



DESIGNER WANTED

by InterLit Staff

The publishing house received a promising manuscript. The editorial team reviewed it and the marketing team is excited about its potential. It is time to think about the process of getting the book to print. You have been asked to hire a freelance designer. What steps should you take?

Begin with a clear concept

Prior to approaching a designer, examine the formats of other books in the category for a planned title. If a particular cover is appealing, analyze what design elements make it attractive. Decide whether the book will be the first of a series. If so, then the designer will need a design flexible enough to tie the series together yet allow sufficient differentiation for each individual book in the series. Also discuss what the interior will require, if it will be illustrated or not.

Give the graphic artist a starting point. Be ready to describe what it is you want the design to achieve. Does it need to appeal to a particular audience? Should it have the same look and feel as other titles in the category? How will the product most likely be used?

Before you contract a freelancer, show him or her the type of designs you prefer. If the designer is forced to guess what is desired for a book, the probable result will be frustration, delays, and escalating costs as the publisher rejects one design after another.

Ask about the freelancer's competence and ability to render the services requested. Ask whether he or she has worked on projects similar to the one you have in mind. Review samples. If possible, obtain references and contact the artist or designer's past customers.

Is your designer open to new ideas? Can he or she take constructive criticism? Does the freelancer work well with the other members of your publishing team? Look for persons who are responsive to your concerns.

Make sure the designer is experienced and current with the latest graphic design programs. Ask whether their equipment is compatible with your printer's final imaging software and hardware.

Set project parameters

Discuss illustration and/or photography options that might be used for the cover. Designers can subcontract creative services if they are unable to provide them themselves. Before signing a contract for original artwork, agree to a price for rough sketches to see whether the artist and publisher's vision match. Once a sketch is approved, the artist can complete the assignment in the medium chosen.

Discuss costs. Certain mediums may cost more than others (for example, oil paintings versus watercolors). Photography costs vary greatly. Costs are also affected by the schedule required or the notoriety of the artist or photographer. Obtain a written estimate for the work necessary on a particular project, from start to finish. If this is not possible, obtain estimates for specific options. Discuss revision fees up front.

Specify who will own the rights to the artwork or photograph. Determine whether there will be additional charges for future reprints. A publisher will want permission to use an image or design in a variety of settings to advertise, market, and promote a book.

Discuss the production process. Can the designer meet the necessary deadlines? What is his or her preferred working style? Schedule enough time to allow for design changes. Last-minute revisions can escalate costs very quickly. Also, discuss if the electronic files used to create the final design will be given to you at the completion of the job. Illustration files may prove valuable should future alterations be required.

Discuss how the publisher and the designer are to proceed if the work, or the payment rendered, should prove to be unsatisfactory. Plan, also, how you will reward the freelancer if the work exceeds expectations.

Commit the project to God in prayer, but do not neglect to formalize your arrangements. Draft a contract that clearly defines each party's responsibilities, deadlines, and procedures in each of the above areas. Set the stage for an amiable and fruitful professional working relationship.v