

You have a
fantastic
product.

Nobody's
heard of it.

**Now
what?**

Unless you are lucky enough to have a monopoly on an essential product or service, marketing will be an ongoing challenge.

Hours of strategic planning go into marketing, targeting potential customers, predicting outcomes. Unfortunately, the most brilliant marketing strategy is useless if the materials themselves don't do justice to the content. A poorly designed brochure or a confusing web site can undermine the product and the strategy.

Should you hire a designer?

The market research has targeted the potential clients; you have continually improved your product or service and are certain that it would be useful to them. The trick is to communicate those facts. The marketing materials that represent your company must convey an appropriate image.

What a designer can do

A professional graphic designer is trained to analyze overall communications plans and create a package that represents *your company* in ways that invite your audience to use *your product*.

Planning your project

Plan ahead. Know what you want the finished piece to accomplish in the context of your corporate communications strategy. Write a design brief and have it approved internally even before selecting a designer. The design brief should answer the following questions:

- What are the objectives of the project?
- What is the priority of each objective?
- How will the new project fit in with the overall company communications plan?
- Who is your existing audience ?
- Who is your “ideal” audience?
- How much can you spend on this?
- When do you need it?
- Who will oversee the project and have final approval?
- Is more than one bid being solicited?
- What constitutes an acceptable presentation (how many options, what format/medium)?
- Will multiple copies of a written proposal be required?

Choosing a designer: large company/agency vs. independent contractor

The range of options available is almost formidable. You can choose an independent contractor, a large multinational agency, or any number of options between. The trick is to decide which will best serve your purposes.

Independent contractors, or freelancers, establish close relationships with their clients. These people are master multi-taskers; clients are guaranteed individual attention and the knowledge that they are dealing with someone who is familiar with *their* project. As a client, you are dealing with one person rather than a sales representative who must communicate your instructions to the designer. Agencies have more people and resources to assign to a project. This can be an advantage if your project requires this level of service, but you may not have access to the person actually doing the design.

Evaluate your needs, and call a range of possible candidates. Ask friends or colleagues for recommendations and if you see material you like, try to find out who designed it.

When you are discussing your project with these candidates, ask as many questions as you can. Ask about business details such as billing practices, intellectual property rights, reasonable timelines, privacy and confidentiality issues and anything else that seems relevant. Is the designer or sales representative comfortable about explaining business policy? Examine portfolios carefully. *Always* ask for and check references.

Finally, consider the personal aspect. This is someone who will be working closely with you. Are you comfortable with this person? Does she listen carefully and explain clearly? Does he seem to have a good grasp of what you need?

Collaborating with the designer

Whether you've chosen an independent contractor or an agency, here are some guidelines that will keep you on track, and within budget.

Involve the right people. You have carefully selected a skilled professional designer. She needs to work with the person or group on your staff with the best knowledge of the project and the authority to make decisions. Projects are often jeopardized if they are assigned to a junior person as budgets and schedules go out the window if every decision has to be referred to someone else.

Set a realistic budget. Design is like everything else – generally you get what you pay for. A designer is entitled to appropriate remuneration and the client is entitled to good value for the money. By prioritizing the objectives in the design brief, you are assured of having the resources allocated properly. Once the job parameters have been established, be aware that changes and additions will affect the budget.

“Measure twice, cut once.” Allow enough time in the schedule for careful work, thorough proofing and testing, and all required approvals. Short cuts at any stage can lead to costly errors and delays.

Any design project, whether it's a web site, logo or annual report, is a collaborative exercise. The final product, a result of good planning and this collaborative effort, will effectively represent your company and its product to your clients.

This publication was created
to provide information
about services available from
professional graphic designers.

Accept no substitutes.



Complements of

pyroGRAPHICS
print & multimedia

About Pyrographics

Brenda Pflieger, an independent designer, founded Pyrographics in 1997. Pyrographics projects have included web sites, multimedia presentations, annual reports, advertising materials and brochures.

Visit the web site, **www.pyrographics.ab.ca** to view a portfolio sampling, fill out a questionnaire for a no-obligation estimate for your design project, and read articles related to the web and design business.

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