

Guidance Note: Graphic Design Process

Good Graphic Design helps to sell Food Products



What is graphic design? Why do I need it? When do I need it?

How much is it likely to cost?

Good design sells.

'Businesses today face an increasingly stark choice. They can aim simply to be the cheapest –and leave themselves vulnerable to being beaten on price. Or they can achieve secure growth with design at the heart of their strategy, acting as a catalyst to completely new offerings.'

Digby Jones, Director General, CBI, in Competitive Advantage Through Design, 2002.

Large companies know the value of good design and commit large budgets to the design and marketing of their company, its image, products and services. Typically when you buy a pack of washing powder, 24% of the cost has been spent on getting the brand and packaging designed professionally. That does not include advertising spend. Why do they do this - because good design sells. Using professional experienced designers can give your product the edge to succeed.

Good design:

Builds loyalty

A memorable, well designed brand can build customer loyalty, a good professional designer knows how to make a brand connect on an emotional level with potential and existing customers through accurate positioning, graphics, typography and colour.

'Design is an investment, not a cost. It is a continuous thought provoking process that affects every part of business.'

Stephen Byers, Managing Director, Ritec International

Evokes

With strong visual training, the Designer will use style and imagery to entice new customers, make a product appetising, appealing and desirable.

Gains trust

A new product or service must be perceived as credible, professional and trustworthy, the designer knows how to use the right visual clues, typography, layout and colour to communicate these values. Commissioning and art directing professional photography being part of that process.

'In a competitive world, high quality design is increasingly a differentiating factor. Good design is not just a matter of flair or an occasional flash of inspiration – it is an ongoing, systematic process.'

George Cox, Director General, Institute of Directors, in Directors on Design, 2002.

Informs

With a firm understanding of information design, hierarchy, typography and colour, a professional designer knows how to communicate the message of your product or service most effectively.

Positions

A good designer can accurately position your product or service so it communicates to the right target audience at the right level.

Raises profiles

A new brand or service has to work hard to establish its position, a professional designer knows how to achieve this using the correct colours, choice of paper, type of packaging and visual imagery to bring it to the attention of potential customers.

Saves Money

The designer knows about producing correct artwork for print, how to achieve the best quality using the correct resolution images and how to use fewer colours and still achieve impact, what can and cannot be printed effectively, what materials and papers to use for the right effect and economy. Knowing good print from bad and monitoring the job preventing the design being spoilt at the print stage. Using a professional designer at the outset saves you money re-printing at a later date.

Saves Money and Saves Face

Most importantly if a designer has to work with an existing brand image that is weak and poorly designed, particularly if it has gained some market recognition, creative compromises will have to be made which will lead to less effective solutions resulting in less sales and less profit.

'If you think good design is expensive, look how much bad design costs'

Martyn Denny, Sales & Marketing Director, Aqualisa

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Sells

Good design and marketing 'generates three times more value than any other activity, and should be regarded as an investment not an expense'

Chartered Institute of Marketing's Chief Executive - Peter Fisk

What makes a professional designer?

With 4 years at Art school and an inherent talent most good designers are uniquely qualified. They learn use of colour, including colour psychology and the human response to colour. Organisation of information - how humans respond to certain information and the best sequence for its presentation.

With literally millions of typefaces they learn how to choose the correct face to match the needs of the job, which weight and case (caps or lowercase) to communicate the right message to the right target audience.

They know how to draw, paint and sculpt and have a basic understanding of form and space, which gives them an inherent 'eye' for composition. Printing in all its forms is known with the use of inks and the technical know how - including resolutions and pixel information, scanning images and converting images for screen use and print use. Utilising the latest computer software and professional design packages that can generate the right information for printers and the web.

Understanding how powerful a brand can be, experience with major brands and packaging equips designers with the knowledge to use all their skills to communicate the values and benefits of the brand (product or service) in the best and most effective way, ultimately adding value and increasing loyalty and sales. They live and breathe design everyday, to most it is not a job it is what they are. However, ultimately a 'good designer' is born and whatever is gained in experience only serves to add to their innate visual instincts.

Things your designer needs to know about you: (not in any specific order)

What do you want your customers to think of you?

Cheap, value, bargain, up-market, exclusive, expensive, desirable, must-have, need...?

Who is your target market?

What age and socio-economic group, ethnic group (if applicable), kids, teenagers, over-60's, working parents, cash-rich time-poor...?

Has the product a name?

Name generation, research, trademark registration.

What is the price position and why?

What is the actual proposition?

Who are your closest competition?

Who do you admire / want to be like?

Conversely who do you not want to be associated with?

What is the message?

Not the features of the product/service - but the benefits to the customer

What information do you need to display?

Special features, copywriting, diagrams, pictures, maps, industry standard logos, etc

Where are you selling?

How are you going to sell/promote?

What media? - advertising, literature, packaging, PR, exhibitions, sampling, e-commerce.

Is there any other information that you'd like to communicate?

OK. So what do I do now?

Once you have decided what you need from the designer you will have formed some sort of 'brief' from which the designer can work. This need not be a written brief, as long as you can communicate what it is you're trying to achieve. The designer will normally not charge you for this initial briefing. You will then be given written quotes for the work at which point you can decide whether or not to proceed.

