

## LMNOP

By Peter Carey



The first thing that Jennifer Graham and Stephanie Chiuminatto wanted was to keep in touch with their friends and work colleagues, not to start a non-profit organization that has grown to over 160 members and offer workshops and mentoring programs. It seems almost cliché to say that their group, LMNOP (Leadership, Mentoring, Networking and Opportunity for A&D Professionals), was born out of necessity, and yet there really is no other way to describe how it happened. Jennifer and Stephanie became quick friends while both were studying for the NCIDQ exam in 2008. Then, in January, 2009, their paths crossed again at the AIA's Not Business as Usual (NBAU) series of programs at the Center for Architecture. Jennifer, being recently let go from her Co-Studio Leader position at Mancini Duffy, and Stephanie, formerly an Interior Designer at NBBJ, wanted to share their experiences of recent unemployment with colleagues and former co-workers. Both were impressed with the large numbers and wide range of experience of the interior design professionals that attended the NBAU bi-weekly events; clearly there was a need for relevant interaction and some form of debriefing specific to their situation.

After email addresses were exchanged, a small group of about fifteen people soon started messaging each other and encouraging everyone to attend events and network as much as possible. The psychological impact of being laid off can be devastating, especially for people who hadn't seen this type of downturn before. With the assurance that each person would know at least one other person at a networking event, the bonding of the group was formed...

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