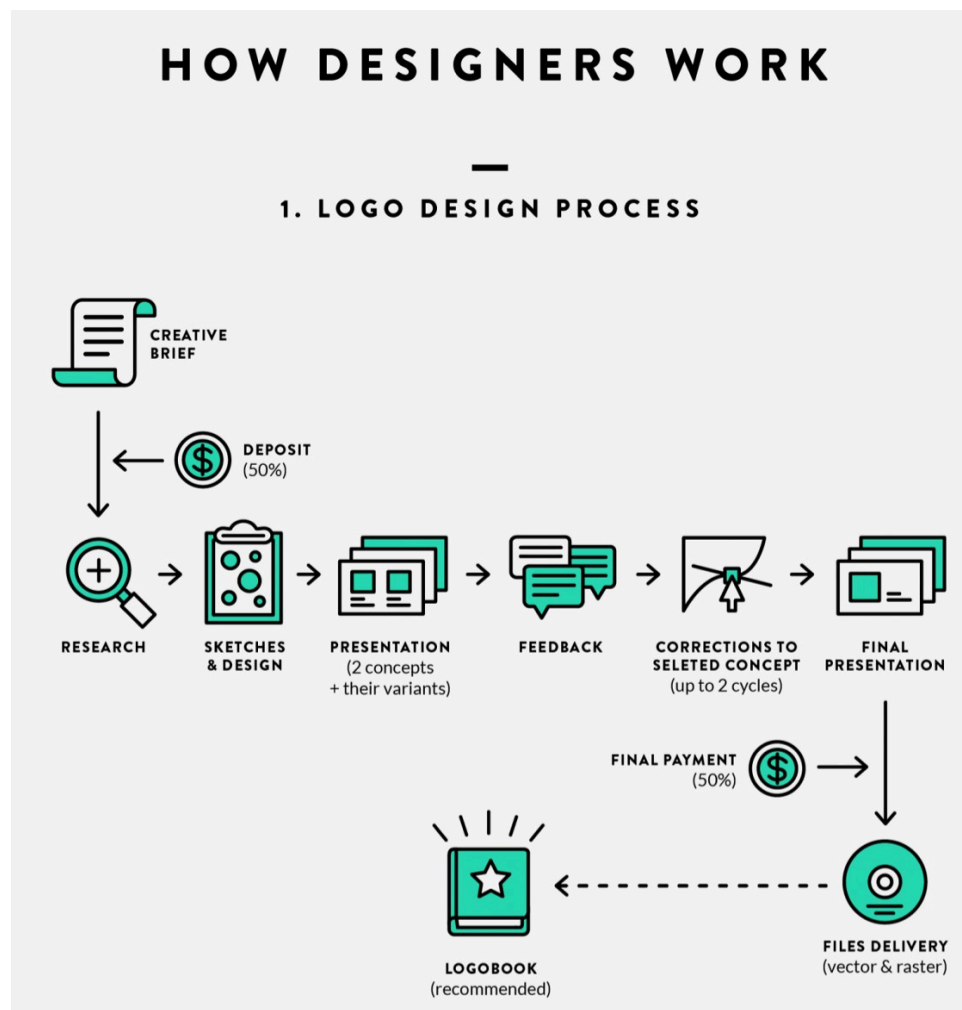


Defining Graphic Design

Graphic design is much more than creating a beautiful image: it involves understanding, interpreting and solving a client's problem through the application of visual communication. Visual and graphic communication is the process of conveying a persuasive message to an intended audience. It is done through the manipulation of visual elements such as typography, photography, and illustrations, materializing a client's ideas into graphics.



Furthermore, designers within this field of work must interpret what their client's direct and indirect needs are through intuitive thinking, or, in other words, through creative insight. Creative insight is acquired through practical experience within the workplace, explicitly undertaking various types of clients and projects, and understanding how to read the creative brief to go beyond what is written in words. These skills cannot be taught through a formal

learning environment such as a classroom and textbooks alone, and they are learned through experience and practice amongst young designers. Intuitive, creative thinking is the distinguishing factor between an amateur, junior and experienced graphic designer. Lastly, graphic designers have to be continually monitoring the field for the latest trends and the next “wow” factor that clients are looking for, in order to attract and maintain their consumers through visual communication.

