

# Graphic Designer

2006-10-09 06:41:58



With a good computer, design software and flare for design and marketing you could be a successful freelance graphic designer. While most firms still turn to large design houses to produce their marketing materials many a firm is seeking out a competent freelancer to handle their design work. Graphic designers produce an array of work from marketing materials such as print advertisements to branding materials such as logos and product packaging.

## Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

Graphic designers need to have a good grasp of design programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. If you've never used any design software before don't worry, with time and practice they can be mastered. What is required is an artistic or design background; marketing, communications and branding experience are also very useful.

## The Start-Up

A graphic designer's world revolves around a computer, don't go cheap here. You'll need a high powered system with a decent size monitor. Many design professionals opt for a Macintosh, Mac's provide great stability and computing power, if your budget allows it buy a Mac. Other essential tools include a scanner, digital camera, high resolution printer and a pen and tablet. You'll also need business stationary including business cards, a letterhead and an invoice, quote and receipt template.

Much your work will come from recommendations and word of mouth. That said the internet also provides a great place to sell your services globally. Market your services online through a well designed website. Include a portfolio of work, client testimonials and a list of services you offer. Your online portfolio will become the centre of your marketing efforts, make sure it's easy to update and search engine friendly.

If you've never done any graphic design work before starting out will take a little time and patience. Offer your services for free to family and friends with small businesses. Offer to design promotional materials such as flyers and posters or redesign their logo. Treat all your clients as if they were paying for your services. Most designers provide a proof of their work during initial rough stages, this gives the client an opportunity to provide feedback before you've spend time on the final touches. Treating your first few unpaid jobs as paid jobs will provide an excellent rehearsal for the real deal.

## Making It Work

Much of your success will revolve around effectively communicating with your clients. Be sure to use a contract for each job and don't begin work until it is signed by both you and your client. Design work is usually constrained by deadlines, plan your work schedule well and always meet your deadlines. A reputation for timeliness will be invaluable for your word of mouth marketing efforts.

## Marketing

Develop both an on and offline marketing strategy. A small pay per click campaign can drastically increase your website's exposure, also consider advertising in business publications. Register your services with design directories and freelance services such as [getafreelancer.com](http://getafreelancer.com). Also consider starting a design blog on your portfolio website offering free tools, tips and tutorials.

## **Don't Forget**

Graphic designers either charge a monthly retainer or an hourly fee, hourly fee's should only be levied for specific jobs, once a client requests work on a regular basis a retainer is recommended.