

## **The Designing Edge**

*Design is essential to custom publishing success—but only if it's purposeful*

You know that old saying, “It’s not just what you say but how you say it?” That’s never more evident than when it comes to custom publications containing wondrous words but very little in the way of visual. So what philosophy should you take to make sure there’s a feast for the eyes to go along with insight for the mind?

## **Forget The Afterthought**

Too many think of design last when it comes to print, throwing something in casually to fit the words. Instead, consider having both components inform the other as close to the beginning of the project as possible. An even crazier thought—sometimes create the text *after* you come up with a design concept. The average reader doesn’t scan words cover to cover, but they will take in many, if not all, of the visual elements. For a comparison, consider that rock band Van Halen has sold close to a hundred million albums—and many times it started with an Eddie Van Halen guitar riff, not a bunch of lyrics.

## **Get On The Same Page**

A considerable factor for success is communication. When it comes to design, it can be very difficult to fully explain the vision in someone’s head. Don’t be afraid to have check points in the project to make sure it’s going in the direction that everyone wants. The worst thing is to complete a major design which was all wrong, simply because several people had a different idea of what the word “engaging” actually meant.

## **Less Is More**

Although you want design to stand out, you don’t want it to overwhelm. Crazy colors and pictures strewn everywhere won’t help your audience focus...except away from the screen. Though it may be difficult, pick out the visuals you just have to see on your site—then pick half of those!

## **You’re The Customer**

Because a design is a specific skill—to the point where designers are accurately referred to as artists—many clients are afraid to challenge their ideas. “What do I know? I have no artistic ability.” You know your business, you know your customers, you know what you can live with and what you’ll regret. Don’t be afraid to speak up—an artist would rather hear criticism early than have to scrap their work and start again. After all, there’s a reason it’s called, “Back to the drawing board.”

No matter the design philosophy you choose, you should always remember it doesn’t have to be all or nothing. Those with limited budgets often get concerned they won’t have the money to put together the kind of design necessary to keep up with competitors.

Though it's wise to improve your design capabilities when you can afford it, don't be embarrassed to ask what can be done at different price points, no matter how low. We might just be able to work some miracles—I mean, we are artists, aren't we?