



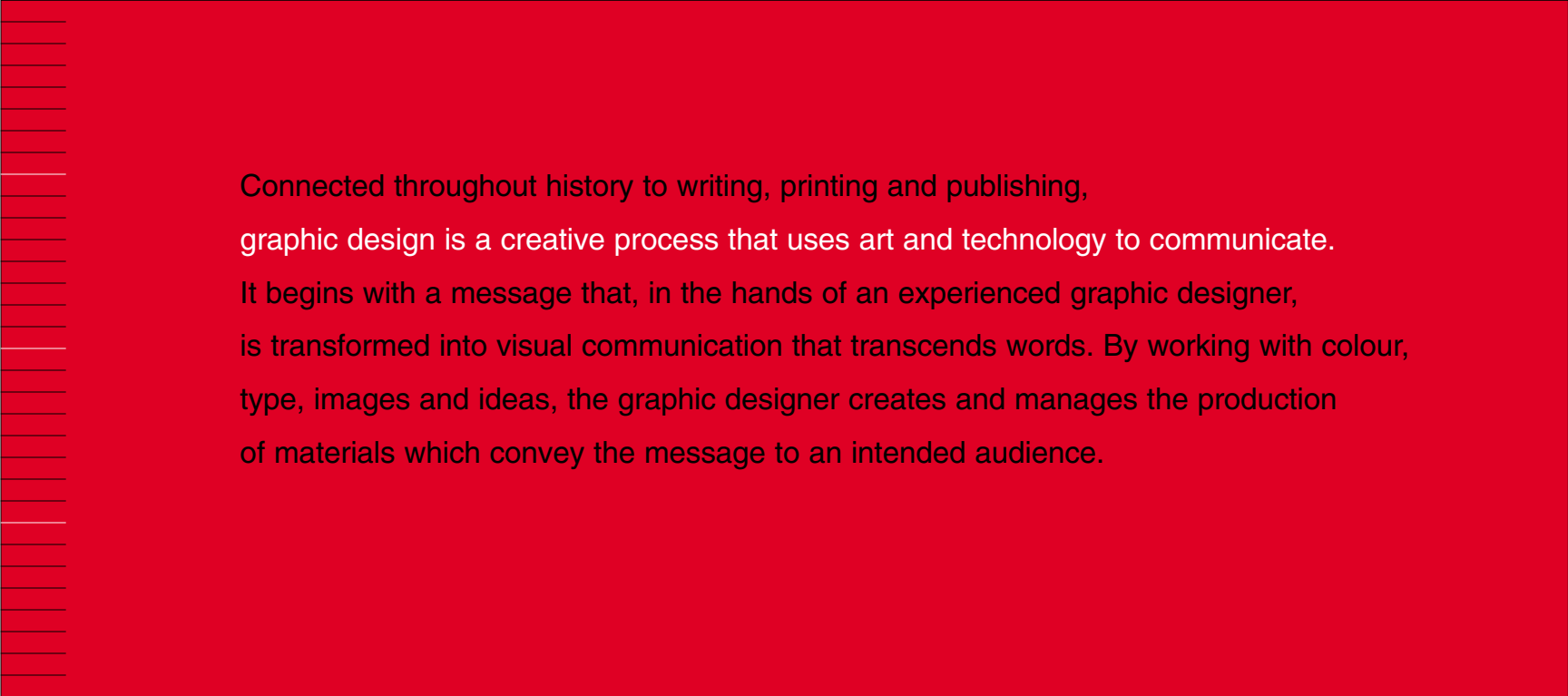
Society of  
Graphic Designers of Canada

Société des  
designers graphiques du Canada

Graphic Design:  
A Guide for Buyers

**Good design** is good business





Connected throughout history to writing, printing and publishing,  
graphic design is a creative process that uses art and technology to communicate.  
It begins with a message that, in the hands of an experienced graphic designer,  
is transformed into visual communication that transcends words. By working with colour,  
type, images and ideas, the graphic designer creates and manages the production  
of materials which convey the message to an intended audience.

Over the past fifty years, **graphic design** has evolved as a complex service profession, primarily concerned with problem-solving and communicating concepts appropriate to a client's needs. In today's information-based society, the demands placed upon **graphic designers** requires intelligence, responsibility and versatility.

**Graphic design** encompasses:

trademarks and symbols	posters
identity programs	exhibits and displays
stationery	advertising
brochures	sign systems
product literature	environmental graphics
annual reports	television
diagrams, graphs and maps	film and video
books	websites
packaging	

**Graphic design is part of the fabric of our lives.**



**Business and Design**

Design significantly affects the way an organization is perceived by its many audiences. It contributes to the success of an enterprise by influencing customers, stockholders, employees, analysts and others.

