Choosing and Using a Graphic Designer

Business Information Factsheet

BIF013 · December 2022

Introduction

Graphic designers produce eye-catching and effective designs that can be used in a variety of ways. For example, they are commissioned to create business and product logos, images and artwork for websites, stationery, leaflets, packaging, signage and exhibition stands.

This factsheet outlines some of the steps involved in finding and choosing a graphic designer and preparing a project brief. It also indicates the likely costs.

Finding a graphic designer

There are a number of ways to find graphic designers, for example:

- The 'find a designer' directory on the Chartered Society of Designers website (www.csd.org.uk/resources/find-a-designer).

- The 'find a design agency' directory on the Design Business Association's website (www.dba-community.org.uk/s/searchdirectory?id=a251t000000dmIB).

- Freelancer marketplaces specialising in graphic design and other creative services. Examples include:

  - 99Designs (https://99designs.co.uk).

  - Dribble (https://dribbble.com/hiring).

  - DesignHill (www.designhill.com/designers?pagetype=grid&page=1&location=United%20Kingdom).

- The UK Graphic Designer directory (www.ukgraphicdesigner.co.uk).

Issues to consider when choosing a graphic designer

When choosing a graphic designer, key considerations include the following:

- Do they charge per hour, or will there be a fixed project fee?

- What type of clients do they work for and how long have they worked with them?

- Would there be a conflict of interest with any of their previous or existing clients? Do they work for any competitors, for example?

- How much do they know and understand about a particular business sector? This is not essential, but in specialist sectors choosing a designer with prior experience may save time and money, as they will not have to spend so much time familiarising themselves with the sector.

- Designers should be asked to provide examples of their work and references from other clients. It is also important to look at the designer's own website, which will typically showcase their skills and design styles.

The project brief

The design process usually begins with an initial consultation during which the graphic designer and their client can discuss a project brief. The more information provided to the designer about the project and specific business goals, the better the end results will be.

The project brief should cover the following points:

- The nature of the work being commissioned and the ways in which it will be used. For example, if a new logo is to be used on websites and social media accounts, correspondence, stationery and adverts, it may be needed in a variety of sizes.

- Whether the designer will liaise directly with other suppliers when required, such as website developers, copywriters and photographers.

- The objective of the design work being commissioned. This will help the graphic designer create designs that will meet the aims of the business effectively.

- An estimated timetable, including deadlines for various stages of the project.

- An overall project fee or an estimate of how many hours the designer will spend on all aspects of the design work.

- The formats in which the final designs should be supplied.

The design process

After the initial consultation, most design projects involve a number of stages, including:

- Development of initial ideas by the designer.

- Presentation of first drafts and an opportunity to give feedback. This is an opportunity to ensure that the designer's vision of the finished design matches what is required.

- Finalising an agreed design based on feedback and amendments.

- Proofing and signing off the finished design.

- Implementing the design.

How much will it cost?

The rates charged by graphic designers vary considerably, depending on the designer's skills and experience and the complexity of the project. Some charge by the hour (usually between around £30 and £90) or by the day (typically around £200-£400). Others may charge a fixed rate per project or work on a retainer basis.

When hiring a graphic designer who charges an hourly or daily rate it is important to ask for an estimate of the amount of time it will take to complete the project as this will help to keep a tight control on the budget.

Useful contacts

The Chartered Society of Designers is a membership organisation representing design professionals in the UK and overseas.
www.csd.org.uk

The Design Business Association is a trade body for design in the UK.
www.dba.org.uk

Related factsheets

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BIF267 Increasing Website Traffic
BIF392 Creating a Marketing Strategy