

5

VITAL

SECRETS

YOU MUST KNOW

BEFORE HIRING A DESIGNER

(#4 will blow your mind!)

We're glad you're here. Now we can talk about the stuff that matters.

So you're about to open your new hotdog stand, release an R&B album, or start a high-end home-to-home personalised toilet inspection service (ok, maybe not that last one), and you need someone to design your brand identity system, your logo, and a business card for starters.

Or perhaps you've been assigned by your boss to execute a fundraising campaign, a live-streamed poetry-reading event, or a 'How to make \$1 million in 2 days!' online course, and you need creative input on making sure everything looks on-brand, sleek, and overall just badass.

Whatever brought you here, know that we understand exactly how lost you might feel at the thought of narrowing down the right designer for your project. We know your concerns. We feel your pain. No, we aren't counsellors, nor doctors (as much as we sometimes wish we were); but as designers, we figured there must be so much going through your mind.

Should I hire a freelance designer or an agency? How do I know this designer is right for the job? How should I pay? How do I best communicate the scope of work? What if he's not an actual designer, but that masseuse from Chinatown named 'Jeffrey'? (No disrespect to Jeffrey, he's a great guy, just not a designer.)

We're gonna cover some of that in this ebook, and more. But first...

Why the heck would we reveal these secrets?

Here's the thing - we hate the idea of people not sharing what they know for the greater good. Everyone needs a little help, and we received more than a little help when we first started our creative agency, billy.

Here, we value transparency and authenticity. We cannot possibly live that out without sharing what we've discovered to the ones who need this info more - you.

So get ready. Grab that flat white (or that whiskey, or that boba) and a seat - and I mean really grab that seat because some of the stuff we'll share could knock you right off it.

Are you good? Alright, let's start off with a practical one...

VITAL SECRET #1

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED,
OR YOU WON'T GET
WHAT YOU NEED

*(A.K.A. HOW TO WRITE A
KICKASS DESIGN BRIEF
FOR YOUR KICKASS DESIGN)*

So a man walks into a bar. He goes up to the bartender, leans on the counter, and says, *"I need a drink."*

The bartender approaches him, ready and poised to whip right around to grab a bottle of hard liquor, or the tap handle on his left. After 10 seconds of silence, he leans his head forward, his ear pointing more directly at the man.

"Yes, sir? Uh... what would you like?"

The man looks at him with pursed lips and furrowed brows. *"Hmm... well, this drink I need would have to have some alcohol in it. It will be a mix of a few drinks - into one drink. Understand? Also, I absolutely must have it go down my throat."*

"No problem, sir. Most of our drinks enter the body via the throat!"

After a moment of preparation, the bartender hands him a bourbon coke. The man's eyes widen, his pupils dart left and right as he processes the situation.

"No, no, no. It can't be brown. Something lighter, I think," he says, shaking his head.

"Lighter, huh? Is it clear-coloured?"

"Yes, I believe so!"

"Alright, I have just the thing." The bartender turns around for a brief moment and then swiftly slides a gin and tonic over to the man.

The man takes a sip, and then violently sits straight up. *"This is not it! It's carbonated!"*

"Well, sir, this is a clear-coloured, mixed, alcoholic drink, as you requested. You didn't say anything about not wanting it carbonated!"

Infuriated and exasperated, the man storms out of the bar. The bartender, though not having received payment for the drinks, felt a sense of relief that this fruitless exchange had met its long-anticipated end.

What drink did the man want? Well, no one knows.
Not the bartender, not you, not me.

Why? Because neither did the man.

You see, how well you know what you want and how clearly you communicate it will greatly increase the likelihood of:

1. The designer knowing what is required, and how to approach designing it.
2. Less revisions, time, and effort required to achieve the desired result.
3. A more pleasant and fruitful relationship between you and the designer.

To sum it up,

***the effectiveness of a design
is directly proportional
to how well the designer
understands the brief.***

To achieve that, you'll need to intimately know the project's needs, and communicate them with a clear and comprehensive brief.

