

# Getting the Most from Your Graphic Designer

**A** well-designed document is an effective document. It gets your message across to your intended audience—whether your aim is to persuade a meeting planner to hire you or to help a seminar participant grasp a concept.

## I have graphic design software on my computer, and I think I have a pretty good eye. Why do I need a graphic designer?

Strictly speaking, you don't—any more than you need a hairstylist, a mechanic, or a lawyer. You *could* cut your own hair, fix your own car, and represent yourself in court.

Most of us, though, recognize that we can't be experts at everything, and that an amateur job will generally look...well, amateur.

The music is not in the violin—and great designs aren't guaranteed by even the most sophisticated software.

Even if you have an innately good design sense, getting up to speed on everything a graphic designer needs to know takes time and effort that might be better spent on whatever it is that you do best.

## Isn't it expensive?

The total cost of a project will depend on a number of factors:

- *what you want*—just as it costs more to paint your whole house than to paint just the bathroom, you can expect to pay more for a book design than for a straightforward business card design
- *how quickly you want it*—rush charges may apply if you decide your handouts need a new look the night before the conference
- *how well prepared you are*—more on that in a moment.

Designers make it their business to know how to grab a reader's attention, and help that reader absorb and even remember the message.

So consider this: maybe you can't afford not to have your documents professionally designed.

## Aha—so it *will* cost me an arm and a leg!

Not necessarily. Here are several ways to save money, time, and/or sanity:

- Involve a graphic designer as early as possible in any project—even before any copy is written. The designer will often be able to suggest ways to save on printing and other costs.
- Start with a small job—say, a one-page handout rather than your whole participants' manual. Then gradually revamp the rest of your materials as your budget allows.
- Understand that once you "sign off on" (approve) a mocked-up design and give the go-ahead for layout to begin, any further changes to the design or to the copy itself will increase the project's costs—sometimes substantially. Even small alterations can cause ripple effects that are very time-consuming to fix. And you *will* be charged for that time—just as your house painter would charge to repaint a room if you decided you detested the chartreuse you originally chose and would really rather the walls were a nice shade of taupe.

So be certain that everyone who might want input into the design or wording—the conference committee, your assistant, your significant other, your cat—has seen and approved it before you sign off.

- For the same reasons, be sure you give the designer the final version of the disk file—and that it matches the hard copy you provide.

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