



## Four Tips to Partnering With a Graphic Designer

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Working with an outside graphic designer should make your job easier, not more complicated. This whitepaper will help you simplify and demystify the process for a successful partnership.

### INTRODUCTION

The best time to engage a graphic design studio is when your market research is completed, your business strategy is established, and your marketing plan is in place. A graphic design team can help you craft your message and then select and design a vehicle to get that message out effectively.

Before that happens, it helps to take a few proactive steps to ensure success. It's all about best practices. Preparation. Collaboration. Communication. Inspiration.

### PREPARATION

Effective design is a reflection of a clear business plan and vision. There are some situations guaranteed to derail a design project and most of them are due to a lack of preparation. It is difficult for any project to be a success if important information is left out. Come to the table with as much information as possible.

### Creative Brief

What's your overall strategy? Who is your target audience? What are your specifications? The more information you can provide, specifically regarding your message, your offer, and how you want to be perceived in the marketplace, the better.

### Budget

Don't fear the funds discussion! Far too often, clients hesitate to disclose what they have to spend on a given project. That information is essential to effective design, which is all about stretching your dollars to give you the most "bang for your buck."

### Target Audience

Who are you trying to talk to? Establish the basics: data about your current customers, including age and gender to income and geographic location. Do those specifics describe prospective customers? Be ready to also offer information about your business, your employees, and your executives.

### Content

Copy is critical to design. Whether it's a simple flyer or a full-blown web overhaul, work on content first. Reading what you have written about your product or service inspires the designer.

### Creative Assets

The designer will need your logo, your branding standards (if you have them), and any available imagery, such as photography and illustration. It is also a good idea to show any work that has been successful in the past.

## COLLABORATION

Traditionally, a graphic design team would have had a discovery meeting, then gone off to research, brainstorm, concept develop, present, refine, and sell or go live. The only time the client would have been involved was during that initial discovery. Times have changed! Successful graphic design firms know better.

It's a two-way street. The most effective projects are born of a strategic collaboration between the client and the design firm. More access and a closer working relationship contribute to a constant exchange of ideas—an ongoing conversation that gives life and momentum to any objective.

### Discovery

During this “getting to know you” process, the designer will learn about your company and develop a set of goals, desired perception, and unique value among your competition.

### Research

The serious design firm does their homework and by revealing what they have found before actual presentation, your valuable feedback is provoked. An open dialogue and collaborative research process can uncover valuable tidbits of information that may distinguish you within the industry.

### Brainstorming, Concept Development & Refinement

After knocking around a bunch of ideas, you get back to your business while the design team begins to flesh everything out. The more effective way of handling concept development is to review a brief write-up of concepts and how the designer envisions them playing out. Feedback from you on those ideas prior to beginning the design process will affect the design.

## COMMUNICATION

Clear communication is the absolute key to any relationship. If you have a specific idea in mind, state it. If you don't like what you're hearing, voice your opinion. Regardless of how often you have already done so, contact the design team with an “I forgot to tell you” update. The information may be essential. Then, when all is said and done, remember to communicate the results.

### Direction and Objective

From nuts and bolts to strategy-based objectives, tell the designer what you want. A seasoned one will give it to you.

### Honesty

Brutal honesty will get you everywhere. Do you like it? Do you think it's effective? Don't be concerned about hurt feelings.

### Expectations

To avoid disappointment on either end during the process, expectations should be spelled out and addressed early. How long will this take? What will be my return on investment? How many versions of a layout will I get? Your questions should be answered.

### Roles

Know your role (and, for that matter, the role of the designer, too). While it's easier to work with one point-person from your company, tasks may be delegated to more than that person. Who's responsible for developing content? Who supplies the creative assets? Who's the final decision maker? Establish those roles up front to avoid confusion.

### Praise and Constructive Criticism

Give it up for the work! The easiest way to motivate your graphic designer is to let them know you're happy with their effort. It makes for excited, enthusiastic designers, which leads to exceptional, effective designs. And don't hesitate to give constructive criticism. Your collaboration leads to a design that is exactly right.



## INSPIRATION

Graphic designers rarely reinvent the wheel, so samples of other work go a long way. Show some of your previous work, or samples of competitors' materials you like and want to emulate. Whether it's the paper, color, imagery or typeface on a printed piece, or the navigation, legibility, animation or tone of something in the digital world, it is helpful to know what attracted you to it. Also disclose your thoughts about anything that might draw the attention of your target audience. You will be providing an essential glimpse into your aesthetic mindset.

## History

Every business has a story. What's yours? Let the designer step into your company's shoes and learn the ins and outs. Why was the business launched? What is your company culture?

## Open Mind

It's easy to stay in a comfort zone. However, chances are you sought a graphic design firm to help you stand out. In order to differentiate yourself from your competitors and from the thousands of images people confront each day, you'll want to be open to new ideas. Consider new creative avenues—everything from color to format to tone. To take your business to the next level, thinking outside the box can be essential.

Working with your graphic design firm can be smooth sailing if you prepare, collaborate, communicate, and inspire. The best and most creative ideas can be achieved with these easily taken steps. Laying everything out on the table at the beginning can lead to creative gold. Hopefully, the designer will get it right the first time. Be open and honest if that is not the case. That type of commitment fosters a long-term partnership and develops real, lasting value.

Keep in mind, this brief description of how to get the most out of the relationship creatively is only part of information you should know about working with the graphic design industry. More will follow. Stay tuned!

## About Us

Falco Design is a full-service graphic design and web site design agency headquartered in central New Jersey. Our clients range from small and medium companies to large corporations; law firms to green energy companies; technology to education.

Our services include graphic design, print and online brochures, web site design and development, HTML e-newsletters and e-mail blast campaigns, and complete direct mail design and fulfillment.

In business more than 40 years, Falco Design is an unwavering source of the special type of collaborative energy necessary for truly outstanding results. To see our portfolio and client list, and for more information go to [www.falcodesign.com](http://www.falcodesign.com) or call 732.390.0099.