Here are 9 considerations when writing a design brief:

1. Your Target

Who is your audience? Where applicable, narrow it down to age group, location, and gender (demographics). To go more in-depth, include the way they think, their inclinations, behaviours, and mindsets (psychographics)

2. Facts of The Project or Brand

What are the important things the designer may need to know about your brand, product, or service? If it's new, what has or hasn't worked in the past?

3. Objectives of The Design

What do you want to achieve with it? Where applicable, make it S.M.A.R.T.:

- Specific; use numbers, proper terms, and clear descriptions
- Measurable; use units of measure (e.g. likes, %, visitors) so that you know if it was achieved
- Attainable; can realistically be achieved
- Relevant; is meaningful in light of your 'big picture' goals
- Time-Bound; so you know how much time is allocated for this objective to be achieved, and when to evaluate its performance.

For example, when determining objectives for an emailer design, one might aim 'to attract

[realistic number of] newsletter subscribers to click on this link, by [date].

4. Key Message

What should your Target take away from your designs / communications?

5. Key Words

Adjectives that describe the ideal vibe of the design. E.g. Clean, friendly, fun, edgy, groundbreaking.

6. Timeline

When do you need the design ready? Include intermediate milestones, such as dates for specific drafts, print proofs, and submissions.

7. Deliverables

Specifically what you need - what media type or formats (JPG, PNG, or GIF)? What dimensions?

8. Budget

Straightforward - how much can you afford to complete this project?

9. Stock Assets, or Custom Only?

This is explained in our next Vital Secret...

VITAL SECRET #2

NOT EVERYTHING YOU
SEE WILL BE CREATED
BY THE DESIGNER

(WAIT, WHUUUT?)

Design can be described as putting together text, images, and other elements into a functional, aesthetically pleasing visual. That's kinda like our bartender in the story mixing the right combination of drinks in the right proportion, rubbing that orange peel around the rim of the glass, and placing an umbrella in it.

Here's the thing. He may not have grown that orange, manufactured mini umbrellas, nor brewed everything in that glass. Shocker!

It's the same with design. There are websites that provide free assets and templates (each website has different T&Cs on their use) so that designers won't have to create their own from scratch. Some examples are Unsplash (photos), Freepik (vectors, photos), and Canva (design templates of all kinds). Usually, custom assets (e.g custom illustrations) and bought assets (e.g. photos bought from Shutterstock) would incur additional costs.

Before you go, "Ugh! What am I paying them for if they weren't the ones who created everything in this design?" I urge you to think about everything that is being designed in the world - if any one person uses only the raw materials that they create from scratch, this world would be a very slow-moving and one-dimensional world indeed! Home builders don't usually use the timber they've grown themselves; game programmers don't always use codes they created from scratch; and dung beetles definitely do not produce the key ingredient with which they make their dinner dish.

They stick to their lane; they know what they're good at. It may not be creating assets, but it sure as heck is putting assets together in a way only designers can! That's what you pay designers for.

See?

***Nothing is truly original -
and this ecosystem increases
efficiency, productivity, and
reduces time wastage.***

For example, a 'martini' icon need not be re-illustrated if there's already one out there that perfectly suits a designer's needs. The designer gets their job done more quickly, which means their client receives what they need more quickly. Our poor dung beetle friend would starve to death if it tried to produce what only the elephant can. Alright, perhaps not the best analogy, but you get what I mean!

There's nothing inferior with a design that incorporates stock assets. Au contraire, it's really win-win for everyone!

VITAL SECRET #3

YOU GET WHAT YOU
PAY FOR (USUALLY)

A wise man once said, *“You pay peanuts, you get monkeys.”*

Alright, I don’t know whether it was a man, nor whether he was actually wise. Neither do I know why he would consider having primates of any sort in his employ. BUT! I do agree with this statement.

