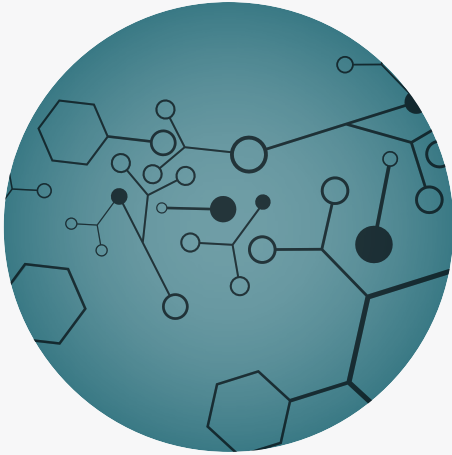


5 WAYS GRAPHIC DESIGN CAN HELP BUILD YOUR TECH BRAND

C | D CHRISTIANSON DESIGN



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Introduction

Graphic design is much more than a method to create attractive imagery. It is a powerful marketing tool that helps bridge the communication gap between your customers and your business. Visual effects and colors that attract the eye, clarity in wordsmithing and infographics, and a professional approach to managing the user experience—all of these contribute to make your communications more effective, and ultimately improve your position in the marketplace.

A graphic designer or design firm can provide assistance:

- Identifying the materials that can help meet your business objectives
- Mapping out a plan to produce the materials in a cost-efficient way
- Developing project parameters and benchmarks
- Providing layouts showing how the final product will look
- Building the final production files that can be provided to a commercial printer, a web server, or other channels
- Assessing the effectiveness of your current marketing materials and suggesting ways to improve them

Implementing well-designed and targeted graphics across your sales & marketing materials will increase your chances of capturing attention while creating a memorable brand experience. In the context of a website, effective design will engage your visitors and make them spend more time on it, which leads to more inquiries or purchases, AKA higher conversion rates.

In this guide, we look at five specific ways graphic design can be a powerful tool for your business by:

- Keeping your brand fresh
- Catching the customer's eye
- Streamlining your messaging so you don't lose your prospect's attention and engagement with too much jargon and clutter
- Using continuity and consistency to reinforce your brand
- Measuring results

“Design is the
silent ambassador
of your brand.”

— PAUL RAND



Paul Rand (born Peretz Rosenbaum; August 15, 1914 – November 26, 1996) was an American art director and graphic designer, best known for his corporate logo designs, including the logos for IBM, UPS, Enron, Morningstar, Inc., Westinghouse, ABC, and NeXT. He was one of the first American commercial artists to embrace and practice the Swiss Style of graphic design.

1 Freshness

Let's face it: novelty is appealing. The human brain is hard-wired to look for and pay attention to new stimuli.

For marketers in technology industries, it is especially important to keep materials updated, timely and visually appealing—to reinforce the message that you are at the forefront of industry developments.

When you add a fresh new look with a commitment to solid, well-written copy, consistency in style among different media, and careful proofreading, you project an image of authority and timeliness. These are all good practices for a company marketing to highly educated professionals.

Consider whether or not your current brand is working for you by:

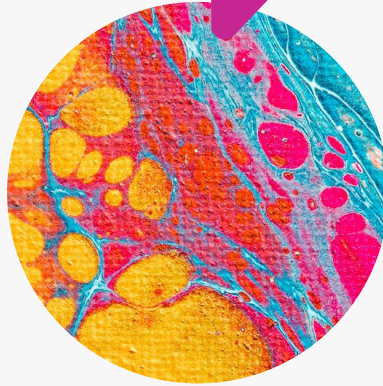
1. Analyzing website traffic patterns—see how people find your site, and how they behave once they get there. Do they stay a while and read through different sections, or do they leave immediately?
2. Listening to word of mouth—Consider what existing customers are telling you about your existing branding. Are you doing well? Or is there room for improvement?
3. Maintaining consistency—Assess how easy or difficult it is for your team to maintain the brand, i.e. to produce consistent branded materials. Do they excel at printed collaterals, but struggle with digital channels?

