

ComputerWeekly.com

Guide to choosing Graphic Designers



**How to choose the right Graphic
Designer for your business**

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INTRODUCTION

You only get one chance to make a first impression, so it's essential that you have the right design to catch the eye. It's a wise investment then to recruit a competent graphic designer who can make an impact and reflect your business' professionalism.

Creative excellence is integral to the success of your business or business campaign. By adding creative value to your business, you will connect more with your potential and existing customers and they will be more likely to do business with you instead of one of your competitors.

A graphic designer's main purpose is to present information in a way that is both aesthetic and accessible to the viewer. It is about communication and the transfer of knowledge to customers. They use a combination of images, text, and graphics to produce a unified and effective design based on your brief.

Your brief to the designer will consist of a summary of your aims, objectives and ambitions to be achieved through the design. Some of the main aims of graphic design are to:

- Generate contact with potential and existing customers
- Boost sales
- Maintain and spread brand awareness
- Distinguish your company from competition
- Enhance your company's credibility

Familiarity of a brand generates trust, therefore the more you invest in a good design and brand, the easier it will be to retain and expand your client base.

Graphic designers usually have a vast range of artistic expertise, and would be able to help you, whether your business is just starting out or you are looking to refresh the look of an established company, to design such things as:

- Corporate logos
- Web graphics
- Brochures
- Flyers
- Packaging and products
- Exhibitions
- Company stationery

BRANDING

If you are setting up a new business, it is very important to create a brand for your company as this is how to get people to remember your business. It is vital for your company to create a unique identity in its brand design so as to set you apart from competitors. A brand should embody all the information connected to your company, including your values and personality.

You need to brand the identity of your company visually and this requires investing in a graphic designer as they have the crucial expertise and creative process which will produce an effective and unique identity. Branding is not simply about colour, shape or form, it is also a psychological process of understanding what appeals to potential clients.

Remember that your brand design needs to be able to work on all forms of marketing materials, including your website, business stationery, product packaging, and brochures.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Sourcing a good designer or agency can be difficult as there are innumerable graphic designers with various levels of skill and experience to choose from. This is where the Approved Index, the UK's leading online business to business referral service, proves invaluable, with a list of established, proven graphic design companies on its books for you to contact. You can complete a simple form on our website and receive up to six free quotes from graphic designers and agencies.

<http://www.approvedindex.co.uk/indexes/GraphicDesigners/default.aspx>

You will still have to choose one company to work with, so here are some things to consider.

Assessing a portfolio

The greatest resource available for researching a graphic designer's aptitude and suitability for the kind of work you have in mind is the portfolio of jobs they have done in the past. Qualities to look for include variety, originality and whether you consider the style of the designs effective for the businesses in question.

Also, you must consider whether you like the designer's style and would like it to represent your company's brand. This seems obvious, but you must give thought to this as if your preferences are very different, it may give rise to many problems later on.

If a designer's portfolio is large then this shows he has many clients and has lots of experience.

Getting references

Any graphic designer or agency should be happy to provide you with a list of satisfied clients as references. This is possibly the most important step in choosing the right company to work with as talking to past clients will give you an idea what the company is like to work with in practice.

There are a number of questions worth asking referees. How well did the designer communicate with the clients? Did the designer deliver what was required within budget and to schedule? How did he act under the pressure of deadlines? Have the designs stood the test of time? Is the designer dynamic and adaptable enough that alterations to the design can be made without difficulty?

Size of the organisation

You will likely find that there are all sizes of organisations available for your project, from freelance individuals to multinational corporations. Which is best depends on you and your project and there are advantages and disadvantages to either. While a freelancer will probably give you a very high level of personal service, they may not personally be able to take on all of your tasks. Large companies offer stability, capacity and guarantees, but you may not receive such personal service, especially if you are a relatively small client. Additionally, a larger organisation is likely to be more stable.

Ultimately, you should be confident that the individual or company you choose can provide you with high quality work and the level of service you want.

A good relationship

Make sure that you meet the individual project manager and the designer who will be working with you on your project and ensure that you get along well with them before employing their services. Also, request their own portfolio so you will see their individual style and experience.

It may seem obvious, but having a good working relationship with your designer is vital. You will inevitably need to communicate a lot and effectively in order to achieve the result you want, so you must feel comfortable with them. It's no good having the world's most sought-after graphic designer working for you unless you feel able to

tell them that they've done something wrong or that you don't like something they've created. A designer should be able to take constructive criticism and suggestions and be generally personable. Compatibility between client and designer is key to generating the best possible end result.

Geographic expertise

You should ensure that the graphic designer has expertise in the customers you are looking to attract. Therefore, if your business is aimed primarily at British customers then it is recommended you choose a British graphic designer as they will have the geographic expertise to create a design that would appeal to the British public.

Medium expertise

As graphic design can extend to a wide range of disciplines, it is vital that you research graphic designers to make sure they have the expertise in the graphic design area you are looking for. For example, some graphic designers focus on website design, so if you are looking for a graphic designer to design brochures for your company then you should not choose them.

Sector expertise

You want to choose a graphic designer that understands your business sector. This will help you get the most effective design for your desired audience as the designer will have a knowledge and understanding of the type of customers you are targeting and how your sector operates.

Budget

If you have a small budget, it may be advisable to look to individual or freelance designers as they should charge less than using a large design agency. Likewise, if you are looking for a graphic designer to design a number of different items for you, it may be best to use an

agency as they will have more support and will be better handled to manage multiple and more complex designs at once.

PRICING GUIDE

Pricing varies depending on the type of design agency or designer you choose and also the size and complexity of your project. If you want the graphic designer to design a number of different elements, the price will increase. Generally, if you are a larger business, then the prices will be more expensive.

Below are some guideline prices for the main services available from graphic designers.

Corporate Identity and Branding

Prices will range from £500 for a logo design to around £50,000 up for larger corporations.

Corporate Stationery

Prices will start at around £500 for the design of business cards, letterheads, etc. The printing costs of the stationery will be an additional cost on top of the design, and starts at around £500.

Website Design

Prices for website design will range from £1,000 upwards. The cost of the design increases with the level of sophistication you are looking for.

Packaging and Product Design

The price range for packaging and product design starts at approximately £2,000.

Adverts, Magazines, Posters, etc

Design costs will start at around £1,000. Printing, photography, and advertising costs will be extra.

Brochures

Design costs will start around £1,000. Printing costs will be extra.

Exhibition Stands

Prices for the design of exhibition stands start around £500 plus costs of producing the stands.

E-mail Campaigns

Prices start around £500. The cost of acquiring an e-mail list and sending the e-mail campaign will be extra on top of the design cost.

Remember to ask your graphic designer whether he will provide the images for your design or whether you will have to buy them separately. This is an important consideration as you do not want to find out after the design process has started of any unexpected costs.