Chris Johnson ('08)

Chris Johnson, a 2008 alumnus of Concordia University Wisconsin, is making the most of his education and experience since his graduation. Chris graduated with a degree in Multimedia Communications and has been making a difference ever since in the world of technology. Upon graduation Chris began doing consulting work for businesses in the Milwaukee area. After getting married in July, 2009, Chris followed his wife, Erica (Thiede) '08, to San Francisco where she was called to teach. While still consulting with clients all over the country, he responded to a Craigslist ad and started contracting with Chai Labs, a Mountain View, California, startup that was eventually acquired by Facebook. Chris then started at a social voice platform company called “Say Now”. That company was acquired by Google, and Chris joined Google as a full time employee.

At Google, he was the first and only designer on Google Hangouts when it launched in 2011. Google Hangouts is an internet communication platform that includes video, voice calling and instant messaging. He also led the design of Hangouts on Air, which allows you to broadcast your Hangouts video conversation to the world on YouTube. It’s been used by everyone from the Muppets to the President of the United States. He has also worked on things like Chromebox for Meetings, Google’s videoconferencing product, and is currently working on something new in Google’s Enterprise division as Senior Interaction Designer.

Chris' love for design developed while working on a political campaign for one of his Concordia professors, Dr. Jim Burkee. He developed strong friendships with faculty while helping them with their IT issues. But the things that he remembers most are the close friendships that he developed with his fellow students. “The people I met here are what stick out to me. I met a lot of very good people that I am still friends with,” he said. Johnson also noted the way he was able to become “very connected” and build relationships with a variety of people. He said, “You never know where someone is going to be in the future.”

Chris also gave some advice to students. He advises students to have a goal in mind and be willing to ask, “What am I trying to do?” Chris attributed the year he spent working full time between high school and college as an instrumental part to his clarification of purpose and his reason for going to Concordia. Chris says, “Having that clarification helps you realize how you are valuable and where your gifts and talents lie.” Looking back on his time at CUW and on his career, Johnson has learned to value the work he does and the relationships he has established. “It is important to do something you enjoy with people you want to be around.”