4. Assessing your current brand image—Are you utilizing and reinforcing the existing brand successfully, or is the brand losing strength by being used only occasionally and imperfectly?
5. Considering a brand image update—Could you make better use of your marketing dollars by refining your underlying image to something more relevant to the current market?

A good graphic design firm can help consider these questions, decide if it's necessary to reinvent your look, or to just freshen up the look you already have. An honest design firm will not default to a higher-priced option, but will partner with you to consider the relevant questions. They will also suggest the most effective solution for your situation, while considering your current situation, as well as your desired position in the market.



HELLO, I'M
NEW HERE



Whether you will be starting from scratch to build a new brand, or touching up (and reinforcing) your existing look, here are some things to look for in a design firm:

- Do you relate well to the key rep with whom you will be working? Do you like the people in the firm? You can never underestimate how important it is to have a human connection with your design suppliers, as that can make the entire process a lot easier.
- Testimonials from other clients: Does the firm have a good retention rate? You want a company who not only does good work, but keeps on doing good work.
- An aesthetic that you appreciate. A good designer can create work that is incredibly varied, but you will find that most firms have a certain style. Pushing design firm "A" to produce work that looks just like a very different design firm "B" will ultimately be challenging and costly. Just hire design firm "A!"

2 Visual appeal

Visual appeal is what graphic design is all about. Designers work with shape, color, texture, pattern, movement, symmetry | asymmetry and more, exploring different combinations that create a visually pleasing effect. Many designers will share a fascination with these elements from an early age. Add to that an appreciation for the power of verbiage, animation, and sound—and you have a powerful set of tools to attract attention and hold it. A quality design firm that has expert command of these tools can be a fantastic partner to help meet your marketing objectives and convert leads to customers. Let's meet a few of the tools that designers employ (and that savvy marketers recognize):

TEXTURE

Photos, illustrations and typography all demonstrate texture. Typography can be selected and manipulated to resemble a dense heavy solid field of color, or a very scattered open-weave texture on the page. Likewise with photographs and illustrations. Beyond the textures of individual items, there is additional texture created by the relationships between items on a page. In all cases, texture may be used skillfully to create visual appeal, and to trigger a response.

Understanding the power of texture and its effects on readers is a big part of the designer's job. If you'll notice, children's books often have short paragraphs and plenty of pictures. Since the intended audience are inexperienced readers, this visual technique helps train them to associate the words with pictures.

On the other hand, literature for adults such as novels often don't need to have any images in them, as most reader's imaginations can make sense of the words written. The lack of visuals is intentional, as good authors know that the best way to engage their readers in their stories is to have their minds create the images for themselves.

COLOR

Color is trickier than you might think, and your graphic designer is the one who can help you harness this powerful tool. Some key considerations:

- Humans respond to color in an emotional way. Designers are skilled at understanding and using color to convey and evoke different emotions that may lead to the outcomes you, as a marketer, desire.
- Our perception of color changes depending on the media (print, web, projection, etc.), the substrate (the type of paper, or material for printing), the time of day or ambient light, the surrounding colors, our age, any underlying visual challenges (there are many different types of color blindness).
- Colors may change dramatically depending on the color space used to create them and manage them. Designers are familiar with how colors created in CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow and black) for print application may look completely different on a monitor in the RGB (red, green, blue) color space.

WHITE SPACE

If you are in the marketing and design industry, you are likely very familiar with this term, and hopefully you appreciate the incredible power of white space to effect a response.

White space is the open space (white or otherwise) around your text, pictures, or audio. Audio? Yes, sound needs space to be effective as well. We would argue that audio is one of the best demonstrations of white space around. Imagine a television ad where the talent is speaking in run-on sentences with no pauses or breaks. The talking runs incessantly, forming a barrage of sound with no relief—making it very hard to understand.

Imagine also a professional storyteller, pausing for effect and meaning. These pauses matter, as they give the content a chance to shine, to sink in, and be fully understood. This is absolutely true in print media and website content: If there are no resting places, no pauses, and no "white spaces," then comprehension suffers.

