



The Designer or Design Firm Decision

By John Reiss

Choosing an integrated media design partner can be a daunting task. The vendor community is populated by a diverse number of individual designers and design firms vying for your business, many of which demonstrate a similar level of technological, organizational, and aesthetic aptitude. However, distinctions in both cost and yield unveil value differences that could make the decision a little easier.

The cost and yield distinctions are determined by the number of people involved on the vendor side of the project. Individual designers cost less, but rely solely on the talents and experiences of the individual. Design firms cost more, but employ the diverse talents of a creative team, commonly comprising a project manager, design director, designer, copywriter, and technology developer.

After considering the numerous benefits afforded by a creative team versus that of a single designer, the differences in value are clearly defined:

Efficiency – tighter deadlines are met as a result of concurrent task execution (multiple people working).

Focus – peripheral distractions are avoided by focusing team members on specific tasks and responsibilities.

Collaboration – more inclusive and powerful design and content solutions are created due to the diverse number of perspectives available through a project team.

Insight and Experience – fewer mistakes and process glitches occur as a result of the broad base of experience each team member brings to the project.

Success – the probability of project success is significantly increased because of the strategically composed creative team's ability to employ best practices throughout the process.

Though creative teams offer more efficiency, focus, collaboration, insight, and value, not every project warrants such a complete spectrum of benefits. In most cases, individual designers are better suited for projects that are smaller in scope, easier to manage, and require less consultation.

There is a delicate balance between cost and yield when choosing an integrated media design partner. When faced with such a decision, be sure to consider carefully the differences in value between an individual designer and a design firm. What you don't invest in today, could cost you more tomorrow.