

hi@a

and welcome to this wonderful document on ...



**HOW TO WORK WITH A DESIGNER**

You have a project that needs some design help ... great! Hiring a graphic design firm to really hone your business identity and collateral is one of the fastest ways to achieve a professional, credible feel to your business. Whether you have no or limited experience or lots of experience working with a designer, here is a handy outline of things to keep in mind before, during and after your project.

#### BEFORE THE PROJECT BEGINS

*At this point in the project, the designer is an optional resource. If you have all the answers to the questions below, a designer really doesn't need to be involved. However, if you have concerns or need clarification, sit down with your designer to get their thoughts. They can be a wonderful resource in determining quantities, timelines, budgets and even who you might include as your audience.*

#### **Who is your audience and what do you want them to do?**

Figuring out what action you want your audience to take is an important step in the conception process. Design is wonderful, but without direction or purpose it is all window dressing.

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Work with your designer on the beginning processes to achieve the maximum expertise for your money.

#### **What is your timeline?**

Timelines are built backwards. Often people do not build in enough back end time (pre-press, press proofs) after a job has been approved. Give us your drop date (when you want the item in your hands) and we will work out a timeline to make sure that happens.

#### **What is your budget?**

You have one. Let the designer know what it is, so they can let you know from the start what to expect.

#### **Know your quantity**

You wouldn't think that a little number is so important. But in essence — it dictates everything:

- > How it is designed
- > How many colors
- > How it is distributed
- > What print process is used, *and most important,*
- > The cost.

One of the worst mistakes is having us design something for 100 people and have it turn into 700 people. It is always more expensive than if we knew to design to the larger quantity from the start. Think about it as retro-fitting a sunroof — expensive and just not quite right.

Always over-estimate because the average printer has a 10% over or under clause. That means they could be legitimately 10% shy of your quantity. If you were counting heads, this could be a real problem. Plus, if you think about it, increasing the quantity by 100 is pennies compared to going back on press.

#### **Organization = money**

The more organized you are, the less we have to figure out = the more money you save. For example, suppose you have a newsletter. Do you know what stories are on what pages? What photos go with that particular story? Do you have a pull quote you would like to use if space allows? If you don't spend the time now, designers will "spend" the time later. Unsure of a process? Tell us and we can suggest one to make your job go as smoothly as possible right from the beginning.

## CONCEPTION OF A PROJECT

*At this point you have contacted us for a specific project. If possible set up a direct face-to-face meeting to convey your thoughts and ideas.*

*Designers can infer a lot from body language and tone of voice about how you feel about certain styles compared to just reading it over an email.*

### **Know yourself**

Sometimes it is easier to know what you don't like. It is a great jumping off point and it tells us right off the bat what to avoid.

### **Let us be free**

You have a preconceived notion – wonderful! But never discount we are fantastically creative and might come up with something you haven't thought of. Allow us to do one direction that breaks from your original preconception.

### **Don't underestimate the time it takes**

You may think to yourself, "It's just a two-sided page. What is taking so long?" What you don't know is all the intricacies of layout. Designers don't layout in Word, so your text is coming into our program raw. This means we have to go through and get very personal with the details, eliminating double spaces, changing hyphens to em dashes, deciding what should be bold or italic, converting tables, making capitalization and punctuation consistent, eliminating widows and orphans and a whole slew of other things. This takes some time, so allow us some time to get things perfect on our end to present to you.

## YOUR FIRST COMP

*You have just received the agreed upon comps or mock-ups of your project. The designer has taken what they know about your likes and dislikes and has hopefully transformed them into a tangible project that if nothing else, is a jumping off point.*

### **Be decisive**

Costs can oooh up quickly if you email us with one change and then an hour later send another change. Take the time to thoroughly look through the piece, make your changes and relay it once. It is amazing how much money can be saved with concise changes.

### **Twice is not nice**

After a piece is laid out, don't make your changes by revising and resending the original Word document. Make changes to the mock-up itself.

### **Speak designer**

Any and all communications should be precise. For instance, if we have your approval to go to print, say "you are approved for print" instead of "looks good." Looks good is open ended, and as far as we know you may still have to get one more approval. Another

example would be saying something "looks weird." Instead communicate what precisely you don't like about it — don't worry we have tough skin. Appearance is vastly subjective, so explain to us what exactly is the issue.

### **A word about color**

Back long before computer layout, designers provided sketches. In a way, it created less hassles than today. Your mock-up is an APPROXIMATION. Ink on paper varies as much as Michigan weather, and if you are a real stickler for tint and hue, ask to see the color chip, a press proof and or even go on a press check.

### **Proof, proof, proof**

So often, people don't really look over the project thoroughly until it is printed and then they are scouring it over for flaws. When proofing, print it out or look at the mock-up. Don't do it on screen, you are less likely to catch errors. A proofreading trick: Proof up from the end, sliding a ruler up line by line — this stops your brain from over compensating.

## YOUR APPROVAL

*It is after your approval that the other half of our job comes into play. The piece may look complete to you, but on our end, there is a lot of work left and it is this expertise that really sets the professionals apart from the amateurs. Pre-press is a complicated process that takes years to master exactly how the ink should lay on the paper, what density, how to best gang a job run on a sheet. It gets more complicated than most people care, so we shall spare the details. Just know ... it ain't over for us until the finished job is in your hands.*

### **Last chance**

Proof it again once more. Small changes can have tiny effects that might have appeared since the first time you proofed the piece. It is VERY possible that something changed that was fine previously due to human error. Line breaks and extra spaces have a way of creeping in, so proof not only for spelling, but more for alignment, spaces and overall design cohesion. Once you give us the OK, it is gone, and all changes POST pre-press are costly and almost always avoided with a little extra care.

### **Post-mortem**

After a project is done, you can now look back on the job and analyze what went well and what didn't. Your relationship with your designer is just that — a relationship. Even if you are satisfied with the job overall, you should still discuss any minor issues that arose and how they can be avoided in the future. Get to know each other's working style. The more open your communication, the better product you will receive while minimizing frustrations and cost.

happy designing!



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