

Working with a Graphic Designer



When Should You Hire a Graphic Designer?

A graphic designer can create a professional look for your brand and develop marketing materials to promote your business. Time and money are limiting factors for most small businesses, so knowing when to connect with a professional and how to best use their time is important. While the financial investment of creating a logo can be daunting, it is a long-term investment that should give you good returns. Unless you or someone on your farm has the skill set, hiring a graphic designer is the best approach to developing your farm identity and marketing materials.

What are my options?

A **freelance designer** is self-employed and usually works from home or a studio space. Often their rates are lower, because their overhead is lower, but this is their business and they still need equipment and expensive software to get the job done. A freelancer may be the best fit for a smaller farm.

Crowdsourced design can be an economical option. It offers any online designer an opportunity to create a logo for a set price. While the low price may be attractive, this system often relies on recycled and canned solutions and may not address your needs and goals in the way that the personal connection with a designer can.

A **full-service design firm** may be just what you need if you are growing and need greater capabilities. They may approach the initial concept development with a team and have copywriting, illustration, and photography resources in-house. This may be the best fit for a larger established farm with several marketing outlets.

Many graphic designers also offer **web design** but often web developers are also needed if there is any complexity to the site. It is usually best to have logo and identity work done before developing a website.

For an online version of this publication, visit the resources section at asapconnections.org.

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Written and compiled by ASAP staff. For more resources visit the resources section at asapconnections.org.

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Choosing the right designer

When you decide it's time to professionalize your logo or brand, the first step is finding a designer you can connect with. A good strategy is to identify logos or materials that you like and find out who did the design. You may get a referral from a friend or consider a designer that has worked with other farms. You can always search online for designers in your region.

When considering a designer:

- Look at samples—most serious designers will have a website to showcase their work.
- Make sure you like their style—don't expect an illustrated logo from a designer that does not show illustration in their portfolio.
- Ask for a quote or price range—some designers will quote a flat rate and others will charge an hourly rate depending on the type of project. You will need to provide adequate information about your project to get a fair price.
- Interview a designer or two—this gives you the opportunity to judge if you have a good fit.
- What is the range of materials you need—do you need one designer to meet all of your needs. Many designers specialize but work closely with other designers in allied fields.

Before you hire a graphic designer

To make the best use of your time and the money you will be paying a designer, spend some time beforehand thinking through your needs and what you want your design to communicate. The most efficient approach to a design project begins with a design brief. A design brief is a document that provides the designer with the information needed to begin the creative process, and allows you to focus on exactly what you want to achieve before any work begins on the project. A design brief should primarily focus on your desired results and outcomes of the project. It should not attempt to deal with the aesthetics of design—that is the responsibility of the designer. A good design brief will ensure that you get a high quality design that meets your needs.

The Design Brief

About your business

An overview of your business history and a statement of your goals is the best starting point for a design brief. This information will let your designer know more about your business and better able to develop designs to meet your needs. Provide your designer with a design brief in advance of meeting if possible and they will review and ask more questions to get a good feel for the project. That conversation is critical, but this documentation will be an important reference. A design brief should begin with the basics—who, what, when where, why of your farm.

Who: Who are you? What is your story? The [Storytelling Toolkit](#) can help you formulate this information into a story and may be useful in developing content for marketing pieces.

What: What does your farm business do and how do you do it? What are your products? What is your business' personality? What makes you different from your competitors? What do you value the most?

When: When was your farm established? What is your farm's history?

Where: What is your business' local connection or sense of place?

Why: Why are you farming? Why should people support you? What are the goals and vision of your business?

About your project

The second portion of a design brief delves into project-specific information. Information for a logo development will be a bit different from a brochure or retail product label. This information will help a designer understand your project goals and desired outcomes. This process will also help you crystallize your thoughts on what you need and will aim your designer in the right direction. If you have current or past materials, provide those materials to your designer and discuss your likes and dislikes of those designs. Consider the following questions and provide as much detail as possible.

