JUST *Thinkin'*

So . . . just what does a Graphic Designer do, anyway?

We get that question (in one way, shape or form) a lot.

Let's look at it from the viewpoint of other design professionals. If an interior designer is called in for a job most of us would assume that the job involves making the space – say a living room – more livable, attractive and comfortable. They do that with fabrics, paint color, furniture, lighting and a *lot* of planning.

Interior designers create a floor plan showing where things should be placed with relation to doors, windows, fireplaces, etc. Then they take into consideration the size, proportion and scale of a room. They look at traffic patterns and airflow. They ask questions about how the owners will use the room, how much does the owner wish to spend, what type of styles do they like or dislike and if they have preference to colors and textures.

Graphic Designers are really no different. We just need to know different information.

• What is the client attempting to do with this piece of communication? That is almost always the reason a graphic designer is brought in; the client needs to communicate something.

• What kind of budget has been allocated to this one job?

• And (just like with homeowners) do they have a preference or need for certain colors and combinations. Do they need a logo created? Are there other pieces for which this needs to be compatible?

A client may feel they need to have a large brochure to communicate everything they do. But a designer could suggest a series of smaller brochures that communicate the same information but make it easier for the reader or prospective customer to understand that one aspect of the client's business.

Example; a software company may have many products that are all very different. Smaller brochures for each product may better communicate those differences. Yet a software company that makes products that are very similar may benefit better from one large brochure that shows, page to page, the subtle differences.

Then there is the issue of color. Ink and paper stock can communicate many different things. Blues and greens say calmness. Reds and oranges say "pay attention to me". Often a business has corporate colors that need to be included in a printed piece. That can be done inexpensively by using simply two colors or, if full color is necessary, the corporate color can be matched.

Texture, color and shades, dimensions . . . just as in interior design. But Graphic Designers use these in printed pieces. When a print design is translated into art for the web, it makes sense to try to replicate these items for the computer screen. The key is to be consistent from one medium to the next. Which discipline drives the concept and technique is for another story.

DESIGN TIP

Humor. The one thing first time communicators seem to be truly afraid of is a sense of humor.

Remember that business people are people first. I don't care if it is a CEO of a large business or the manager of a small construction company. . . . everyone likes to laugh.

Just make sure your humor does not injure in any way and is appropriate to the subject matter. Humor can mend many fences (whatever that means).

"Designing your product for monetization first, and people second will probably leave you with neither."

Tara Hunt, HorsePigCow

Trusted Colleagues

Jim Sheehan, *Account Executive, Smith Print, Norwell, MA*

Jim is a true professional in every sense of the word because he works with the client and the Smith Print staff to assure a fine product.

His knowledge of printing is only surpassed by his interest and understanding of the environmental impact of today's printing. He explains all the steps they take at Smith to assure each job is as environmentally safe and protected as possible. From vegetable based inks to stocks chosen for their recycled content, Jim walks through a job from beginning to end.

Jim cares about his clients and their needs while maintaining his own credibility. *(Plus, he will definitely make you laugh.)*

You can reach Jim at 781.878.5555 or at jims@smithprint.com.

This is an ongoing column. Look for who will be highlighted in our next issue.