



FIRST STOP!
The Design

A theme park just doesn't "happen"; it takes many years and a lot of people to develop ideas and create the designs suited for the environment and population. Philip Drake is the Director of Atomiq Design, designers and "experience developers" for theme parks and tourism. ED! asked Philip a few questions about his work.

ED!: What is the first thing

you must think of when designing a theme park?
Philip: Demographics. What is your target customer? For example, are they teens and young adults wanting thrill rides, families with young children, mixed family groupings etc. Unfortunately, the start of any theme park project is usually maths, statistics and economics. This leads to determining your feasibility (how something can be done) and this leads to

determining what type of rides and attractions will work in your park. It's pointless to design a group of cutting-edge \$20 million rides if that puts your ticket price outside the reach of most of your customers. After that less exciting part you can start to think about themes and worlds and the layout of the park.

ED!: How do you get visitors coming back to a theme park time after time?

Philip: Anyone can build the biggest or fastest or tallest roller coaster in the world and lots of people will come to ride it. But if that's all there is to do, people may not come back very often, if at all. What you need to do is build an experience that makes the whole visit a great day. That means a combination of several things: a unique visual experience — what we would call "wow factor"; an environment that creates an emotional response in the guest like something fun, scary or thrilling; and interactive activities so people can get "hands on". Finally, designers need to set up opportunities for the park's staff to engage with guests. Ideally this includes



Philip Drake from Atomiq has worked on designs for Abyss. Pictures: Atomiq

Philip Drake from Atomiq has worked on designs for Land of Awesomeness.



NEXT STOP:
The 'happiest place on Earth'

Strap yourself in, hold on tight and keep your hands in the car! Heather Zubek takes you on a roller coaster ride through the world of running a theme park.

What's the difference?

An **amusement park** has rides, games and other forms of entertainment. A **theme park** is just like an amusement park but its rides and attractions have a central theme. MovieWorld and Disneyland are theme parks.



Dreamworks is just one of the theme parks worked on by Philip Drake of Atomiq.

costume characters, entertainers, unique food services and animal handlers. **ED!: Theme parks have certainly changed over the years, what has been the one major change in theme park design?**

Philip: Hmmm, hard question. I think the biggest change has been in the use of technology. Most theme parks now ask for rides and attractions that are more complex than ever before.

More and more rides and attractions use technology to add entertainment, thrilling environments or story characterisation to the experience — animatronics, large media screens, lights and lasers, robotic vehicles or moving scenery. Virtual reality is something that is still fairly new but we are expecting this technology to bring in the biggest change to theme park design over the next five to 10 years.

Disneyland of course! And the second-most popular theme park in the world, coming just behind Walt Disney World. The idea for Disneyland began when a man called Walt Disney watched his young daughters ride a merry-go-round in America. He thought of creating a place where adults and children could visit and have fun together. The earliest plans for Disneyland were for a park called Mickey Mouse Park, complete with a Main Street and steamboat rides. In July 1955, Disneyland was opened to a very unhappy public. The opening day was a disaster with no drinking water, uninvited people climbing over the fence, special guests running late because of traffic and heat. This unfortunate beginning didn't stop people. Each year over 15 million people visit Disneyland with 18.3 million people visiting the 'happiest place on Earth' in 2017.

Being Part of the Disney Family
Disneyland and all the other Disney theme parks attract workers from around the world. ED! caught up with a couple of them to find out what it is like to work in the "happiest place on Earth". **Chad Ostermann** from Kansas worked as a safari driver at the Kilimanjaro Safari at Walt Disney World in Florida last year.

ED!: What did you do as a safari driver?

Chad: I would drive a large truck with up to 45 people in it across a live animal reserve where I would point out the animals as they roamed around. I went across the savannah with the lions and into the forest across crocodile-infested waters. Rhinos sometimes charged the trucks but luckily the trucks are too large to be tipped over.

ED!: Why did you want to work in a Disney theme park?

Chad: I always thought it would be an incredible experience to meet people from around the world and see how Disney does business. As a graduate in Digital and Experimental Media, I find all their innovations and theming fascinating.