- What is the overall goal of the design project?
- What are you trying to communicate and why?
- Is this a stand alone piece or part of a larger marketing plan?
- Who is the target market and what are their demographics and psychographics? (i.e. age, gender, income, tastes, views, attitudes, employment, geography, lifestyle)
- Who is your competition? Provide examples.
- How will you measure success?

Logo design

Logo development can be an exciting step for a business. It will be the centerpiece of your branding and should serve you for a long while. A good logo is distinctive, yet simple and it effectively conveys your intended message.

- What is the tone or feeling you would like to convey?
- Is there specific imagery you want to include?
- Are there colors and styles that you like or dislike? Provide the designer with things not to do, and styles that you do not like or wish to see in your design.
- Do you have a tagline or copy that must be integrated into the logo design?

Print and website design

Marketing and promotional materials, or website design will need additional information and resources. The copy and images used in a design are as crucial as the design. Rely on your designer for suggestions of resources like a copywriter or photographer. Many print designers also do simple websites and offer site maintenance. More complex sites may require the services of a programmer.

Designers consider themselves to be problem solvers. It is best to not have rigid ideas about the format of a piece—your designer can help you identify options and flush out an effective strategy.

- What problem is the piece solving? Are you trying to reach new consumers, sell more products, or build awareness of your products or services?
- If you already have a logo, is it effective and meeting your goals?
- What copy (text) needs to be included in the design? Who is providing the copy or does a copywriter need to be involved?
- Do you have images or do you need a photographer? If you have photography, is the quality appropriate for the intended use?
- Will you need illustrations or diagrams? Who is providing these or do they need to be created?
- Will materials be printed? Designers usually have relationships with multiple printers and should be able to suggest the best way to reproduce your design.
- Will you need a domain name and web hosting?
- What other information should the designer know?

The Design Process

Logo design

Your first project with a designer may be a logo design. After a discovery session aided by your design brief and research by your designer, you can expect an initial presentation with a few design concepts. Ideally, there will be the a concept that appeals to you. If not more concepts will be generated—be upfront about what you like or don't like about the initial concepts presented. There will typically be a round of revisions with the chosen concept based on your input followed by a second presentation. Finally, the logo will be refined to a finished stage and you will be provided the logo in several formats. You may not be able to open them all but, they may be critical for some design applications in the future.

Print and website design projects

Print materials follow a similar path except each piece needs a strategy for developing copy, images, and eventual reproduction. You will be asked for approvals, or to sign off, at various stages. Take that seriously and read your copy, check phone numbers, and addresses. The later down the road it gets, the more expensive it becomes to correct errors. It is costly to reprint.

Budget

A budget is always an important subject—you need to know what you can or are willing to afford before getting started. Different types of logos require different time commitment and therefore different costs. A simple wordmark can be inexpensive, but an illustrated logo or hand lettering will cost more. The cost of marketing materials can be a little more predictable. Discussing a budget prevents designers from wasting valuable time and resources while trying to offer you the best design solution for the your budget. Most designers will be frank if you are not in the same price ballpark and may be able to advise you on a lower cost design route to still get excellent results. Resources from other creatives, such as copywriters and photographers, plus the cost of reproduction should be considered in your budget.

Deadlines

Set a realistic deadline with your designer and formulate a timeline for the completion of the work. You should take into account the various stages of the design process such as consultation, concept development, production and printing. You will be asked to periodically review artwork and eventually sign off on a project. Make sure you understand your responsibilities for these stages. Errors and changes at later stages can be costly.

Conclusion

Developing your brand should be an enjoyable process and the results should reflect your values. It is best if you can cultivate a long term relationship with your designer—you have both made a time investment. A good partnership can provide a cohesive strategy for the future and fulfill your marketing goals.

Logo file formats

eps can be used to save high quality vector art. It is preferred by designers and printers for reliable quality but it may not be viewable on your computer if you do not have design software.

pdf is a great all purpose format for print.

jpg is best format for photographic images or for placement on the web and in many business software programs.

png is great option for the web as the background can be transparent.