

Launch Your Brand & Web Design Business In 6 Weeks

WORKSHEETS AND CHECKLISTS TO HELP YOU CONFIDENTLY LAUNCH YOUR
DESIGN BUSINESS AND START WORKING WITH YOUR FIRST CLIENTS!



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START HERE

Starting your own design business can truly be a roller coaster of emotions; it's wildly exciting but equally terrifying! We know how overwhelming it can feel not knowing where to start when it comes to getting everything in order to officially launch.

Not too long ago, we were exactly where you are. But, here's something really powerful that we picked up in the process of starting our business: you don't have to know everything before you launch your business to be successful. You just need a great plan to get started, and the confidence to put yourself out there.

Because we see so many designers get "stuck" in the launch phase of their business, we created this guide that will help you feel prepared, confident, and ready to take the leap!

This guide is full of checklists and prompts that are going to help you nail down your essential business details, so we recommend printing it out or filling it out digitally; whatever way helps you to intentionally think through your launch.

Okay, ready?? You've got this!

Cassidy & Amanda



OVERVIEW OF YOUR NEXT 6 WEEKS:

WEEK 1 - INTENTIONS & GOAL SETTING *Brainstorm your intentions for your business and set clear goals*

WEEK 2 - ESTABLISHING BUSINESS BASICS *Naming, legalities, finances, and determining your services*

WEEK 3 - YOUR BRANDING *Creating a brand strategy for your business, what you need to get started*

WEEK 4 - YOUR WEBSITE *What your website needs to start attracting and booking clients*

WEEK 5 - MARKETING YOURSELF *Setting yourself up online, making a marketing plan*

WEEK 6 - BOOKING YOUR FIRST CLIENTS *Attracting your first clients, closing the sale*

WEEK 1: INTENTIONS & GOAL SETTING

Dreaming big and setting intentions early on is one of the best things you can do for your business! Our biggest business wins have come from setting goals that scare us a little, so don't hold yourself back. Brainstorm ambitiously!

Take a few minutes for each question and journal about your vision and intentions:

Where do you want to be in your business and personal life in 1 year? 5 years?

(Are you wanting to move to a new house/city? Start a family? Replace your current job's salary? How much will that lifestyle cost? Do a rough estimate to see what your yearly salary should be. How much do you want to work each week? Write it all down!)

Dream big!

Why do you want to start your business?

(Is it to give you more freedom to travel? More time with your family? Flexibility to work when you want to? To help others? What is the driving force behind why you're starting this business now?)

What's your why?

How do you want to help people with your services? And who do you want to help?

(Are you wanting to focus on serving women-owned businesses, or maybe nonprofits? Do you help this niche by offering branding? Web design? Marketing? What do you want to do, and for who?)

Now that you've set your business intentions and visualized your ideal lifestyle, it's time to get specific and set some financial goals for your business. Again, we encourage you to set goals outside of your comfort zone (even if it's just slightly). Your goal should scare you, at least a little bit.

We have a quick pricing calculation that will help you estimate what you should be charging minimum-per-project, based on your financial goals and available time. You'll probably have to estimate on this a little, and that's okay! You have to start somewhere.

1 How many projects/clients do you want to take on in a year?

2 What is your desired annual personal income?

3 What is your tax rate percentage?

(It's recommended to set aside 25% to 30% of your income as a self-employed business owner for taxes, but always check with your CPA to be sure.)

4 What are your estimated annual business expenses?

(List everything that you pay for on a monthly or annual bases for your business. Anything like office rent, client management systems, courses, contractors, insurance, website hosting, legal work, equipment, new technology, etc.)

MONTHLY	ANNUAL
TOTAL MONTHLY x 12 = \$	TOTAL ANNUAL = \$
TOTAL OF ALL BUSINESS EXPENSES IN A YEAR: \$	

6 Now let's do the math to figure out your minimum price per project!

*Numbers
don't lie!*

Please Note: This equation shouldn't be used for precise financial estimates. Rather, it should be used to calculate the rough rate you should be charging to meet your income goals. Every business has unique requirements for taxes and you should consult a tax or accounting professional to find your exact percentages and regulations.

