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**How to Effectively Design Your Business Image**

**By Faith Seekings**

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In many industries, image is one of the last things business owner looks at. If business is not booming, they assume there is something wrong with the sales method, as opposed to the image. "If we just sent out a few thousand more fliers" they say, "we will get some more clients". When in reality, they should be looking at how the message they're sending to their target market is perceived in the first place. Here are a few pointers to look at:

–Color–

Colors evoke innate responses, which means not all colors are suitable for all business types. How does red make you feel? Angry, in pain, tense? It's tricky. In the financial industry red is negative (in the red). In the world of health, red can represent discomfort, not good for people offering pain solutions. In fitness, red is very sporty and stimulating. How about blue? It tends to be calm and soothing. Blue can range from fun and playful sky blue to dark, corporate navy. Green is often associated with natural things, or 'go' and money - depending on the shades. Yellow/orange/reds/browns in combination stimulate the appetite – think fast food and candy bars. Red is tricky. In some instances red means power and is striking. Purple can very easily go from sophisticated, royal aubergene to kid's grape (Barney). Orange is still a little weird and often used as a shocker, not as the dominant color. The only industry that can get away with almost any color is Tech.

–Personal Preference VS Market Preference–

People often let their own personal tastes rule their image decisions One's color preferences and styles may not suit the audience they are targeting. What style of design appeals to you? Now imagine that in the eyes of someone quite different, like your grandmother. For example: being too sporty and athletic when your target is professional businesspeople. Too earthy and organic when your target is average Joes. There may be imagery that means a lot to you in your profession, but doesn't mean much to your target market. It may even scare them. Step back and look at your business as if you've

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never encountered it before. Imagine what might attract clients, or help explain simply what you do. Realizing that your image needs to portray a certain message to the general public, not the you or your colleagues, is the first step to image success.

–Looking "New"–

Just because you've only been in business for a few days, doesn't mean you have to look like it. Having a well put-together public image will build trust and a solid reputation. Taking a little time and care instead of quick 'good enough' fixes will help you appear more established. Potential clients may not consciously pin point it, but they will pick up on the homespun factor or the generic Staples business cards. How does that affect your credibility? It is good to get your name and information about your business out there. However, when it comes to points of contact like brochures and web sites, if they are messy and difficult to read, they aren't doing you any favours. There are professionally designed, inexpensive web templates that can do a great job until you are ready for a custom web site.

Find a real printer and ask them have a look at your layout and make sure your type isn't falling off the edge and that the images sharp.

–Looking like everyone else–

You have a lot of competition. If everyone in your industry uses the same symbols and goes for the standard solution, how will you stand out? What makes your business unique? Is it the name? The location? Is there something meaningful to you that you could incorporate into your identity that shows your uniqueness, or that speaks to your target audience? Maybe a new take on an industry symbol. It could be as simple as having a blue card with a different typeface. Imagine this amongst a sea of black and white, times roman everything centered cards.

–Looking good on a shoestring budget–

If you can't hire a designer there are a few things you can do to help look like a pro. Have things printed professionally - it is much better than your bubble jet. Don't make all the type gigantic. Give everything some breathing room by not butting up against the edge of the page or pictures. Line things up. Look at the competition. Compare your work to professionally designed material and try to notice the differences that make theirs look cleaner. Put your own tastes aside and ask your target audience for their opinions and then listen to them.

Faith Seekings is the owner of Faith Seekings Design. She works with business owners to help align their business goals with their business image. She can be reached at 416.368.8956 or email

Faith is a graphic designer trained at George Brown College in Toronto. With more than 8 years' experience as a designer and project manager, Faith has created logos, stationery, advertising campaigns, ecommerce solutions, websites and collateral material for a host of clients, including: Rogers Cablesystems, Daniels Properties, Zona Health, Nooro Online Research, Agent Wildfire, Nymity Privacy Services and more. Faith is a skilled designer with a keen eye for the strategic as well as the tactical elements of graphic design.

## **Interior Design, Getting It Done, Right**

**By Ben Shar**

Interior design is the design of the inside of a building or structure. We could be referring to a home or a business. In any case, for those that need to design a living or working environment, it is important to make sure that you do so while being well within your budget. And, you will need to take and keep exact measurements. Is there a way of getting your interior design project done within your budget and, dare we say, easily? There sure is. In fact, interior design software is becoming a hot new commodity!

People like to change. Let's face it. We don't like to see the same old thing, day in and day out. Instead, we want options and color and sometimes, we just have to change things to stay sane! For all of those that need to use some interior design skills, this can be the perfect way of doing so. Interior design is a skill, often learned through college courses. Does that mean that you, the laymen can not do it? Of course not! But, get some help buy checking out interior design software.

These software programs can help you design a home from start to scratch. They can help with color schemes and even suggest art work for the walls. What these programs do is create an image of the space that is to be designed within the walls of the computer. Then, you can design it how ever you like without fear that making a mistake will cost you. Instead, you get to choose from anything that makes you happy and see how it works.

There are hundreds of programs on interior design and by all means this is no where near the limit that these programs have. To find out what they offer you, individually, check out your options. Look for software choices that will work in your unique situation and will provide you with the opportunities that you have been longing for. It's easy to find these interior design programs, of course, when you know to look online for them.

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