You may have heard your meta-self ask yourself, *“Why should I pay a creative agency \$5,000 to design my logo? Couldn’t I just pay some rando \$5 on Fiverr or Upwork to do it?”*

YOU CAN! Of course you can. Technically, you can do whatever you like! Who are we to say anything about it? Oh wait, we’re designers who actually care about whether you get a good logo or not.

That brings us to the first problem - a designer who charges \$5 or \$50 for a logo design (let’s call him Doug) won’t actually give a baboon’s left nut (I’m talking about that cashew in its left hand) about whether your logo is on-brand, whether it will help you sell your product/service, or whether it truly radiates the DNA of the company or not. You see, Doug’s just there to be the ‘monkey’ - a pair of hands and feet (+ bonus tail) to give you what you instruct him to give you.

“I want my company name in a semi-circle around this truck icon.” He places your company name in a semi-circle around a truck icon.

“Hmm, that doesn’t look good. How about make the truck red instead, and use our company’s acronym instead of the full name?” He does just that.

And after 276 revisions, you’re in far too deep to drop him for another designer, and still wondering why he hasn’t been able to achieve what you wanted.

Now, I’m not saying all cheap designers are like Doug. But really, how important is your project to you that you’d be willing to take that risk?

Let’s suppose you’ve gotten my point and you’re sold on the idea of paying a significantly larger amount than \$5 for an agency. Let’s say this amount is \$5,000. It’s not the highest we’ve seen (fees amounting to the 100s of 1,000s are not unheard of), but it’s a reasonable rate (as of 2021) for a logo design from a creative agency.

What might they give you that Doug cannot (or will not)? In short,

they're much more likely to achieve not just what you want, but what you need.

Of course, I can't speak for every agency, but I can speak for ours (billy). For a fee of \$5,000, here's a glimpse of could be achieved:

1. **Brand design**, not just a logo design. Branding, according to Marty Neumeier, is 'a person's gut feeling about a company, product, or service.' It would be difficult to design a logo in a vacuum - it must always be designed in context of the overall brand of a company; that is, in light of what people think about the company.

If a client's desired brand has already been established, great! We would design the logo based on that. If not, then we would have to work together with you to process what you want for your brand first, and then the logo design can be effectively executed.

2. Beyond the two hands, two feet, and one tail, we would provide some brains and heart: **strategic-level creative input**. It's not just about giving you a design you want; it's about understanding the objectives and needs of a company and translating that into deliverables. If a new logo doesn't help you earn back the money you invested into it, then why do it at all?
3. **Greater assurance due to lower risk** (than Doug). There will always be a risk that Doug's drafts (logo, not beer) are not going to reach the quality level you expect. After all, he's only being paid \$50, so how much ownership can he really afford to invest into the design? How deeply could he afford to consider your brand's values in the design?

He probably has 20 other \$50 logo design jobs to handle that week. On the other hand, receiving 100 times that amount would allow us the time-space to put our full focus into it, in order to produce exactly what's required as efficiently as possible.

You might say \$5,000 is expensive. But is it, really? If establishing your brand and having a badass logo would accurately portray your company's desired values to the public for the next 15 years, could you truly put a price tag on that? There are companies that would pay 100 times that amount for it, because they understand that it indirectly translates to even more revenue at the end of the day.

Here's a more concrete example. Say you got an agency to build a beautiful, robust eCommerce system for your website that could potentially increase your company's revenue by \$100,000 a year for the next eight years. Could investing \$50,000 into building that system really be considered expensive?

The raw amount spent doesn't determine how (in)expensive a job is; it's about what you're getting (or not getting) in return.

And if you're not willing to invest that much into your company then, well, Doug (as sure as laundry) is always gonna be there for you (:

VITAL SECRET #4

**NEVER AGREE TO
PAY A DESIGNER
FOR THEIR TIME**

(IT'S ALWAYS LOSE-LOSE)

If you don't agree with this, then by the end of this section, you will. The first time I heard this concept was from a brilliant man named Chris Do, from The Futur, whom I consider a key mentor in my journey as a creative and businessman.