Objectives - Distinguishing Between Amateur and Professional Graphic Designers

Problems within the Field of Graphic Design:

- Untrained designers
- Oversaturation within the marketplace
- Low quality work
- Amateur designers are diminishing the value of qualified, educated and trained designers

Since computerized graphics software became vastly available, many people have become amateur graphic designers through quick online video tutorials. Unfortunately, this progress in computer technology has devalued the importance of hiring a well trained graphic designer in favour of cheap, untrained labourer in some cases. Many of these so-called designers do not possess the skills and proficiency to materialize a client’s concepts into graphic artwork, relying on books and video tutorials to teach them how to create unoriginal material. It is for these reasons that human resource personnels and creative directors need to set regulations, standards and procedures when hiring graphic designers for various tasks and levels (i.e. junior, intermediate and senior positions).

The Right Mindset for Hiring a Graphic Designer

1. Creative Assessment

When hiring a graphic designer, the employer should give practitioners a creative assessment to evaluate their creativity and skills in visual communication and design through a creative

brief challenge. The goal for this creative assessment is to examine the practitioner's ability to be creative under pressure, evaluating their creative insight, their ability to understand a client's needs and target audience, and their general talent in graphic communication design.

2. Portfolio

After the creative assessment, practitioners are going to be asked to present their portfolio to the employer. The portfolio can include graphic design and related work, such as photographs, sketches, website design, magazine layouts, and logos. By displaying their body of work, the employer can observe the candidate's past performance in the field of visual communication design and see if they are suitable for the position. They should have a clear perspective on who they are looking for, while being open to non-traditional creative practitioners entering graphic design. The portfolio should illustrate potential.

3. Experience

This phase is more like an interview while looking at a practitioner's resume. The employer will ask practitioners questions about their experiences in the field of graphic design. The more experience the better, because graphic design is all about hands-on practical skills, so years of experience can prove the maturity of being a graphic designer. Therefore, the number of years of experience matter, and more experienced candidates have a higher likelihood of getting the job.

4. Education

It is also essential to consider education when hiring a graphic designer. Often, people call themselves a graphic designer because they have a lot of experience in the field. However, it is unfair to the people who have a degree in graphic design or a related undergraduate degree. Therefore, the employer should consider the qualifications of each candidate when fairly determining their choice.

5. Offering the Right Position

The employer should discuss a candidate's creativity, skills, experiences, and education when offering them a certain position level, taking everything into account.

The Process of Applying the Mindsets

1. Creative Assessment

For the creative assessment, employers will vet the candidates' creative skills set. This will aid in differentiating the level of creative potential each participant possesses, depending on their years of experience and practical knowledge in graphic design. This could be executed in a number of ways, one of which could be conducted by asking the candidates to design a new logo for an existing or fictional client on the spot and with limited time. If a hiring manager does not wish to ask the aspiring new employee to redesign a logo, it can be a mockup of an advertising campaign, magazine layout, prototype of a crude app, etc. An employer should implement the same assessment for all candidates, allowing a fair evaluation and demonstration of their imagination, design thinking skills, and drawing abilities. Candidates can complete the assessment either through a hand drawing on sheets of paper, or a digital illustration while utilizing their preferred software. The creative assessment should be done on site, monitored, with no preparation or outside materials needed.



2. Portfolio

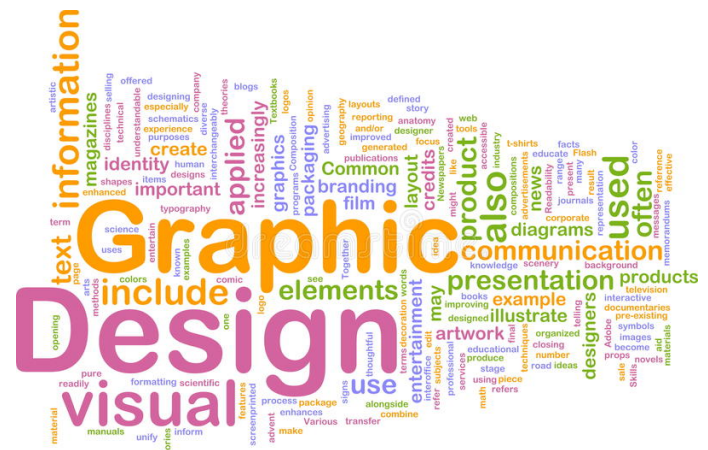
The employer will be able to evaluate the body of work that has been completed by each candidate, establishing a level of standard amongst the graphic designers wishing to be hired. The hiring manager should compare the



candidate's creative assessment challenge to their portfolio to verify their graphic design ability, ensuring that their work matches their skills. Also, it gives an opportunity to those who may not have an extensive portfolio to remain in the candidacy pool.

