

II

Team Dynamics

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***With perfect
teamwork, Empire
State was built.***

Rem Koolhaas,
Delirious New York

Both the sole designer and the design team are legendary parts of the professional landscape of design. However, there is a theory in design that the best and most truly creative work can come only from one person's mind. It is this theory that often makes team performance more difficult in design than in other professions. Yet, while the designer as sole creator may be a strong factor working against the establishment or prevalence of teams in design, incredibly difficult demands on designers that have led them to rely on collaborative work and experience has shown that teams work. For example, architect William F. Lamb faced many challenges and set difficult goals for his most famous building, the Empire State Building. The architectural atmosphere of the 1920s encouraged him to build the tallest and most famous building in the world. In addition, he needed to meet the new zoning restrictions of 1916 while still achieving architectural excellence. Facing these tough external pressures, Lamb also set high expectations for his design team—to complete the tallest building in the world within 18 months of the initial sketch. It is now well known that the design and execution of the Empire State Building was so well married that the supplies appeared like magic and stories rose higher each day. And so, “with perfect *teamwork*, Empire State was built.”¹

In design, as in most professions, there is work for the single ego and there is work best suited to teams. In this chapter we explore the meaning of teams within the design field. Designers express the need for teams and collaboration, and often credit teamwork for the success of their projects, and yet the design industry is famed most for individualists. Both Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard Roark, the fictional architect in *The Fountainhead*, by Ayn Rand, were constantly victims of their unwavering ego. Our theory encourages designers to identify and distinguish between when the single ego should control a design project and when a team model should be used: this distinction is the key to success in using teams in design.