

How to Hire a Graphic Designer

A designer's job is to communicate your vision in printed materials or often, on the Web. Graphic artists blend together typography, paper, color, illustration, photography—and pizzazz—to deliver a message to your customers on a business card, logo, brochure, poster, invitation, book or even a T-shirt. If you don't know Helvetica from a hole in the ground, it's time to find yourself a designer.

Steps:

- 1.** Decide what you need. Does your new company need business cards? Would a logo help establish your presence in the marketplace? Do you need to tap into a new pool of customers? Have you got a product or service that nobody knows about? Effective graphic design lets people know who you are and what you do.
- 2.** Ask friends and colleagues for recommendations. Ask printers if they can recommend a designer they've worked with. Or check the PWC-GMCC web site or directory for designers in your area. Look at the designers' Web sites to see if their style is suited to what you're looking for.
- 3.** Review the designers' portfolios. Get a sense of how similar your business is to the type and size of the clients they typically work with. When you see something particularly interesting or good, ask, What was the problem you were asked to solve, and how did you arrive at this solution?
- 4.** If you like their work, discuss the project you need done. Expect the designer to ask you lots of questions about the project and your business.
- 5.** Ask for a quote. Some designers will bid small jobs on the spot. Others will send you a quote later, which should include a ballpark estimate for printing. Design fees are in addition to illustration, photography and printing costs (subject to a standard 17.5 percent markup), but the designer manages all of those elements.
- 6.** Budget according to size and complexity of the piece. Black and white or two-color work is cheaper than full-color. Actual fees are based on an hourly rate appropriate for your geographical area.
- 7.** Hire the designer. Make sure the contract has all the details of the job, including a printing estimate and schedule, before you sign it. You will typically pay half of the total fee in order to begin the job, and the remaining half when it's printed.
- 8.** Review sketches/comprehensives to determine if the designer is going in the right direction. He or she will take your feedback and refine the concept. You'll meet several times during the process to keep tightening up the design until it's complete and printed.

Tips:

Designers tend to specialize in different areas, such as developing corporate identities, which involves designing a logo and applying it to business cards, stationery, brochures and the company's Web site. Others specialize in environmental graphics, signage, exhibit design or product package design, while still others are strictly book or web site designers.

Start collecting materials that you like: business cards or logos, brochures and other printed pieces with a particular style or approach, or invitations that caught your eye.

What to look for:

Good recommendations
Clear idea of what you want
Someone you can work with well

Overall Warnings:

Check final proofs with the utmost care: If there's a typo, and you've signed off on the job, fixing the error will be on your tab. Check phone numbers and ZIP codes carefully.