And when he told us this, my mind was blown to atom-sized bits. Time for you to wear that helmet you've put aside for times like this, lest thy cranium be likewise cleft in twain.

To start off, there are many ways designers may choose to get paid, of which two are particularly common.

The first method is *time-based compensation*. This means that for every hour of work a designer puts in, you pay a specific amount (that's their rate). For example, if their rate is \$60/hr, and they quote you for a design job that may take 10 hours, the total amount payable would be $\$60 \times 10 \text{ hours} = \600 . Simple and clean, right? Clean, maybe. Simple, deceptively.

Here's the problem - time is not an accurate measurement of the output quality or volume. Let me elaborate, with the help of our Fiverr friend, Doug. Should we introduce a friend of his? What the heck, let's just imagine Doug and his friend, Judy.

For simplicity's sake, let's say they both command the same rate of \$100/hr. Doug may take 15 hours to do what Judy may take 10 hours to do. Does that mean that Doug deserves to get paid \$1,500, and Judy \$1,000, for the same job? If you genuinely thought, "Yeah duh!" then you must be a lunatic and I don't wanna talk to you anymore.

But if you thought, "*Heck no! Why should Doug get paid for being slow??*" Exactly.

Conversely, why should Judy be punished for her efficiency? Shouldn't she be paid even more for giving the client what they need 5 hours earlier than Doug would've?

Are you seeing the problem with time-based compensation now?

You're welcome.

Alright, so now we all know this is a problem. How now, brown elephant?

This brings us to the second (and more sensible) method of payment - *deliverables-based compensation*. This one is simple - a quote is given based on the items required by the client, whether the designer takes a day or a year to complete.

This, to us, makes much more sense, because not only does it eliminate the problem described above, it also motivates the designer to complete the job as quickly as he possibly can. Time is money, and having completed a job more quickly frees up the designer's time to complete more jobs, thereby earning more; plus, the client gets their needs met even sooner. Win-win.

Just because a designer takes a longer time to complete a project does not mean he actually did more work or produced work of higher quality. That mindset is absolute dung beetle food!

So NEVER pay a designer based on time. You might end up paying the price for a designer's inefficiency, and of course this designer gets undeservedly paid a premium for being slow. It simply doesn't make sense for anyone!

If they insist, simply describe to them the problem of charging by time and they should begin to thank you on their knees for enlightening them. If they thoughtlessly insist their way is better, can you be sure you're dealing with a sensible person? And if not, then would you dare continue dealing with them? And if not, would you consider engaging someone else -ahem-billy-ahem-? 🤔

VITAL SECRET #5

**YOU DON'T
AUTOMATICALLY OWN
THE DESIGN OUTPUT**

*(THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN AN
ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT)*

Yup. This secret is pretty straightforward, but we thought we should explain to you why. You see,

ownership is determined by the terms of the agreement.

And this differs depending on where you're based. For example, in Singapore, the Copyright Act states that a creator's work belongs to the creator by default, unless otherwise stated in the contract between them and their client.

Always, always, always read the terms in the Engagement Agreement you're about to sign (or not sign). Did I mention reading them? Yes. **READ THEM.** Most of what's in there may be standard stuff, but here's a short list of key things to look out for in any legal contract between you and the designer:

1. Ownership

Who owns the design output? If owning the design is important to you, ensure that you point this out to the designer so that they can amend it accordingly. Oftentimes, if ownership is given to the client, the designer would at least reserve the right to use the designs for marketing purposes. Not a bad thing.

2. Payment terms

Designers often include an upfront payment of between 30-60% of the total quote (this is to safeguard against many a 'designer-shopper', who ask for work and then deciding halfway to go with someone else after half the work is already done), while the remainder is to be paid in varying increments at varying stages of the project. Get well-versed on these terms, and make your calculations to ensure your cash flow allows for timely payments.

