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EYE ON YOUR BUSINESS ■ *articles*

## The Sum of the Whole: Part I

*Integrating Professional Design Elements into Your Brand Identity*

**One of the many services I offer** is professional design consultation for identity branding and general marketing pieces. The consultation is a good introduction for my clients into my process and a stepping off point into the world of branding and design. The majority of my clients have been in business for a number of years, and most started off doing their own marketing and design because they think either: 1) "I need to save money so I'll just do it myself for a little while" or 2)(my favorite) "If I don't do it myself, it won't get done."

What I find interesting is that these same business owners don't think twice about hiring an expert to do their taxes or bookkeeping, yet it can take years before they will work with a professional designer on their branding materials. Why is that?

I believe that one of the reasons for this difference is that most business owners easily recognize that if their books and taxes are not done correctly, it can be detrimental to the health of their business. The other element is that, for most people, bookkeeping is just not fun! But design... now that's fun! And yet...

The brand identity of your business is a very important asset to your business, right? Having one created and managed by a professional means that your best image is showcased and you are positioned as a credible expert. If not – this, too, can be detrimental to the health and success of your business.

For those of you still not quite ready to hire out the creation of your marketing materials, here's a handy list I have compiled of the top consultation comments that I offer my clients upon review of their materials. Use it as a quick course to spruce up your materials

**Tip #1: Hierarchy.** When you are planning the layout of your marketing piece think of it in sections. The layout of the design needs to lead the viewer through the piece in an ordered way as an experience. I find hierarchy to be an amazing tool because even if you are not there when your material is read, you have designed it in such a way that you can control how it is experienced.

What do you want to be seen first? Second? Last? The hierarchy of the collateral can be achieved in a variety of ways by manipulating size, font style, or color. Be careful, though, because even if you have "treated" different pieces of information in different ways, they may still compete. If your title is in a mellow blue at size 20, and your subtitle is fire engine red in size 14, guess what? The boldness of the red will compete with and diminish the impact of your title.

A good rule of thumb is to place your design on one side of the room and you stand on the other and squint. What parts of the layout are standing out first, second, and third? Are they in the order that you want them to be in?

**Tip #2: WIIFM.** Always keep in mind your target. Look through their eyes and ask the question "well, what's in it for me?" Go through your entire document concentrating on the benefits of your message, not

## *Sum of the Whole: Part 1 (continued)*

the features. Another alarming, but all-too-common, trend that I'm seeing is too much "real estate" being given to outlining your education and business history. Although this is an important part of your business, how well does it answer the burning question in your client's mind, "what can this company do for me?"

**Tip #3: Voice.** The "voice," or tone, of the piece needs to reflect the mission, vision, and personality of your business. If the culture and personality of your brand is a little quirky, then make this "heard" in your marketing materials. If you're selling a high-tech service, your language must reflect high-tech concepts and lingo. Working with a professional writer to help you find "your voice" is a valuable component to your brand.

**Tip #4: Intrigue.** Give your audience just enough so that they want more. People don't want to be overloaded with information. Especially if the marketing piece is a brochure or welcome kit, only provide enough information so that your audience gets the basics of what you offer and how you can solve their problem. If you create some intrigue, your prospect will have other questions, giving you an opportunity to continue the conversation.

**Tip #5: Action.** Don't forget to include a call-to-action as part of your marketing piece. After you've spent so much time creating it, you want to be sure that you give your prospect a lead-in to the next step, right? A call-to-action can be a free or discount offer on your services. It needs to be compelling and have a sense of urgency to it—offer is good until a specific date only, for example.

I hope this article has opened your eyes to the world of design and the many details involved in creating marketing collateral. In this article, we've looked at the design "big picture," the overall effect. In Part II of this article, we'll work on the detail level, looking at some specific design elements that can really make the difference between "good" and "great."

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### **About the Author**

*As the creative director and owner of Eye 2 Eye Graphics, Nancy creates designs that capture your passion—the true essence of your business—in a visual manner, and moves your branding and marketing materials from "obsolete" to "outstanding". Nancy connects with you, eye-2-eye, and transforms your ideas into stunning, original representations of your business identity. To view Nancy's extensive portfolio visit, [www.Eye2EyeGraphics.com](http://www.Eye2EyeGraphics.com)*