The designer will probably be able to help you in some aspects of the above list like name generation and with their contacts will be able point you in the right direction to more specialised consultants, including market research and trademark lawyers. They will also handle the print for you, which is best advised to do. Many a good job has been ruined by bad print! And what a waste of all that money spent on the design work.

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How does the design process work?

Armed with your brief your designer will produce initial creative concepts. It's important to remember that these will be a range of ideas and not finished designs. With your feedback a chosen route/idea will be explored. The final design will be polished and print ready artwork will be created.

Further stages would follow a new brand identity these may include stationery, brochures, leaflets, packaging, website etc. In this way everything that is produced will follow the same Brand guidelines that have been honed in the initial design process.

Expect to pay in stages as the job progresses, all copyright and intellectual property rights remain with the designers until payment has been made, though some designers will retain copyright. All designers will expect to be able to use the work they designed for you in their own portfolios and sales material.

Any outside commissions should be budgeted for as extras. If specific photography is needed there may be various costs involved like food economist and stylist as well as art directing the photography.

How much will it cost me?

As is normal, commissioning any type of consultant will always depend on how much work there is and the level of Consultant you've chosen. Naturally if you choose a large London agency the costs will be a lot higher than a small local one, but the quality there will be more or less guaranteed due to their ability to employ the best designers. However bear in mind that the designer that did the actual work in the portfolios of a large agency, may have already moved on and started up on their own.

As a rule, consultants that have 'cut their teeth' working in large consultancies on known brands and have started up on their own will have both the experience and offer better value. Like anything in life - there are good designers and bad ones. Expect to see the portfolios of the companies before choosing! It must be borne in mind, however, that setting a low budget will not give you the amount of support, input and access to professional expertise you may require. On average a small consultancy will charge around £500 a day. Typically a new brand identity would require between 3 and 5 days of work.

How to get the best from your Designer:

"Everyone's a designer"

Don't be tempted to 'design' the job yourself 'for' the designer as this can restrict creativity and you will never know what you might have got! Apart from this your idea may not be viable or appropriate within part or all the criteria listed previously and could be a more expensive solution than the designer would come up with. Of course don't be afraid to discuss any ideas that you might have!

Saving some costs:

If you want to save costs, try to do things yourself that aren't directly related to the design process, ie typing, research etc.

PDF's:

If saving costs is an issue, also cutting down on meetings and accepting pdfs by email instead of printouts will be beneficial. A pdf is a file that enables the designer to show you their design concepts as they've designed it in a small file with all the photographs, typefaces etc included. In order to read a pdf you will need Adobe Acrobat reader, which you can download from the internet for free. Get.adobe.com

Time schedules:

Always leave enough time in your schedule for the Design process. It can take deceptively longer than you might think, and good design work does take time to develop, often the time spent in between the stages is needed for a 'fresh look', it is during this time that the concepts are honed and perfected. There will also be time needed for other suppliers such as photographers, researchers and printers who will need to be briefed and booked in. Depending upon the job some printers will need 2 - 3 weeks notice. A small job usually only 5-7 days.

Warning:

Always check the print-ready artwork meticulously for spelling errors and addresses, phone numbers etc. The designer will more often than not miss these as they are more conscious of the layout, colour, typography etc and probably won't be reading the words. Apart from this it is likely that in the Designer's terms and conditions the onus will be on you to check that content is correct.

File formats:

Once the job is finished ask the designer to give you a cd with all the artwork and logo artwork etc that you will need for future work and to give to other suppliers. In the case of Logos, ask them to explain to you which logo to use for which application. It is unlikely that you will be able to open most of the files yourself so make sure they are labelled in a way that you can identify them. There are a number of different files that the designer will supply you, amongst these some will be for full colour, some may be 'spot colour' others just for black and white or faxing, some may be for a particular type of print like silk screen only, others for web site...

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As a guide:

Logo Artwork for print will normally either be an 'eps' or 'tiff' file.

Logos for web sites will be either a 'gif' or a 'jpeg/jpg'

DON'T use any file intended for web sites for print!

To add to any confusion jpegs may also be useable for print - but it depends on the size and quality, as a rule of thumb if a jpeg/jpg was supplied for web - it wont be suitable for print.

If you need to import any logos for your own use on the pc let the designer know which file format you'd like them to supply. As designers tend to be Mac based most will not be familiar with the PC / windows platform.

Tip:

Sometimes there may be difficulties with using and printing certain files supplied by the designer effectively on your pc. Consider getting certain stationery items like 'continuation sheets' or 'press release' paper printed at the same time as your other stationery items. This will save you a lot of money, not only at the printers, but also save you a lot of time, frustration and printing ink struggling with your desktop printer - with the added bonus of you presentations looking more professional!

Good Design

'A lot of trial and error goes into making things look effortless.'

Bill Moggridge, IDEO, Financial Times, 30 July 2002.

We hope that this general guide, which we at Fly design limited have written for **The Food Club**, will be helpful in understanding the creative design process. We also sincerely hope that you will benefit from what Good Design can bring to your particular food business.

Cindy & Helen at www.flydesign.biz

