No doubt about it: Visual communication is a powerful tool.
The right combination of images and words can create results
that neither element could achieve on its own.
A Graphic Designer
can help communicate your message with power, with crystal clarity.
Graphic Designers are professional communicators
with years of training—to give your message power
and get the results you're looking for.

Graphic Designers are visual problem solvers.

Just What Are Graphic Designers (and What Do They Do?)

Graphic Designer is a broad term describing any visual designer who works in a commercial setting. A Graphic Designer is a graphic artist who uses typography, illustration, photographs and color to create much of what you see every day: logos, ads, fliers, brochures, posters, book covers, billboards, charts, packaging, computer art, postage stamps. If it communicates visually, chances are a Graphic Designer had a hand in it.

Who's on your creative team?

Often, Graphic Designers team up with other problem-solving specialists. For example, a Graphic Designer may work with an illustrator—a graphic artist who translates ideas into images using paint, pencil, ink, collage, or some other graphic technique. Cartoonists, letterers, surface designers, pattern designers, photographers and writers are just some of the specialists who work with Graphic Designers. Think of them as the creative team.

Okay, You've Selected the Perfect Designer for the Job. How Do You Work Together?

Good graphic design is hard work, and a team effort. Remember, a Graphic Designer is a consultant hired to solve problems. A Designer will challenge your ideas and preconceived notions to find the best solution for getting your project noticed in a marketplace exploding with information. Be prepared to work closely with the Designer and make decisions to support the creative process.

Clear communication and mutual respect between the Client and Designer are essential. On day one, start with the nuts and bolts: Clearly communicate your vision for the project, its audience, objective, and the message you want to send. This is vital for putting the Designer's expertise to work to create the visual piece that accomplishes your goals.

The Process Goes Something Like This

The written message. Chances are, you'll provide the wording or *copy* for your project. Tone is important. It must be appropriate for your audience, and consistent with the visual presentation of the piece. Is the tone lighthearted? Businesslike? Simple? Sophisticated? A clear tone will help the designer pinpoint the best visual solutions for the assignment. If your copy is not complete or you aren't satisfied with it, ask if the Designer can recommend a copywriter to fine tune your message.

Copy preparation. Most designers will request a printout of your copy, along with the text on diskette or in digital form. To save time and money, make sure to discuss copy formats with your Designer before you release the text. Otherwise, time and money may be spent, reformatting copy before importing it into a page layout program.

Project materials. Besides providing copy, you may need to provide the Designer with other materials such as photos, company letterhead, logos, or artwork. To avoid breaking copyright laws, be sure you have written permission from the photographer, corporation, or artist to use these materials.

As tempting as it is to use artwork or photos from publications, ads, or other "public" sources, remember the copyright law. Before using any material which could be protected by copyright, investigate whether or not it's in the public domain. Your Designer can offer advice on how to check this out. Violating copyright law could get you considerably more than a slap on the wrist—like a hefty fine.

There should be no question about which materials you will need to provide, and what the deadline is for giving them to the Designer. If this is a loose end, your project could be delayed.

Contracts. Once the necessary materials are in place, the Designer will present you with an estimate to complete your project. The estimate verifies project goals, outlines costs, provides a rough schedule, and discusses copyright issues. Once in a while, the client's needs change course—causing design projects to change dramatically from their initial concepts. This domino effect usually brings new costs for design and related services. Changes from the client which fall outside those spelled out in the original estimate are called author's alterations (AAs). It's a good idea to talk about how AAs will be handled when going over the design estimate. AAs usually result in a revised estimate and new set of terms in writing because they require additional design time.

The schedule and the approval process. As with most important projects in the business world, design projects have schedules and chains of command for approval. Your Designer will help you schedule critical dates for the project. For this process to run smoothly, the client (and everyone whose approval is needed), the Designer, and all

vendors involved must stick to the schedule. Otherwise, the project could be delivered late, or the quality could be compromised. Although face-to-face meetings are often needed, the production process can be streamlined by taking advantage of technology. In other words, email, fax or mail as much as possible. For a sample production schedule, see Appendix A, page 14.

Pricing. Determining a fair price for design services is a matter of negotiation. Some of the variables include the Designer's experience, expenses, responsibilities involved, delivery time, and the project's overall complexity. ***The Graphic Artists Guild Handbook: Pricing & Ethical Guidelines*** offers rates based on extensive national surveys—and you may find these helpful (see Appendix B). Rates do vary from region to region, and may be dependent on the complexity and schedule of the project. Ultimately, it's up to you and the Designer to set a fair rate of compensation based on the project. A written agreement will help avoid misunderstandings about the project specifics and estimated expenses.

Designers should be able to price their services based on both per-diem and hourly rates. For large projects spanning weeks or months, you may prefer a per-diem estimate.

An hourly rate formula would cover business overhead expenses, a salary rate, and a reasonable profit margin. In either case, the designer should show you a detailed break-down of costs. If you reject the Designer's art work or cancel the project after the designer has begun working, you will have to pay a reasonable rejection or cancellation fee. Ask the designer to explain this fee before the project begins.

Be careful about bringing freelance Designers on premises to work for the duration of your project. In audit after audit, the IRS has determined that so-called freelancers are in fact employees—which means employers must withhold taxes for them. The same scrutiny is applied to *freelancers who are employed full-time by you,* not on your premises.

Whew! The Finished Product. At last, you have the finished piece in hand, back from the printer, all shiny and new. By now, you may have concluded that visual design is hard work. You're right. The good news is, if you're teamed with a professional Designer who keeps you informed and involved throughout the creative process, you'll end up with a product you can use to represent your organization with pride. You've just unleashed the power of graphic design.

APPENDIX A

Sample Production Schedule

Project: brochure with previously reviewed copy

Different types of projects have different production schedules and turnaround periods. This schedule includes one round of revisions (11/21) after a layout was chosen (11/7). These revisions should be clearly negotiated in the contract. You can have as many or as few revisions as you feel necessary; but, additional changes not negotiated up front are considered Author's Alterations (AAs) and are billed in addition to the original estimate. AAs are usually billed at an hourly rate. In the unlikely case of a complete redesign, a new contract should be generated between the client and the Designer.

To budget your time and set realistic deadlines, start with your target date of publication and work backwards. Be flexible and willing to add a few cushion days to avoid rushing the job—especially if several people must sign-off on (approve) the project.

10/1   Meet with designer to discuss parameters and scope of project

10/8   Client sign-off on estimate and schedule (allow 5 to 7 working days; if vendors' quotes, such as for printing, photography, or illustration aren't needed for the assignment, estimates may be generated more quickly)

10/9   Provide designer with completed copy, camera-ready logos, and/or artwork (allow 10 to 14 working days for initial design mock-ups)

10/21 Review mock-ups and agree on a direction (allow 7 to 10 working days to submit final designs)

11/7   Receive actual layout for approval (allow 5 to 7 working days for internal client routing and sign-offs)

11/14 Return to Designer with comments (allow 5 to 7 working days to make any changes after review)

11/21 Changes are made with final sign-off on proof to go to press. *(Note: this time frame will depend how extensive changes were)*

12/15 Delivery of finished piece from the printer (allowing for 10 to 15 working days for printing; printing time depends on the complexity of the project and the printer's schedule)