If you want your message to be understood, give it space.

3 Streamlined messaging

Speaking of creating extra space... when it comes to content, sometimes less really is more.

A recent trend, in the era of search-engine-optimization über alles, is to craft content purely to fill a page and trigger search engine popularity.

Let's not do that.

There is real power in simple, straightforward messaging, well presented in both copy and graphics that work together to aid understanding. This is especially critical for tech companies (biotechnology, financial tech, data tech, etc.), who are speaking to audiences that are highly educated and discerning.

The graphic designer you want to partner with is one who:

- Is ready to study and learn about your field, in order to help you write and illustrate concepts that explain your benefits to customers
- Has the capacity to copy edit your material to help lose the excess baggage
- Is willing to do the extra work to communicate the information as effectively and efficiently as possible

Do you need a designer who knows your industry inside and out? Not necessarily. While a command of scientific terms is helpful, the designer who is new to your field brings a set of fresh eyes that can help you get rid of some of the insider jargon that may be turning off people who are newer to the field than you and your R&D colleagues within the company.

The advantages to streamlined messaging for technology marketers include:

- Getting attention and keeping it—Clear, concise language helps you capture attention, hold it, and convert interested viewers to customers. Studies show that you only have a short time window between capturing someone's eye and capturing their interest in learning more. Your visual appeal may draw someone in initially, but streamlined and cohesive written content is what keeps them engaged and reading.
- Highlighting what's important—Parsing language to the most important points also helps keep internal marketers and salespeople on point.
- Avoiding confusion—By simplifying things, you not only avoid confusing your customers, you're also more likely to get the response you want.

Streamlined content may take a little more effort to produce, but it is well worth the effort. A good agency or design firm will provide this keen attention to detail in every project.

After all, building a brand takes some commitment. Yes, going for a fresh look can help you springboard to more effective marketing efforts, but once you have started in a new direction, it is well worth it to keep managing and reinforcing that program to maximize results.

“There is real power in simple, straightforward messaging.”

4 Continuity and consistency

Maintaining consistency across all media is not always easy. Consistent language and graphic styles all help to push your message forward (and not forward and backward). The best use of your marketing dollars is with a partner firm who will help you maintain consistency, and make the most of your dollars.

How are you getting the message out?

- Logo and brand identity: Your logo and brand visuals should have unity to ensure your brand remains consistent and recognizable to your customers.
- Brand manual: Your corporate brand guidelines will serve to regulate the brand's visuals and messaging) and help ensure consistency of communications no matter who is handling them.
- Website graphics: Graphics on your website all relate to the branding, and should take into account the challenges of color consistency across different displays.
- Social media graphics: Create a library of social media content that can be easily disseminated
- Video: Make sure that all video has consistent branding, and consider the importance of intro graphics, consistent audio, and thumbnails.
- Printed materials: Safety data sheets, flyers, brochures and signage should all incorporate elements from your visual brand identity.

BUT WHAT ABOUT GRAMMAR?

Grammar is the less glamorous side to graphic design. Grammar and consistent styling of language are sometimes not explicitly managed and this can create micro-confusion for your customers as they look at terms such as "min" "m" "mmHg" "3%" and "3 %". These are the minute details that go a long way to building the customer's faith in your professionalism and trustworthiness.

A design firm will help maintain rigorous standards, and can work with you to develop a style guide that is used as a tool for keeping the copy clean and on-point. Maintaining a consistent brand tone will also enhance readership and results. Invest in creating a style guide, as it will also help your content creators work more quickly, thus reducing your costs and production times.



5 Measurable results

Developing nice-looking marketing materials is one thing, but making sure your program is actually effective is another. How do you know if the projects you produced actually succeeded?

