

Questioning the Design Experts

Following are a few tips to help you begin the design firm selection process.

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ASK OTHER PUBLISHERS

- Was your deadline ever in jeopardy because of the designer? Why? What was done to fix the problem?
- Did you ever feel uncomfortable working with them?
- Was your designer open to your ideas as well as providing their own?
- If you provided any initial cover design ideas, were they built upon or discarded completely? (A good firm will provide at least one layout using your idea and several more with her own.)
- If you asked for specific revisions, how did he or she react to your request?

ASK POTENTIAL DESIGNERS

- How many years of experience do you have designing books?
- How many books have you designed? (You want to find someone with plenty of experience.)
- Do you work with a contract? Insist on this!
- Be sure to know the fixed and potential additional costs and payment schedule in advance.
- How many front cover ideas will I receive?
- Do you provide press-ready files to the specifications of my printer? (Don't hesitate to ask to speak with printers that have worked with the designer you're considering.)
- In what format are your design proofs delivered? (PDFs are standard.) What if I'd like to have hard copies?
- What types of elements are important to you when designing a book's interior? (Good answers should include: typefaces, leading, kerning, margins, widows and orphans. Also avoiding common typing errors such as: using double spaces after sentences, using proper dashes, using curly or smart quotes instead of straight quotes, using proper ellipses, etc.)

- If your cover design firm will be different than your interior layout firm, be sure they're willing to work together to ensure a cohesively-designed book.
- Can they also create electronic versions of your book?
- Do you have other service providers to recommend or handle for me? (Illustrators, printers, editors, etc.)
- Who retains the copyright to the design? If it's the designer, don't let this frighten you, as this is common. You should expect to have full usage of the cover image for your promotional usage at no charge. Under no circumstance should you turn over rights to your entire book or manuscript, however!
- Will I receive a production schedule? Mention any reasons why you might need your front cover design or finished books in-hand by a specific date.
- Will you be available to help design promotional materials once the book is finished? If not, be sure the designer is willing to provide at least cover files to another designer for this purpose.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- A good designer will want to know about your book as well as your company's goals and will show interest in both.
- If you and a potential designer don't "click" during your initial conversation, move on. There are plenty of good book design firms out there and at least one is right for you and your project.
- A good firm will recommend another design firm if their schedule is too full or if they feel your book does not fit with their style.
- Remember that you're hiring this person not only for artistic talent, but for their industry expertise. Trust their instincts, but don't completely ignore your own.

TLC Graphics and Narrow Gate Books are the recipients of more than 80 regional and national awards. Together they handle all development, design, production, distribution, marketing, and PR aspects of small publishing.

More helpful publishing information can be found at www.TLCGraphics.com.
Contact: info@tlcgraphics.com for more specific information and a free project estimate.