



How to work with a designer

Ready to start your project? Here are six steps to help keep your design project on track and running smoothly.

1. Choose your graphic designer.

This is a very important step. Don't rush this part – if you choose a graphic designer you have trouble working with or whose style you don't care for, this could end up becoming a painful and difficult process for both of you. In fact, we think this is so essential, we've devoted an entire pdf to this topic – "How to hire a designer" – to help you pick the right designer for your project.

2. Read the fine print.

If the designer supplies you with a contract, make sure you read it so you know exactly what it includes and doesn't include. This is the best way to avoid surprises at the end of a project. Don't forget to ask who owns the copyright of the work when it's done. Some illustrators and photographers retain the copyright on their work and you just license the use of the work for your particular project.

3. Define your expectations.

Here's where you need to start thinking about the scope of your project versus the size of your budget. Your designer may have ideas on how to cut costs without hurting quality (in fact, we have a pdf on this topic as well – "Ten ways to keep your design costs down" – presenting some of our ideas). You should also consider your timeline. Some things take more time, so get time estimates along with cost estimates.

4. Get organized.

What do you want to accomplish with this project? Is it a sales piece? An informational piece? How you use a piece dictates the "feel." Who are your potential customers? What will they like? Are you looking for something bold, feminine, conservative, elegant? What colors, logos, photos, etc. need to be a part of the piece? What elements are you providing? What elements need to be created as part of the project (writing, photography, etc.)

5. Pull everything together.

If you're sending elements to the graphic designer, make sure you save them in a format the graphic designer can easily use. Is there other material that could help the graphic designer? Information about your company? Other materials you like or don't like? Resources from your competition? You also might find it helpful to fill out a questionnaire (we've provided a few on our articles page to get you started).

6. Have a meeting with your graphic designer.

Now you're ready to sit down and talk. This is the time to make sure you're on the right page with your graphic designer. If you're meeting with WWD, we'll also review and discuss any questionnaires you've filled out.

Basically what it comes down to is this – the more prepared you are for your project, the smoother it usually goes.

Karin Wilson owns Wild Woman Design, LLC, a graphic design firm. She can be reached via her Web site, www.wildwomandesign.com, where you can also sign up for her monthly "Graphically Speaking" column – full of tips to help make your graphic design a success. Copyright 2004 Wild Woman Design.