**“Design is a potent strategy tool that companies can use to gain a substantial competitive advantage. Yet most companies neglect design as a strategy tool. What they don’t realize is that design can enhance products, environments, communications and corporate identity.”**

**Effective design** is invaluable in helping a company or its products reach full potential in the marketplace. In addition to projecting a company’s unique assets, positively distinguishing it from competitors, **good design** facilitates a higher level of internal morale, greater public recognition, higher standards of performance, better recruitment, and in turn, higher productivity and profitability.

**Good design is good business.**

1. Philip Kotler and G.Alexander Rath,  
“Design: A Powerful but Neglected Strategy Tool”  
*The Journal of Business Strategy*, Fall 1984, p.12



### **The Design Process**

Typically this process involves four phases:

#### **1. Project planning and familiarization**

- Client conferences to establish goals, scheduling and budget, as well as content requirements, visual requirements and production considerations.
- An extensive review of business plan and marketing or communication strategy is often recommended for best results.

#### **2. Concept development**

- Close work with the content expert to develop complementary visual and written messages.
- Design proposal and rough layout for the client's evaluation and approval. This usually includes preliminary specifications for typography, photography or illustration, paper, and printing technique.
- Refinement of design proposal and preparation of revised and more detailed roughs (comprehensives) for final approval.

As professionals, **graphic designers** are creative strategists who combine visual communication skills with business insight.



### Choosing Designers

Much is at stake in the process of visual communication. In addition to the credibility of an organization, there are the disbursement costs of materials, photography, illustration, writing and printing or broadcast fees. A well-conceived design makes the investment of time and money worthwhile.

An organization requiring the use of graphic design services is advised to review the work of several professional designers. An evaluation should consider:

- ❖ the appropriateness of design solutions to a project's communication objectives;
- ❖ cost- and time-effectiveness;
- ❖ the designer's reputation and existing client relationships.

A professional designer does not engage in speculative, uncompensated commercial projects. Work for charitable, not-for-profit organizations or associations may be completed on a *pro bono* basis.

Should evaluation on a competition basis be desired,  
the correct course of action is to:

- evaluate firms through interviews;
- select for competition only those designers in whom there is serious interest;
- pay a reasonable honorarium for schematic presentations prior to commissioning the successful competitor.

**Good design flourishes** in an atmosphere of mutual respect  
that is professional, objective and alert to good ideas.

#### **Working with Designers**

A productive client/designer relationship requires teamwork. Client and designer must recognize each other's areas of expertise—they must listen to and learn from one another.

Just as it is important for the needs of the client to be articulated and fully understood, so, too, should the designer's expertise in the creative, concept development process be recognized. Good ideas cannot be called up on demand like a computer file. Time and a measure of freedom are necessary for creative work.



**The Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC)**

The GDC is a national, non-profit organization, founded in 1956 and chartered in 1976, which conducts educational activities, exhibitions, publications, and competitions for the benefit of Canadian industry and commerce and the general public.

Professional memberships in the GDC fall into two categories:

- The **MGDC** designation applies to members with a minimum of five years professional graphic design experience whose work and professional integrity meet acceptable standards.
- An **LGDC** designation is for licentiate members, professionals with less than five years experience who have successfully completed a program of graphic design studies.

As a professional organization, the GDC has formulated a **Code of Ethics** that seeks to **establish fair and productive relationships** between designers and their clients.



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**The GDC is headquartered in Ottawa and has regional  
Chapters throughout Canada.**

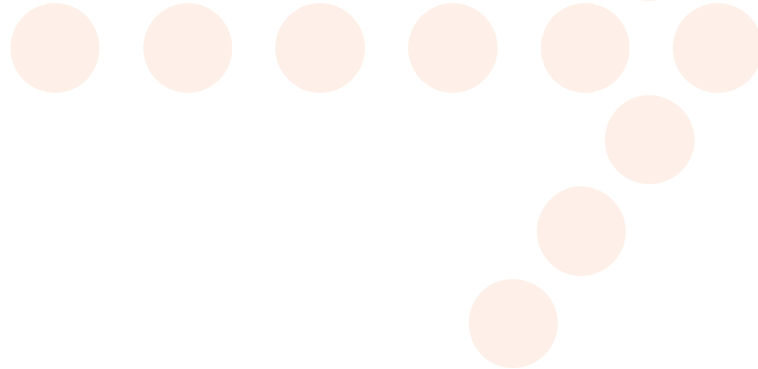
**... Further information on the graphic design profession  
and industry, the **GDC Code of Ethics** and a searchable  
database of GDC members' portfolios is available by  
visiting [www.gdc.net](http://www.gdc.net).**

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