



How to Hire a Creative



Be an Informed Shopper

Successfully running a business means understanding how to prioritize all the duties that need to be done and knowing when to either delegate the tasks out to employees and service providers or tackle the task on your own.

Will designing your own marketing material be worth your time? Even if you purchase the creative software, how long will it take you to create what a professional can create? Will it look like a professional made it or will it look like an amateur did?

A company's marketing material can be crucially important to its success. Compelling branded material increases the value of a company, promotes recognition, distinguishes a product or service from competitors, and enhances customer acquisition.



Here's the big question. Where do you go to find talented creatives who can produce all the media to make your sales funnel work properly at the price that fits your budget? Hiring the right professionals to create your digital and print presence is essential to effective communication of your brand. If you're not an artsy person or you know your time would be ineffective trying to be a graphic designer or web designer for your business, maybe you should hire an expert.

No matter the job, when you hire a specialist to fix your problems, you're going to get what you pay for. Fast, cheap and high quality are what you have to choose from. As a consumer, you can only reasonably ask for any two of these attributes from any service provider.

**CHEAP
+
QUALITY
+
FAST** **=** **Too
good
to be
true**

For instance, if you want your car repaired quickly and for the lowest possible price, can you really expect the quality and care to be high? If you want to pay a roofer to put a new roof on your business within 2 days made with the upmost quality and care than you simply must pay extra for him to prioritize your needs above other projects.

No roofer will push all other responsibilities out of the way, hire a few workers, make sure the quality is top notch and not charge you a higher price. If it's cheap you want but you still want high quality, don't expect your service provider to clear their calendar to serve you ahead of their customers who are willing to pay full price.

A friend of yours went to a marketing firm and had it all done, but it was expensive. Your neighbor used a global sourcing platform to find creative professionals from all over. Yet, their expertise didn't match the level your neighbor needed. What about independent freelance creatives? With so many out there, how do you pick a good one?

Each of these resources has benefits and drawbacks. Let's look at the pros and cons of each one so you can get what you really want when you hire for creative projects.

Online Crowdsourced Platforms

A crowdsourced freelance platform is a marketplace of independent creatives. Businesses anywhere in the world can post their project online and hire creative talent from anywhere in the world. Freelancers create a profile on the site, display their portfolio and post their rates. Top platforms include—Fiverr, Upwork, Freelancer.com, Envato Studio, PeoplePerHour, 99designs, eYeka and crowdspring.



PROS

Accessibility:

It's easy to access a global pool of talent and view their posted qualifications, previous work and fee rates, all on one site.

Competition:

Freelancers know their profiles are posted side by side with their competitors. They know their rates need to be competitive, potentially saving you money.

Monitoring:

If you have the time and need, you can track your freelancer's work time and results through a desktop or phone app. At first glance, the posted rate of freelancers seems attractive. Yet, hidden or additional costs add up.

Some sites charge businesses a fee to enroll or post jobs. Plus, freelancers pay a fee to be listed on some sites, as well as a commission fee on your project, and those fees may be passed along to you. Commission fees paid to the online platform can be as high as 20 - 30%.



CONS

Reduced Quality:

Quality may be sacrificed by freelancers who run their business like a creative mill. When creatives are forced to accept low payment for each project their strategy becomes fast turnaround in order to make a living.

Questionable Experience:

Many new freelancers begin their careers by joining online platforms. Some will undercut the pricing of more experience freelancers just to get a job. Cheaper isn't always better.

Poor Communication:

With designers located in other time zones and other countries, timely communication can be difficult. Language barriers also may cause frustration.

Difficulty Vetting:

While it's true these creatives post their qualifications online, confirming those qualifications may be impossible.

Limited Collaboration:

Opportunities for meeting face to face with creatives who use these platforms are limited or nonexistent, making it difficult to build a relationship.



Marketing Agencies

Many businesses hire an outside marketing firm to handle their branding projects. These agencies serve as an ally and advisor when establishing branding and setting goals. While having a team of people to handle your projects seems appealing, is it right for you?

PROS

Broad Resources:

A large agency may have tools you and many freelancers don't have, from all the current design software and stock photo library access, to its own social media audience and even press contacts.

Creative Talent:

Most firms employ a range of creative talent. A large staff typically includes graphic artists, writers, videographers, web developers and photographers all in one office. When you hire the firm, you have all these people at your disposal.

CONS

Limited Accessibility:

Large firms have lots of clients. Where will your business rank on their list? Where will they allocate their talent and resources? Will the firm have time for you?

High Cost:

Marketing firms are large businesses with high overhead. Rent, salaries and taxes need to be paid. As a client, you'll share in those costs.

