

What do graphic designers charge?

In an industry that spans a broad range of offerings and skill levels, comparing pricing for graphic design services can be like comparing apples to oranges. To ensure the best design value for your dollar, a number of variables must be considered.

Hourly vs. By Project Billing

Hourly

According to The 2012/2013 Survey of Salaries and Billing Practices for the Communication Design Industry produced by RGD and Creative Niche which surveyed 2,890 creative professionals across Canada, the average hourly rate for a sole proprietor* across the country is \$74/hour.

A sole proprietor's hourly rate will vary depending on what services are required. While a service like photo re-touching will be on the lower end, web and mobile development, brand strategy and art direction will be associated with higher costs. A designer's hourly rate is generally reflective of what they are worth based on experience and expertise.

By project

Project fees are focused more on the value of the work itself than the number of hours a designer spends on the project. As a creative process, it can be difficult to predict exactly how long a design project will take, and the number of hours often varies depending on the skill level and working style of the individual designer.

Considerations

Whether a designer charges by project or by hour, how much the entire project costs will be based on an assessment of the work's value and the amount of effort required to provide a successful end product. A designer must understand the full scope of the project and the client's needs before quoting a price.

** A Sole Proprietor is an individual operating a government-registered business. Rates will differ significantly for firms or agencies, which have a much more varied and extensive supply of resources and expertise.*

Pricing Factors

There are many factors a designer needs to understand before he or she can provide an accurate quote. To establish a price, designers need to understand:

- The scope of the proposed project:
 - a). Deliverables
 - b). Number of concepts and revisions
 - c). Volume of work / future business
- Anticipated expenses
- The urgency of the project
- Estimated number of hours required to complete the project

Be aware that the rate quoted at the beginning of the project will change if the scope of the project changes. If additional features are added or if you decide to take an idea in a new direction not covered by the initial plan, the designer's costs will reflect these changes.

Intellectual Property

Also keep in mind that designers maintain ownership of the computer files for a project they have worked on. As a client, you are paying for the deliverables stated in the original estimate. All concepts, working files, ideas or adaptations remain the property of the designer unless otherwise negotiated. This also applies to materials such as fonts, software, photos and illustrations, templates, style sheets, etc. You may wish to negotiate with your designer to purchase these files for a price based on the time it would take to convert the files, the cost of the media and the value of the project.

Further Resources

To better understand the position of graphic design professionals and ensure that business relationships remain ethical and in the best interest of both clients and designers, it is important to fully understand the nature of the work. For more information on Pro Bono and Spec Work, visit rgd.ca.

For more information on design industry salaries and billing practices, download the 2012/2013 National Salary Survey of CreativeEarnings.

Further details on hiring qualified professionals for design services can be found at rgdontario.com/talent/hiring.php.