

Elizabeth Wetzel

Job title: Global Director of Buick Brand Interior Design

Did you always know you wanted to work in the auto industry?

As a kid I was always drawing. I was always interested in art. I was taking extra art classes outside of school. So I loved art, and I also liked science and math. So I went to a school in New York City called Parson's School of Design during my high school years. And I was exposed to industrial design, which is product design. I loved it and I knew that this is exactly what I want to do. It kind of combined my artistic capabilities and a desire to create and invent products.

So it didn't lead directly to automotive design. What happened was, when I was going to college, I got an internship at General Motors and I was doing illustrations to earn my way through college and my dad worked for GM. He was an engineer and he said, "You know what? You should go over to the design center there because you might be interested in that."

So I did. I came to GM design and I walked in the door and I was blown away by what I saw. Because what I saw was this development of automotive design is very artistic. They had on the walls full-size renderings of future cars and we're talking like five, six years down the road, both interiors and exteriors. And they had clay models as well and I saw that and I knew that's what I wanted to do.

You were the first female chief designer in GM's design history. What's that like for you?

It was exciting. It was a major milestone for me personally. I never thought I'd get to be at that level. The great thing is that what got me there was working with passionate people who really helped me grow.

So what would you say to a young person who might consider a similar career? What advice would you give?

I would say pick something that you love to do, because if you love doing it, now matter how challenging it gets you're still going to enjoy it. So first pick something that you love to do. Pick something you think you will be good at, knowing that during your career, you will have the ability to grow. Nobody expects anybody to come in right out of school knowing everything. But pick something that you think you have talent with and then don't look at what you're doing as a job. Look at it as a mission. Really embrace that drive and enthusiasm. Because I tell you if you have those qualities, drive and enthusiasm, you're going to motivate the people around you.

