

Demystifying the different types of digital designers

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In a time when having a digital presence is a key component to your business, there are several types of digital designers to help you solve the need of both your business and your customer. The scale, scope, platform requirements, audience and timeline of a digital project all help determine what kind of designer - or designers - need to be brought on board to help deliver the most effective outcome.



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Know the problem

Key to starting the process of finding the right type of designer for your team or project is to understand what problem you're trying to solve. Developing that understanding results in the delivery of a 'problem statement' that interrogates the problem you are facing. From there, a digital expert or consulting company can suggest what kinds of designers can be hired to tackle the identified need.

A good digital designer, no matter what their speciality, is someone who can visually communicate to a customer what they should be purchasing based on their needs, rather than what they think they need. A digital designer should be able to understand whether the problem they're solving is the right one – not the one you think you may have. There's a tension there, but if you're investing in an expert, it's important to allow them the time and space to help develop a solution that will really speak to your needs – and your customers' - needs.

If you believe you don't need a digital designer in your business, you may either be discounting the importance of digital design to deliver an effective online experience or are disregarding the impact of having a digital presence – and both can be signs of trouble.

If you don't have a digital presence of some kind for your brand, in the modern world, you're unlikely to outlive your competitors' next lunch break. That's not to say that every business in every industry needs to go for a full-service digital offering. A well-thought-out problem statement assessed by a good digital designer can help you drill down to what kind of digital presence will serve your business best.

The designer can then focus on producing an elegant solution to your needs, rather than executing poorly across a host of unnecessary touchpoints that can confuse your customers.

Here are some types of designers you may want to consider for your business:

Product Designer: End-to-end Responsibility

A critical designer in most digital projects is a product designer. Involving a product designer at the concept stage of a project will allow them to give input into strategy, brainstorming, implementation, development, testing and rollout of the project to the end-users. They should also have an understanding of the technical development requirements so that they can work around any limitations that may arise.

Many a project has been scuppered by a disconnect between designer and developer as the former builds an 8K solution, when the latter has been tasked to deliver a charcoal sketch.

Web Designer- Specialists deliver specialist results

If a business is looking to develop an e-commerce site, a web designer who understands the intricacies of the purchase journey would be the best person for the job. A good web designer blends design thinking, facilitation, ideation and problem statement analysis to be able to deliver a digital product that is responsive and fit for purpose.

Graphic Designers

Graphic or visual designers are traditionally associated with the print space, but there's as big a need for them in the visually focused digital space. The terms visual or graphic designer are often used interchangeably – but in both instances, their role is to create visuals.

The evolutionary aspect from print to digital is that a digital-first graphic designer needs to have skills across different platforms and devices. They can be specialists in app design, with the requisite understanding of the nuances between platforms – say iOS vs Android – and devices.

In contrast, a visual designer could be a specialist in data visualisation, which is such an important role right now, with data driving most projects. If all that hard-won data isn't presented to the right audience in the right way, the message or findings can get lost.

User Interface (UI) Designer- Delivering a good Customer Experience

A User Interface (UI) designer is the go-to person when needing a designer who understands the layout of and the requirements of different platforms (web, mobile, iOS, Android etc.). Many UI designers specialise in specific platforms, which would work well for a business looking to focus on a specific platform such as iOS.

The UI designer will know the ins and outs of the platform and what standards need to be met and documentation supplied, to get the app approved by the App Store.

User Experience (UX) Designer – Drawing the Map

A user experience designer dictates the flow or the journey that a user will go on, when using the product. The name says it all – they can determine how to optimise the navigation of the platform, make it simple for customers to find what they're looking for and ensure that the experience is standardised across platforms.

In closing, there are many types of digital designers to explore hiring– however in essence, you will need the right resourcing partner to help you determine what your needs are and who the best person for the job is.

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