3. Experience

It is beneficial to prove whether an employee has adequate experience, regardless of their age. This can be done by asking the candidate about design challenges they have undertaken, how they handle difficult clients, and asking for references from past employers or instructors.



4. Education

Evaluating a candidate's educational experience is difficult. However, the employer can ask for a copy of the candidate's official transcripts to be delivered to the human resource department before the interview date. This will verify that the potential employee has attended and completed post-secondary education, and will allow review if they have taken any art and design related courses during their study. Examples of art and design related courses include: art history, drawing, photoshop, photography, painting, film, architectural and fashion drafting, etc. The candidate does not need to have graduated directly from a graphic design post-secondary program, but they should have studied a related field such as fashion, architecture, media production, photography, studio art, illustration, etc.



5. Offering the Right Position

To make the selection fair, employers should categorize the position as junior, intermediate or senior designer, given the company's needs and the responsibilities being handed over. For

example, if a candidate is a recent graduate or has little to no experience in the field of graphic design, they should only be considered for a junior position. A junior graphic designer will be responsible for polishing a senior designer's completed project. Also, they will handle typography, formatting and project revisions for other experienced designers. They can be presented with a chance to undertake their project from concept to completion on a small scale, depending on the client. A senior graphic designer is responsible for conceptualizing a visual communication strategy and seeing it to fruition. Designers who have several years of experience in a leadership position in graphic communication should only be considered for an intermediate or senior position, in order to not diminish their accomplishments in the field.

Examples of Applications

Scenario One: A Recent Graphic Design Graduate

A human resource personel is presented with a potential new hire. They are a recent graduate from the Ontario College of Art and Design University, with a major in graphic design. They have applied for an intermediate position, which requires one to three years of professional experience in graphic design. The candidate has only worked for two years as a graphic designer for a student group at their alma mater, but has never worked in a professional corporate setting. They have presented great skills in the creative assessment, and everything seems consistent. Unfortunately, the candidate should not be given the position of an intermediate graphic designer, because they have not worked in a professional workplace and university student groups are not a substitute for practical work experience.

Scenario Two: Unrelated Major with Experience

A creative director is outsourcing a project to a freelance graphic designer. A potential designer has taken interest in the task. They have six years of experience in the field of

graphic design, have completed projects from concept to final artwork and have great recommendations. The candidate does not possess a graphic design educational background; rather they have a degree in fashion design and illustration. Nevertheless, the creative director can hand the task to this particular candidate (if they pass the checklist), because they studied a related design discipline, have had experience in completing projects by themselves and have over six years of experience. Projects requiring completion from concept to final artwork should only be given to designers with three or more years of experience (i.e. intermediate to senior designers).

Scenario Three: Overqualified

An art director is looking for a new junior to intermediate graphic designer for their advertising agency. The art director has come across an application from what seems to be a great candidate. However, they cannot hire this candidate, as they have over twenty years of experience in the field of graphic design. A candidate of this merit should only be given a senior level position (i.e. senior graphic designer, art director, creative director, etc.), because at a junior to intermediate position there is a risk that a low level position such as the one being advertised might be a transitional position for them, resulting in a high chance for turnover.

Checklist for Hiring the Right Graphic Designer

1. Creative Assessment

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Marginal

2. Portfolio (Must have Four of these Elements)

- Logos
- Typography
- Illustrations
- Packaging
- Packaging
- Photography
- Visual Campaigns
- Others (Demonstrate Talent in the Visual Arts for Non-Designers)

3. Experience

- 0 – 3 years (Entry Level Position)
- 3 – 6 years (Intermediate Position)
- 6 – 10 years (Senior Position)
- 10 - 14 years (Art/ Creative Director Position)
- 15+ years (Senior Leadership Position)

4. Education

- Graphic Design Major
- Art and Design Related Major (Insert Major Here)
- Non-Art and Design Major (Insert Major Here)
- Level of Education Completed
 - Diploma/ Certificate
 - Bachelor's Degree
 - Master's Degree
 - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or Doctor of Design (DDes)

5. Offering the Right Position (Insert Comments Below)