Here's the calculation using your numbers from the previous page:

(Desired Personal Income) + (Annual Business Expenses) = Gross Sales Before Taxes

Then → (Tax Rate in Decimal Form) x (Gross Sales Before Taxes) = Tax Estimate

Then → (Tax Estimate) + (Gross Sales Before Taxes) = Total Sales Needed After Taxes

Then → (Total Sales Needed After Taxes) ÷ (Number of projects or clients per year) = Minimum Price Per Project

Example (Assuming tax rate is 30%): (\$50,000) + (\$15,000) = \$65,000
(.30) x (\$65,000) = \$19,500
(\$19,500) + (\$65,000) = \$84,500
(\$84,500) ÷ (10) = **\$8,450 minimum per project**

Based on these numbers, let's officially declare your goal for this next year.

In the next year, by ____/____/____, I want to make \$_____ in gross revenue (your sales before expenses and taxes and payroll is taken out).

I want to work with ____ clients in the next year.


I want to reach this personal goal:

Next, it's time to set a timeline for your business launch. This is to push you to not be a perfectionist and commit to putting yourself out there. If you want to follow the timeline this guide has set, plan for a launch date that's 6 weeks from now.

If you'd like more time though, that's totally fine! You can skim through the rest of this document to get a feel for the amount of time you may need. We generally recommend designers spend no more than 2-3 months actively working on getting their business up and running.

I will launch my business on: ____/____/____

*up next:
Establishing
business basics!*



WEEK 2: ESTABLISHING BUSINESS BASICS

If you haven't already, you'll need to brainstorm and choose a business name. This part can really hold you up if you let it, so try not to overthink it. You can use your name as part of it if you plan to never sell your business. But, if you're not sure, maybe choose something else.

TIP: As you choose your name, keep in mind available domain names, currently trademarked names, and legibility/memorability. You can check to see if your domain name idea is available using Google Domains or Go Daddy, and be sure to check all social media platforms you plan to use for your handle options, too!

Brainstorm your business name ideas.

you've got this!



Next, there are some legal and financial tasks to take care of. We promise you can do it, and it won't take a crazy amount of time or money!

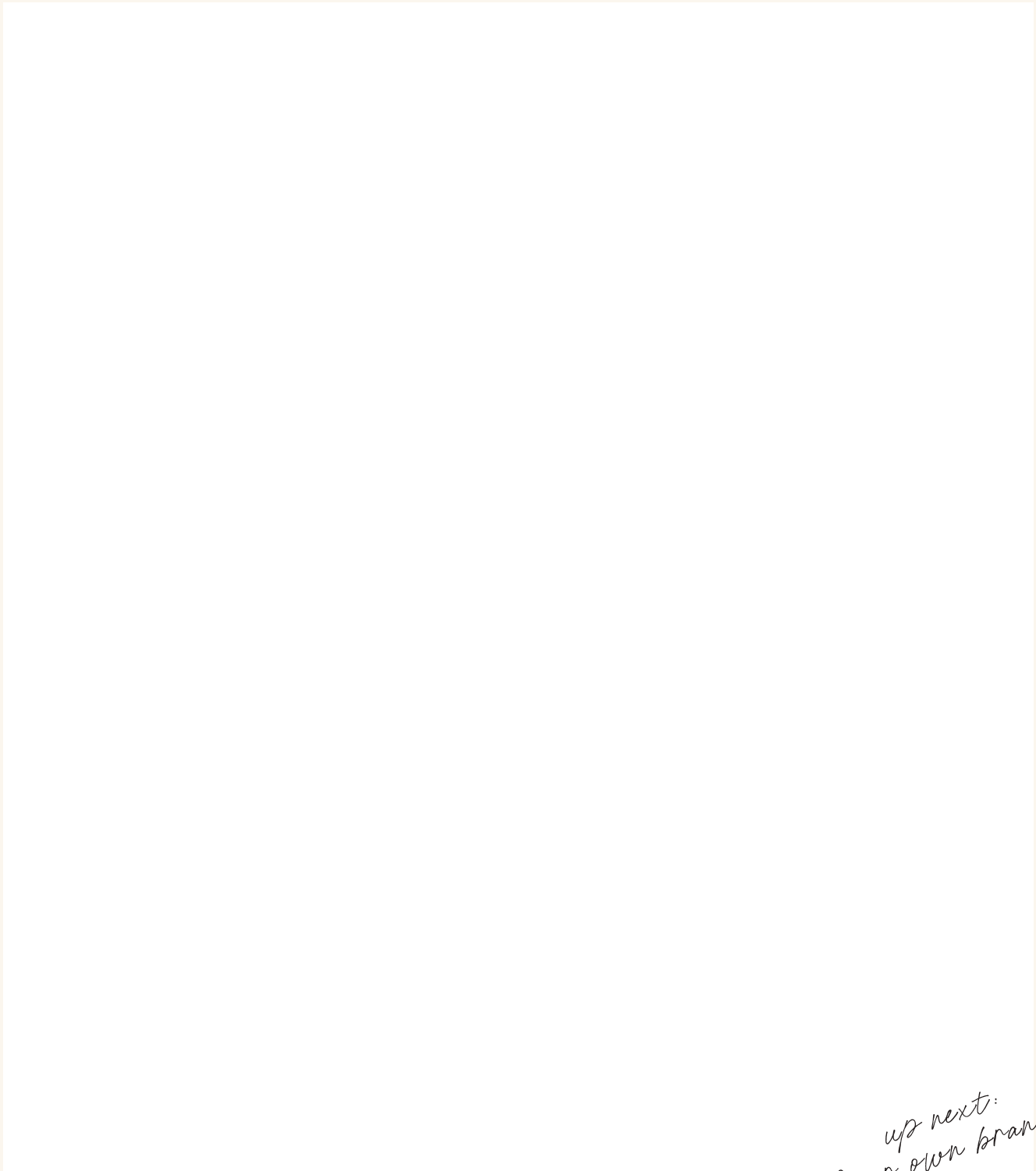
Start-up legal & financial checklist:

- ☐ Determine your Business Entity Type *(depends if you're one person or two, protections you need, etc.)*
- ☐ Apply for a federal tax ID number with the IRS *(this is free and easy to do!)*
- ☐ Get a local business license *(who you contact for this will vary depending on the laws where you live, but try your local government offices to get more information. A quick Google search will likely give you an answer!)*
- ☐ Set up a business bank account *(this must be separate from your personal bank account for bookkeeping and tax-paying purposes)*
- ☐ Choose an accounting/bookkeeping software *(to track expenses, your owners pay, and invoicing clients, we recommend QuickBooks or Freshbooks)*

Now, it's time to decide which services you will offer. These will probably change for you eventually, and that's okay! Just decide what you'd like to start offering at this time.

Tip: Don't feel like you have to offer every service out there. Keep things simple for yourself.

List the design services you would like to offer, and what's included with each.



*up next:
your own branding*



WEEK 3: YOUR BRANDING

Creating your own branding is where most designers start and, often, where they get stuck. Don't let that be you! Create something that is professional, unique, showcases your skills, attracts the right clients, and then roll with it. You can always make tweaks later, and you most likely will as your business grows and changes.

Before jumping into design, it's important to dig into your own brand strategy and messaging. We have a free brand strategy questionnaire to tackle this, which will help you create messaging for your website too.

Next, it's time to create your brand design materials. Here are all the elements you'll typically need:

Your Brand Kit checklist:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moodboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Logo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Color Palette | <input type="checkbox"/> Brand Icon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Font Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Browser Favicon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Logo | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media Profile Images |



Need some time to brainstorm your logo suite? Sketch your ideas below.

A large, empty white rectangular box intended for sketching logo ideas.

*up next:
your website*



WEEK 4: YOUR WEBSITE

You'll also need a strong website so that future clients can find your services, portfolio, and contact information.

TIP: Your website doesn't need to be super long, it just needs to be clear and compelling! We recommend starting with a splash page website (a.k.a a 1-pager) as that can be less overwhelming to create and is easy for clients to navigate.


Here's a website checklist to get you started. (You can add more, but at least have these things included to start).

