

The \$100,000 question: Still giving your logo designs away?

Logo sales can add to your bottom line

By Dan Antonelli

While researching my follow-up book to *Logo Design for Small Business*, I went back and examined the last three or four years of my logo design work. It's always a good exercise to review, critique and look for ways to improve your work. And as artists, that's an important part of growth and perfecting our skills. But what do we do as business people to perfect the art of selling our designs?

\$100,000+ in logo design sales (and counting)

In our accounting software we itemize all our lines of business so it's easy to evaluate our sales in certain areas. This is useful because it shows trends—areas of growth and areas of decline. I went back to summarize the last four years of logo design sales, and was surprised to see that we had over \$110,000 in logo design sales.

We've done approximately 45 logos per year, which translates into roughly \$611 per logo. We charge more than that now, but less than that four years ago, which explains why it's averaging to a lower amount. But it's a far cry above the \$25 a logo I charged eight years ago when I started the company.

The hard realities of running a business, versus "I love to do this" mentality When I first started the company, I seemed to be more



Here's a logo design we developed for a client in Florida. We're providing the artwork for a local company in Florida to install the vehicle lettering. The successful implementation of photography into the design shows what I think is the future of vehicle lettering. We're in the process of designing their Web site and stationery.

focused on producing high-quality work than on actually running the business and giving the business direction. I was of the mind-set that “Wow, I have my own business. I’m doing what I love everyday...” This led me to focus too little on the financial implications of how the business was run because I was doing what I loved, so who cared? My wife worked as well, had good benefits, and we had no children at the time. So, day in and day out, I worked hard on these logos and pretty much gave them away. I gradually got smarter, or so I thought, and was charging \$100 or so per design.

But we were soon to be blessed with twin daughters. My wife and I decided to try to have her stay home with our girls. Now I was faced with carrying all the weight of the mortgage, health insurance, and being the sole provider for my family.

Suddenly, my love of the craft wasn’t nearly enough anymore. I needed to give some love to the business, too, and get my act together. I needed to redefine my business objectives, and what it was I was really hoping to provide for my clients.

I’m glad that I made a conscious decision to start charging what this work is worth—and if I had not, consider that \$100,000 would be in someone else’s pocket—and not mine. Where would you rather your money be?

Who am I and where am I going? Defining the role you want your business to play for your clients is the first step in tackling the task of directing your business. I did this by examining what they ultimately needed, and tried to fit this in to what I wanted to do in my business.

I discovered that what they really needed was a marketing partner, although few could actually articulate that to me. These businesses needed a company that could not only handle their signage needs, but advertising needs as well. So I rethought my sales process, and approached it from that perspective. I made my company one that solves advertising and marketing problems for small businesses. My logo’s tagline summarizes our mission best: “Business Image Solutions.”

The logo is the key Why is the logo so important in the sales process? It may sound obvious, but the main reason is that the logo becomes the starting point for everything you can do for the client’s identity. Once you’ve designed the logo, you now have many additional markets open to you that will increase the dollar amount that the client spends with



Designs like this clearly show the difference between creative advertising design and merely placing vinyl on a truck. A lot of thought went into color selection and layouts for the vehicles. The end result is a powerful branding campaign that all started with a logo design.



Here's an identity system we developed for a sign company in Florida. It's more than just a logo that we designed—we designed their Web site, pocket folder, stationery design and exterior signage.



Even the most basic small businesses need a good image and a logo that effectively communicates what they do. This design was digitally printed and installed on their mobile car-washing vans.



This is a good example of embracing technology. We produced a nice wood-grain fill and beveled the lettering. We then printed the design on our Roland [Roland DGA, 800-542-2307, www.rolanddga.com] VersaCAMM printer for use on site signs and magnetics. The design had to be in an oval shape because the client wanted his magnetic signs to be “cut out” and look like they were lettered on the vehicle.

you. These additional markets or lines of business include:

- Stationery design and printing services
- Collateral development
- Web development
- Vehicle advertising and signage design and execution
- Business forms design and printing

What's nice about offering these additional lines of business is that clients build a dependence on you. That's unlike your primary line of business, which is signs. Because signs last so long, you're out of sight and out of mind to your clients if that's all you can offer them. They only need you when they need another sign or truck lettered. Sell them stationery, though, and you can be assured of hearing from them every six months or so.

The divide between design and non-design shops grows I believe the future of the sign industry will be clearly divided with those shops that embrace technology, and use it to their advantage, and to those who sell vinyl by the pound. The fastest growing portion of the business market is the small-business market. The reality is that these new businesses can't afford big agencies to handle their marketing—they need smaller companies that can provide a multitude of services under one roof. Why limit yourself to one line of business and ignore what it is your clients really need?

Where to go from here In previous articles I've spoken of the need to reposition your shop to take heed on the needs of your clients. Whether it means hiring someone who can handle some of these additional services, or educating yourself on how to do them, the bottom line is this: the more you can have a client spend with you, the better your bottom line will be. Get the money you deserve for your experience and expertise—and you'll be fast on your way to setting your shop apart from your competitors. •SC



Dan Antonelli owns Graphic D-Signs, Inc. in Washington, New Jersey. He is the author of *Logo Design for Small Business* and *Logo Design for Small Business 2*. He's recently started a Web site, www.signshopmarketing.com, which is dedicated to the marketing needs of sign shops.

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This is an interesting approach for this mobile document-shredding company. The paper-icon graphic houses the wording, including the positioning line that we wrote. The shredding-type treatment on *Shred* instantly tells the nature of the business, and *Code* gives it that cool, stamped look. The design converts perfectly to one color as well.



The graphics for this van were digitally printed on the VersaCMM. I designed all the artwork for this moving billboard, and Rich Dombey (www.richdesignsinc.com) handled the actual installation. All the lettering was beveled and carved in Photoshop®, and then white and dark highlights were added digitally.

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