a good portion of the day gently turning away business. North

notes that 50 percent of inquiries for service are turned down. "Our goal is to service the needs of our ongoing, strategic clients — to make certain the Sonys and the 3Coms are getting our full attention," she says.

Going the Web Way

Much of the incoming business is directly related to the phenomenon of the World Wide Web. The Web offers a new model of multimedia production opportunity that eliminates many of the flaws and risks of CD-ROM-based publishing, Mok explains. Since Web sites are essentially living, organic information entities, the need for updates, revisions, additions and redesigns is continual. As a result, it creates an opportunity for an ongoing relationship between production company and client that is preferable to the uncertainties of the project-by-project model.

"The Internet has opened entirely new areas of focus for us," says Mok, whose firm has been rolling out Web sites for, among others, 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, Activision, Sony Pictures and Harper Collins Publishing at the rate of about one a month. Mok credits the information design experience garnered on an early medical CD-ROM for developing an understanding of how Web sites can be mapped in hyperspace.

Designing Web sites is only half of the equation for Mok, whose interests extend into more entrepreneurial realms. "From helping to produce products and services online, we can actually begin to expand the capability of an organization to do business on-line," Mok says, with excitement building in his voice. "Currently, we are addressing transactions, the next hurdle to doing business on the Internet."

What the Internet can deliver, and only a few companies are actually beginning to understand, is, according to Mok, "true enter-

By Sam McMillan



presented itself in the form of "24 Hours in Cyberspace," the ambitious undertaking by Rick Smolan and Against All Odds productions that occurred last month. The event had photojournalists posting their work from around the world while photo editors, art directors and journalists assembled stories for a one-time-only, real-time magazine on the Web.

Mok worked closely with Smolan to create the interface for end users. According to Smolan, that meant taking something incredibly complex and simplifying it to the point where "a photo editor could sit down in front of a machine and, using a point-and-click interface, could begin assembling a story from hundreds of thousands of pictures. We needed to create interactive templates that determined a finite amount of creative choices."

"Clement and I inhabit the same general world," says Smolan, who has known Mok since his days at Apple. "It has been interesting to watch him migrate to the head of the pack. One of the reasons I chose to work with him on this project is that he's consistently sensitive to what's coming next — the zeitgeist, the wind that blows ahead of its time."

In The Mix

To Smolan, the extraordinary challenges represented by the largest one-day event on the Internet "demanded a mixture of art and science. Which is a good metaphor for what Clement does."

When the dust settles from the reorganization, the bottom line will be that Mok is free to do what he does best: design, R&D, and what he calls the gardening aspect of running a business — exploring creative concepts,

developing emerging ideas and connecting those ideas with the people in his organization. Mok calls it being the "and" part of the organization. "Clement is this and that," he says with a grin. Noun, verb, conjunction.