Your Website checklist:

- ☐ **Hero banner** that says exactly what you do and/or promises an aspirational outcome your client can expect after working with you.
 - ☐ **Portfolio work** that shows people the type of work you enjoy doing. *(If you don't have at least 3 projects that you feel represent the kind of work you want to create moving forward, you should create some personal projects! More info on this is on page X.)*
 - ☐ **Services section** that describes what you offer and how it helps bring your client success.
 - ☐ **Steps** of how to work with you *(Typically 3 steps. Ex: "book an intro call, have a strategy session, build your amazing brand!")*
 - ☐ **Testimonials** or another authority piece *(how many years of experience you have, features/articles about you, etc.)*
 - ☐ **About You** *(keep this short and focused on how you help your clients, not so much about your entire life story.)*
-

WEEK 5: MARKETING YOURSELF

Online presence is crucial for your design business, so it's important to create your social profiles and put out some content right away. Your social profiles are often when you make your first impression to potential clients, so you'll want to have your branding, design work, and your lovely face featured!

*up next:
marketing yourself*


Social Media set-up checklist:

- ☐ Set up a Facebook page
 - ☐ Set up an Instagram profile & create 6-9 posts
 - ☐ Make a Pinterest profile & a few boards for your work or other inspiration
 - ☐ Make a LinkedIn business profile
 - ☐ Make a TikTok profile (*even if you're not sure you'll use it, it's good to have the handle*)
-

Your portfolio is one of the primary deciding factors for a potential client wondering if you are a good fit for them or not. If you don't have much work that showcases the type of design you want to be doing, we recommend creating personal projects.

TIP: Personal projects or case studies are great ways for you to show off your skills and attract your ideal clients. Without a real client to work with, they often can be finished quickly and be a fun creative process for you. My Billie Designs has an amazing article full of free prompts to help you brainstorm some personal project ideas.

Brainstorm what your personal projects will be, or what client work you've done that you will feature in your portfolio. (We recommend having at least three strong projects in your portfolio when first starting.)



*up next:
Booking your first
clients*



WEEK 6: BOOKING YOUR FIRST CLIENTS

Often, your first project will be for a friend or family member at a discounted price. Most designers (ourselves included) do our first-ever client project as a “test” project to see how the process goes, and see what needs to be changed for the next client project.

TIP: Always use a contract for ANY type of work you do, even if it's for a friend or heavily discounted. You should be very clear about the work you will deliver, the timeline, the payment amounts and due dates, and the revisions allotted.

Brainstorm a list of 10 potential people in your close or distant social circles that you could do a portfolio project for. Then, reach out to them/cold email them offering your services.

Now that you have your business set up professionally and you're working on or have completed your first portfolio project, it's very important to start booking your first clients outside of the friends/family circle. We always say that if you don't have a salesperson on your team, you are your own sales department! So here's how you'll do it!

TIP: Start a running list of potential clients you've found online or met recently, and create a daily marketing plan that you stick to for the first few months of your business. Having a “marketing power hour” every day is a great idea! This blog article details lots of great ways to organically reach out to potential clients every day, like networking, cold-emailing, DM-ing, etc.

Brainstorm a list of 20 businesses outside of your friend/family circle that you have either found online or met at networking events in person. Then, cold email each business and offer your services. If they are interested, book a “discovery call” (which are really sales calls) to discuss their project goals. You can find our questionnaire for these calls [here](#).

*up next:
Launch your
business!!*

Hooray!

READY TO LAUNCH!

Now that you've started working your way through this guide, you are well on your way to launching your successful design business!

This prep work **WILL** pay off because you're going to feel so confident about putting yourself out there and working with your first clients.

If you're feeling that imposter syndrome creep in, keep in mind that we all start at the beginning and you will learn so much as you grow and gain experience. You are exactly where you need to be!

And if you want to build your confidence even **MORE**, streamline your process, and charge more for your services, you'll love our signature course, **Pro Design Process**.



Pro Design Process has helped hundreds of designers feel prepared to launch or elevate their existing design business, confidently book clients, and raise their rates!

LEARN MORE AT [PRODESIGNPROCESS.COM](https://prodesignprocess.com)