

HOW TO CHOOSE
& BRIEF A
graphic
designer

SAVING YOURSELF
TIME, STRESS
AND MONEY

A N N E T T E P E P P I S

Do you need a graphic designer?

Are you just setting out in business? Are you thinking of expanding or diversifying? Do you feel your current branding no longer reflects the new you?

Do you need a graphic designer?

The chances are you have downloaded this from my website, so you may well know the answer to that already. If you don't, many of my clients come to me for the following reasons:

- They didn't have much money when they were starting up and are now ashamed of their current website and business cards.
- They want to make a good impression and for people to remember them.
- They would like to take their business up a notch and get better clients.

A graphic designer can help you project a better image, communicate successfully with your customers and get your message across clearly. We do that by creating a visual identity for you (branding), providing you with marketing materials (like websites, e-newsletters, business cards, brochures and flyers) and even designing a book for you – the ultimate marketing tool. Once all these tools are in place, you will gain more business and ultimately make more money.



There is a big advantage to doing your own design: apart from your time, it is free. However, that's the only advantage. The disadvantages are many. You will come across as unprofessional – which probably isn't true. First impressions count and your business image matters, so it's important to get it right.

'Simplicity is the essence of good design' is my mantra, but this advice is rarely followed by DIY-ers. These 2 case-studies show the difference between a DIY card and a paid-for design.

Case study 1: the DIY version

This Estate Agent's card was given to me at a networking event. It makes all the classic mistakes. (I have changed the details on the card and blurred the portrait.)



Side 1

- 1 It's far too cluttered; you don't know where to look first.
- 2 The text is so small that some of it is barely legible.
- 3 There are unnecessary elements: the QR code (a pet hate of mine) and a filmstrip containing images too small to see.
- 4 The headshot has not been professionally taken.
- 5 Where the logo should have been used, the company name has been typeset on a coloured band.
- 6 The margins are mean and there is very little white space.

Side 2

- 1 The logo appears, but is too small to see well, as is the office address.
- 2 More QR codes – yet most people don't use the app.



Contrast this with the professionally designed Estate Agent's business card on the next page.



Case study 2: the designed version



This card contains all the necessary elements (logo, name and role, addresses, telephone numbers, email, website address) and has been laid out with lots of space and generous margins. The brand is reinforced by the company logo, colours and fonts.



Choosing the right designer

Many people think they are graphic designers because they have learned how to use Adobe InDesign, the industry standard for design professionals. However, they may not know what to do with it. At universities, a graphic design course has short modules on how to use the Adobe Creative Suite, but the main part of the course focuses on typography (how to design with letterforms). The course also covers other main elements of design, like colour and composition.

So, how do you know if your designer is any good? Here are a few clues:

- 1 They will have a deep seated love of all things artistic, probably going back to their childhood.
- 2 They are very likely to have a GCSE and A-level in Art.
- 3 They will have completed a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, and a BA Hons in Graphic Design (or similar, e.g. Visual Communication) at a reputable university.
- 4 They will be able to show you a portfolio of work demonstrating their understanding of typography, colour and composition.
- 5 You should be confident that they are intelligent enough to interpret your brief and provide a solution that both looks good and does the job it should.

If you are still not sure, ask the designer if they have any recommendations from past clients. Don't write off a talented recent graduate who will not yet have any references or testimonials though; we all need someone to give us a break!



Where do I start?

Any graphic designer worth their salt will give you a helping hand when it comes to writing a brief. I use a questionnaire, and I like to meet my clients face-to-face to find out more about them and their business before I write a scope of work. There are a lot of things you can do to make life easier for your designer and ensure you get the product you want:

- Tell them as much as you can about your business, and let them know who your competitors are, so they can check out what they are doing. This is useful, as you'll want to differentiate yourself from your competitors.
- Think about who your target market is. A design aimed at women of a certain age will not attract young males, and vice versa.
- Think about the type of image you'd like to portray: cool, calm and collected or bright, vibrant and outgoing? Sophisticated and professional or reliable and friendly? Colour and typeface can be used to create mood.
- Let your designer know if there are any colours you love or hate – but be prepared to back down on this. They will have some knowledge of colour psychology, and it's more important to get your branding to look right rather than pretty.
- Ditto fonts. I sometimes show my clients the picture at the bottom of the page to get an idea of the style of typography they like.
- What kind of visual style do you like? Modern or traditional? Simple or complex? Techie or new-age? Clean and bright or subtle or dark?

Once you have discussed all this and more, your designer should then be able to write a scope of work which encompasses a brief and a rough schedule, so you know exactly what to expect. This may seem like a lot of work, but if you want your designer to really 'get' you, it's well worth the effort.

Geometric	Sans Serif	Modern
Serif	Slab Serif	<i>Script</i>

What do I need?

Of course, you need a website, but this should not be your first priority. Before you have your website designed and built, you will need to address your company branding. This will include your company name, logo, colour palette and typefaces, and will reflect your company ethos. Branding is the way a customer perceives you and its purpose is to build recognition (and reputation). It should be used consistently from your website to your stationery, from your vehicle livery to the colour of your office walls.