Slow Turnaround:

It's true, agencies set realistic deadlines and generally hit those dates. Yet, lead times for deliverables tend to be longer than with freelance talent, keeping you waiting for results.

Local Independent Freelancers

Freelancers are independent experts. Like you, they work for themselves. These professionals can be hired on a contract basis to do everything from design logos and build websites, to take business photography and create company videos. They can be found locally through LinkedIn, Craigslist, chambers of commerce, industry organizations and word-of-mouth referrals.

PROS

Low Overhead:

Freelancers absorb the cost of overhead, saving you money. Because many creatives work from home or shared office space, their expenses are reduced, so you're less likely to have costs passed on to you.



Fresh Ideas:

Freelancers stay up to date with current trends in their industry. Because they're not tied to run-of-the-mill concepts, they're constantly looking for a new approach to branding.

Consistent Communication:

Freelancers are the faces of their own companies, so naturally they're more accountable for what they say they are going to do. With freelancers in your backyard, collaboration and conference calls are a breeze.

Positive Collaboration:

Need a copywriter who can work with your website designer? No problem. Freelancers are multifaceted by nature and often work together with other creatives, or your staff, to complete a project.

Personal Service:

Independent freelancers understand the importance of personal service and are often willing to go the extra mile for a client because they are dealing with you face to face. Many freelancers desire to develop lasting relationships because it means ongoing work.

CONS

Inconsistent Experience:

Not all freelance creatives have the same level of expertise. It's important to vet independent workers by reviewing their portfolios to make sure they're up to the specific task you need done.



Limited Services:

A freelancer may offer only a few of the services you need. Look for someone with a broad scope of offerings. However, many freelancers have a niche and if their niche fits the needs of your project you may be able to employ a specialized skill for a much lower cost than if you hired a fully staffed marketing firm.

Inconsistent Talent:

Graphic designers operate in an unregulated industry. Anyone who learned how to use Photoshop or doodled on their math homework throughout high school can call themselves a graphic designer.

Make sure to do your homework and check if your candidates have real talent or if they're trying to be paid as an artist because they didn't pay attention in school.

Next we'll look at the top 5 questions to ask your candidate before you hire them.





5 Questions to Ask Your Candidates

- What does your portfolio look like?
- What is your specialty?
- What is your philosophy on “good design”?
- How do you handle deadlines?
- Do you use any contracts?



What does your portfolio look like?

There are a lot of self-taught amateurs and wannabe graphic designers out there desperate to build their portfolio. The proof is in the pudding! If you were to judge a song you wouldn't just ask what people are saying about it. You'd listen to it!

The best indicator to determine if the candidate should even be in question is to look at a compilation of their final products. How many paying clients do they have compared to personal projects for themselves, friends or family members? You may not be able to articulate the exact reason you like or dislike their portfolio but you'll know almost immediately if you like their creative style or not.

What is your specialty?

To stay competitive, freelancers develop niches, or specialties as designers. Some may specialize in logo design others may specialize in package design. Be wary of the designer that tells you they can do any kind of design project. It's probably not true.



With so many creative professionals you have every opportunity to find one that fits your needs. If you can find a freelancer who is a specialist at accomplishing what you need, you can get great value because they lack overhead expenses.

What is your philosophy on “good design”?

Some graphic designers think of themselves as artists instead of salesman. A skilled designer doesn't just know how to create cool graphics and images, he also understands the commercial aspect. Your designer should be interested in ways to bring you more business as much or more than making your material “pop”. Make sure whoever you hire understands that good design means getting the message across effectively and professionally, as well as looking neat.

How do you handle deadlines?

Many marketing messages are time sensitive. Promotional events and sales are set weeks in advance. Opportunities to capitalize on trends come and go. Therefore, in the world of advertising, deadlines are very important.

Make sure your candidate has systems and procedures for prioritizing projects and meeting deadlines. An ammeter designer may not even charge you extra for tight deadlines because they don't have many clients if any at all.

An experienced and skilled designer will either have other projects coming up or is already juggling other projects so he'll be very conscious of deadlines and will probably be the one to bring up the topic.

Do you use any contracts?

Creatives who clearly define their terms and conditions have probably learned from experience the factors that cause the scope of projects to change.

Independent contractors that don't use contracts are probably inexperienced and may seem vague or uncomfortable when negotiating the parameters and payment plans of a project.

Be wary of the designer that has a hard time discussing his process, procedures, and terms of service. Using contracts shows that they have experienced the unexpected pitfalls that come along with taking on creative projects.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Who to hire to maximize your branding is an important decision. Which-ever route you take, be an informed shopper of brand development services. Look at all the options, pros and cons, because what's best for your friend or neighbor may not be what's best for you.

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