3. Revisions

How many revisions are you entitled to? What constitutes a revision? Would the change in one word be deemed one revision? How much would additional revisions cost? Typically, designers provide between 1-4 free revisions. Enter a deal with your eyes open wider than the world wide web.

4. Workflow processes

This is a sure sign of how organised and efficient your designer is. Do they even have a procedure? If so, what does the workflow look like?

Why is this even important? Because, as even Doug knows, time is money. And time wasted on inefficient processes delays a project. Know the processes, and make suggestions to change them if necessary.

Also, in case you missed it, **READ THE AGREEMENT.**

And now that you have read this ebook of secrets, you are equipped to hire a designer.

Sure this list is not exhaustive, but you've been armed.

As you may have realised, we are not as concerned with rolling in the dough as we are about the quality of designs that we provide, about you, your project, and your brand. C'mon, we wrote this ebook so that you can fare better in this big, bad, beautiful world of business and design.

We genuinely hope this has helped, and if it has, we'd love to hear about it! (Yes, we are secure enough to enjoy reading about your success stories in engaging other designers.) Drop us an email at billy@wheredreamscollide.com.

If you'd like, contact us for a free 40min video consultation, about your brand, your design needs, or how happy you are with your new 'fro.

As always, here's a shameless plug that tries too hard to sell:
VISIT [OUR WEBSITE](#) NOW!!!

Much love from team billy. Peace out.

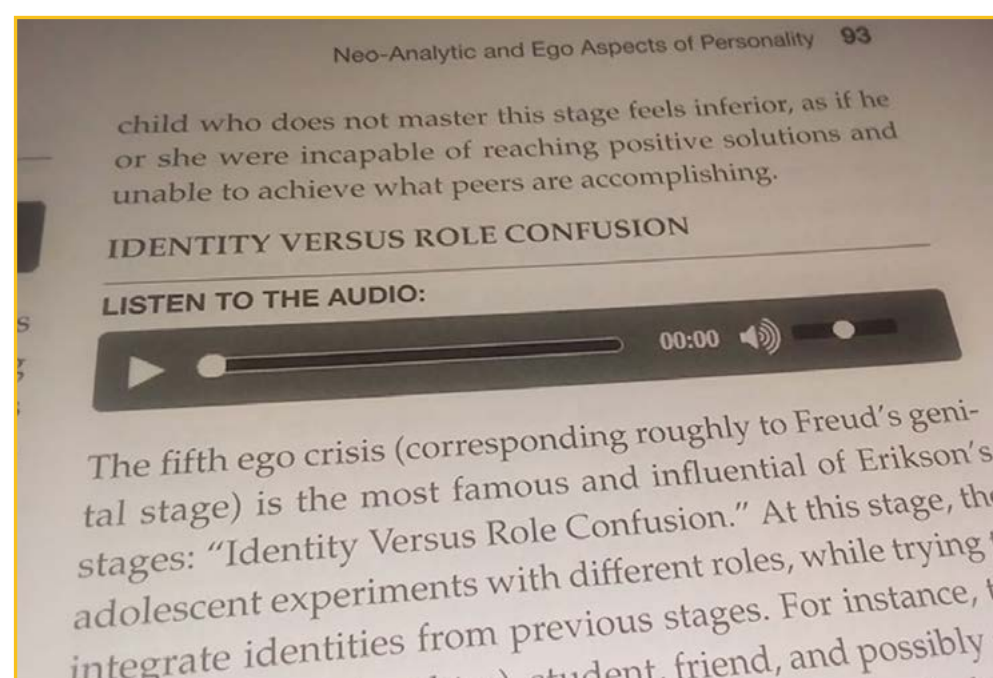
Got time? Check out these compilations of Reddit's 'Crappy Design' subreddit:

In the shadow of every yes is a... different shadow?



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