Safari driver Chad Ostermann. Picture: Chad Ostermann

ED!: What type of training specific to Disney did you have to do?

Chad: Most notably, they teach you the four key basics. These are: Safety, Show, Courtesy, Efficiency. They go in order of importance. Safety is always first, followed by keeping up your performance and theming on "stage" then being good to the guests and others, then finally keeping everything running smoothly.

Brad Kruger, Manager of Media Education with Seven West Media (WA) is a huge Disney fan and was once a part of the Disney team.

Brad: I've been a Disney fan ever since I can remember, and I always dreamed of going to Disneyland when I was a child. Little did I know that my dream would more than come true. I've been to the Disney parks in Anaheim, Orlando, Paris and Hong Kong multiple times. I've only got Tokyo and Shanghai left to do!

My favourite attraction in all of the Disney parks is Mystic Manor in Hong Kong. It's their version of the Haunted Mansion, but without the ghosts, but instead, a monkey unleashes a magical spell. But best of all, I got to work for Disney Cruise Line. I literally sailed the Caribbean with Mickey Mouse — for a job! It was an amazing experience. I learnt a lot about Disney as a business and their biggest priority, which is "guest satisfaction" — that's making sure that people like you have the best time possible. It was amazing to be a part of the 'magic' of Disney.



Brad Kruger with Donald Duck at Disneyland Paris. Picture: Brad Kruger



Mr Moon still grins on the visitors to Luna Park Melbourne each day. Picture: Luna Park Melbourne

INTO THE HOME STRAIGHT:
With Luna Park!

Five Luna Parks have been built in Australia, including one that was built in Perth: Luna Park Scarborough. This park was built in 1936 but closed in 1972. Only the Luna Parks in Melbourne and Sydney remain open. Luna Park, Melbourne was opened on Friday December 13, 1912. It was built by American showmen who had experience in the amusement and movie industry. On that first day, 22,319 people walked through the famous open mouth of Mr Moon. The famous Scenic Railway also opened on that day and today it is the oldest continually operating roller coaster in the world.

ED! talks to Paola Ghirelli from Luna Park in Melbourne about the running of the famous park with the big mouth.

ED!: Safety is a huge concern for theme parks. What type of inspections are needed and how often are they conducted?

Paola: Yes, safety is of utmost importance at Luna Park, Melbourne. There is a daily ride check (for every ride) before every operation day. There are maintenance checks every nine days, then there are larger more complex checks every three months and an annual strip-down maintenance check. **ED!: Describe what happens just before opening each day**
Paola: Every day the rides are

all operated briefly by the Park's operation people and then this is handed over to the maintenance people who operate each ride again to double check.

ED!: What happens after closing time?

Paola: After closing, the park is cleaned thoroughly. All rubbish is taken down to the bins at the back. Rubbish collection happens weekly in winter and in summer three times per week. **ED!: Crowd control must be a big issue as well, is there a strategy put in place?**

Paola: The park takes crowd control very seriously. To control numbers, queue lines are worked out and if needed additional staff are put on.



The scenic railway in the early days of Luna Park, Melbourne. Picture: Luna Park, Melbourne

Hold on for History!

The theme parks that we see today evolved from travelling fairs, pleasure gardens and world fairs found in Europe during the Middle Ages. By the 1800s, fairs had grown in size and popularity and became places where people could watch acrobatics, magic and juggling. During the 1860s mechanical amusements such as steam-powered carousel rides were introduced, bringing

fairs into the modern age.

Pleasure Gardens were large gardens that were open to the public for entertainment. What set these gardens apart from gardens we see today is that pleasure gardens had venues for zoos and hosted concerts and rides.

World Fairs or World Expos are large exhibitions showcasing the achievements of different

countries. The first World Fair was in 1851 in London. This exhibition celebrated the world's industrial achievements as well as entertained visitors. The World Fair in Chicago in 1893 set the standard for future amusement and theme parks. Not only did the fair showcase other countries but it entertained with many 'firsts' such as the first steel ferris wheel and the first 'midway' or 'sideshow alley' area.