

Using Design to Tell Your Story

Whatever your design project, you can make it a success with these keys.

By John Kudos

You have a compelling story to tell, and you'll often want to use graphics and design to tell that story. Whether it's modernizing your logo, creating a one-of-a-kind annual report, or designing a new website, here are steps that will smooth the process.

Engage Your Stakeholders & Define Your Objectives

Include your stakeholders from the beginning. Ask them to help you brainstorm ideas. Ask questions such as these:

- **How will you make people care** about your cause's story?
- **How can you make it easy** to become engaged, mobilized?
- **How can you keep it simple** and accessible?

Answering these questions with your team will help you capture ideas and create a written list of objectives. Then you can leave it to the designers to craft a solution.

Write a Solid Creative Brief

Your creative brief is a summary of your expectations that you will share with the designers. It will help the designers plan for production, and will align everyone's intentions. Here's what to do to make your creative brief successful:

- **Describe** your objectives and your audience.
- **Detail** production specifications (size, format, page count, colors).
- **Explain** the kinds of content to be provided (copy, images, videos).
- **Clarify** everyone's roles.
- **Draft** a realistic schedule.
- **Clearly explain** budget constraints.

Find a Design Firm

With creative brief in hand, you're ready to choose your designers. Meet with at least three design firms before deciding on one.

Tell the designers about any potential challenges and ask how they recommend resolving those issues. For example,

if one of your stakeholders isn't fully on board with the project, the designers can craft a presentation to convince that person to accept the recommendations.

Manage the Review & Approval Processes

Make sure your designers maintain a channel of communication with one person in your organization, usually the communications director. This person will be responsible for the following:

- **Organize feedback** into bite-sized comments. Don't overwhelm the designers with too much at once.
- **Collaborate with the designers** to allow creative interpretation. Give them leeway to try out innovative ideas, but be clear about your boundaries. It's your story, and you want it to reflect you.
- **Proofread and fact-check content.** Check whether any of the photos, illustrations, or video require licensing.
- **Stick to the schedule.** If you fall behind, adjust diligently.
- **If your project is digital,** do extensive pre-launch testing.
- **If your project is tangible,** allow time for printing, production, delivery, and installation.

Launch Your Project

Nothing is more rewarding than seeing your project come to fruition. Clear communications and collaboration with your designers at all stages of your project will assure that your story is compellingly told and well received. **S**

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