The first step is to define the project's objectives. Different materials in different mediums will have different measurements for success. Here are some of the most common marketing objectives, and how success is measured with regards to them:

INCREASE AWARENESS

The goal here is to make more people familiar with your brand, product or service to increase the likelihood of purchase. Here are some of the metrics used for measuring this:

- Growth in traffic—This is the number of people who've visited your site directly. The more people remember your brand, the more likely it is for them to look for it online and browse your offerings.
- Social media activities—If you're creating content for social media platforms, then measuring their success is relatively easy, as these platforms have analytics tools built into their business pages. A noticeable increase in page likes, engagement (reactions and comments to a post), and reach all point to a successful post when increased awareness is the goal. If the number of people reached matches or exceeds your provider's projections, then the campaign is a success.
- Surveys—Conducting surveys before and after launching new marketing materials is a tried-and-tested method for measuring awareness. Aside from measuring familiarity to your brand, it can also reveal customer sentiments,

how they heard about you, how you rank against competitors and customers' willingness to purchase from you.

INCREASE LEADS

Generating more leads creates more opportunities for sales. For online campaigns, the success of lead-generation activities are commonly measured with these metrics:

- Click-through rate—This measures the number of clicks made to your links. Can be applied to channels like e-mail, a social media post, or a PPC (pay-per-click) advert. This is calculated by dividing the number of clicks by the number of viewers, then multiplying by 100. So if 1000 people saw your ad, and 100 of them click on it, then your CTR is 10%
- Conversion rate—This metric is the percentage of viewers who've done a specific action that is tied to your campaign. There are many actions that can be tied to this, such as:
 - Subscribing to an email newsletter
 - Downloading a brochure
 - Making a purchase
 - Completing a survey

To see the conversion rate, simply follow the same formula as the CTR. So for example, if 1000 people opened your email that asks them to sign up for a pre-order on a new product, but only 50 people actually pre-ordered, then that results in a conversion rate of only 5%. This may seem pretty low, but it's important to remember that the average conversion rate across all industries in 2019 is a mere 3.48%. 5% would actually be above average in this scenario.

- Cost per lead—This is the amount you spent for each new lead acquired. To compute it, you must divide the money spent on capturing leads with the number of leads captured.

So if you spent say, \$1000 to capture 25 leads, then the cost per lead is \$40. Once you've identified your cost per lead, it's important to make sure that amount is appropriately lower than the sales you can potentially make from them over a lifetime.

INCREASE SALES

Increasing actual sales is the most common, and easily measurable marketing objective. It is pretty straightforward—just check the return on investment or ROI, and it will reveal how successful your materials were in relation to how much they cost to make.

A simple way to calculate the ROI of a campaign is to take the sales growth attributed to a campaign, subtract the marketing cost, and divide by the marketing cost. So for example, if a campaign that cost you \$300 led to a sales increase of \$2400, then that means that the ROI is 700%.

This is a very good number, as a return of 5:1 or 500% is already considered strong. A return of 10:1 is certainly possible, but only in rare cases. A return of 4:1 or greater is much more common, and should be reasonably easier to achieve with great graphic design and well-written copy in the sales materials.

Summary

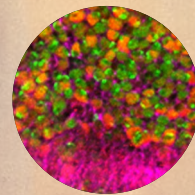
We hope you've enjoyed our guide detailing 5 simple ways graphic design firms help build tech brands:

- Keeping your brand fresh
- Catching the customer's eye
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- Using continuity and consistency to reinforce your brand
- Measuring results

It really all comes down to quality: Choosing a provider who has a reputation for quality and precision makes your job easier, reduces the chance of error, and gives you the results you expect—results that are measureable and that provide you a compelling return on investment.

To learn more, contact Mary Christianson at +1 734 761 5734.

(Cover and page 07) Image from National Cancer Institute, via Unsplash.com
Drosophila Wing Cells. The human CBFA2T3-GLIS2 fusion protein is a key driver of pediatric acute megakaryoblastic leukemia (AMKL), and confers a poor prognosis. Researchers found a way to express CBFA2T3-GLIS2 (red) in larval Drosophila (fruit fly) wing disc cells, confirming a major role for the BMP signaling pathway. This pathway may provide a target for new therapies. Nuclei (green) and actin filaments (purple) are also shown.





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