If your budget is tight, I would suggest the following as basics:

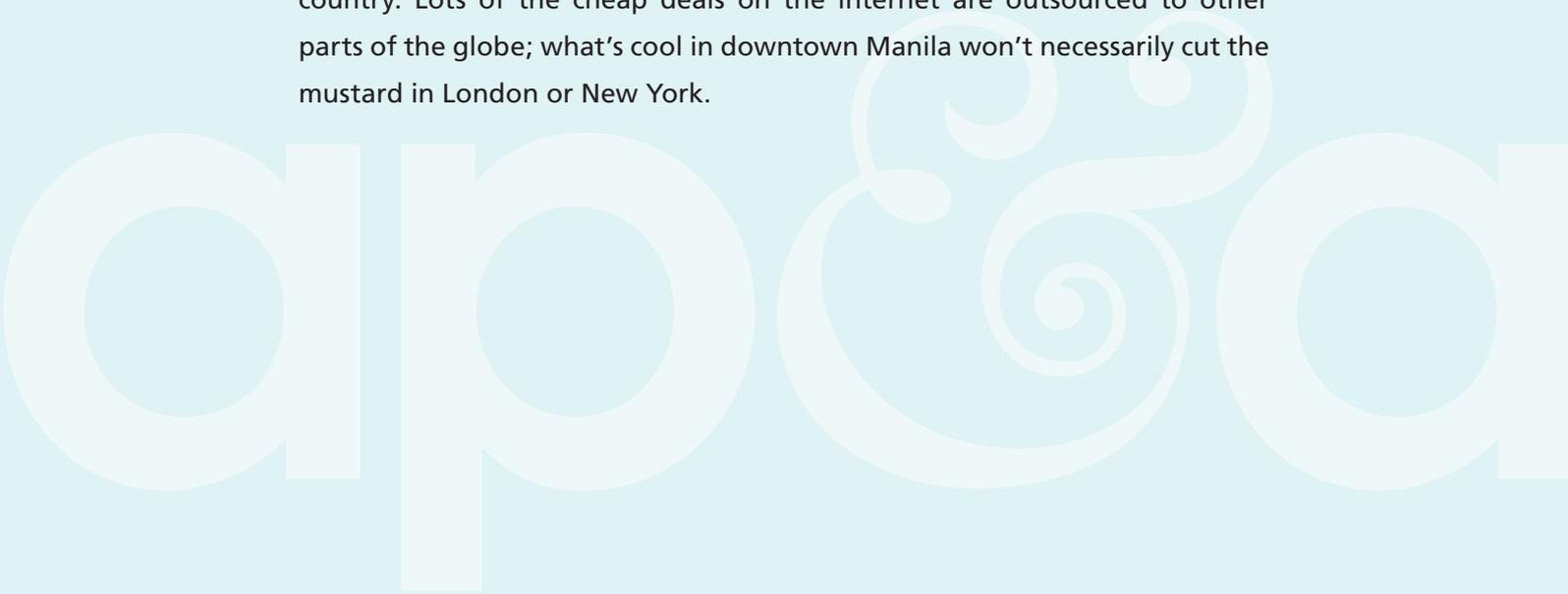
- 1 Logo
- 2 Website
- 3 Business stationery.

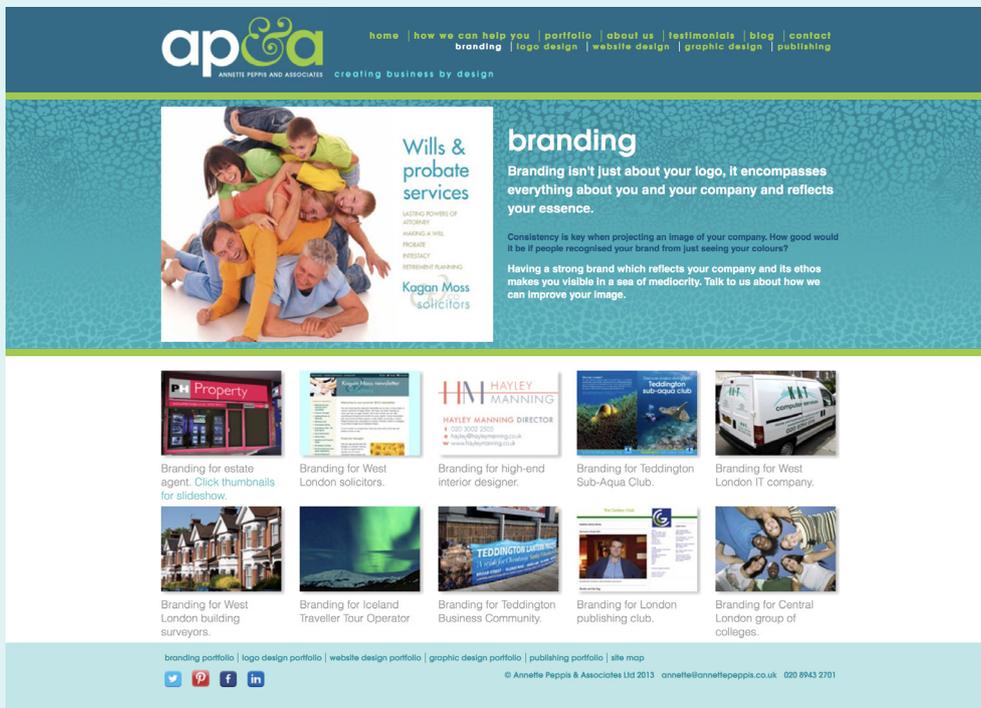
Once these are in place, you can begin to build your business. When cash starts to flow, then you can standardise your social media sites and print your marketing materials.

Where do I go from here?

Once you've chosen your designer (using my guidelines above) get in touch and arrange an initial consultation. You'll be able to tell from this whether you 'click' or not. If you do, ask them to help you write a brief and provide a scope of work and a quotation, and proceed from there.

A final word of warning: I'd recommend you use a designer from your own country. Lots of the cheap deals on the internet are outsourced to other parts of the globe; what's cool in downtown Manila won't necessarily cut the mustard in London or New York.





If you like my website portfolio and would like to find out more about working with me, you can get in touch with me in the following ways:



Email: annette@annettepeppis.co.uk

Telephone: 020 8943 2701

www.annettepeppis.co.uk



I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

