Why You Need a Professional Book Designer

by Peggy Nehmen and Bobbi Linkemer

You are a new author. You're in the process of writing a book or perhaps you have finally finished the writing phase**.** What is your next step? You need a cover, but not just *any* cover. You need a really great cover because your book cover is the single most important marketing tool you have to sell your book.

A great book cover can attract readers and buyers, enhance your credibility as an expert on your topic, and increase your sales. It will grab attention, whether it is on a bookstore's shelf or the size of a postage stamp on Amazon's website. On the other hand, a poorly designed book cover can turn off a potential buyer in a split second.

One thing to keep in mind—your book cover is not about you, it's about your target audience. It's about attracting potential buyers. It is the first and perhaps the only time a potential buyer may see your book, so it's crucial to make a memorable first impression. If the cover has no impact, the buyer will not look at it again. She will not click on it on Amazon or carry it with her to the checkout line. She will not buy your book.

A great book cover is also about readability. If the buyer can't easily read the information on the front or the back cover, he will simply look at another book or walk away. The cover is your billboard. If the front cover grabs the buyer, he will turn the book over and read the important information on the back cover.

The elements of a really great book cover are its title, imagery, format, and packaging. The **title** should be smart and snappy to grab the reader's attention and arouse curiosity. You need one really good **image**—not a cluster of images—to focus the eye.

Typography must be readable at a small size. Something about it should be distinctive, whether it's the font or the color or its placement on the cover. Don't underestimate the importance of the way your designer uses type to convey a message.

Format refers to three elements of your book: interior layout, book size and shape, and presentation of your material.

1. Interior layout: This is a big part of a book designer's job. Laying out the pages of the book is more complicated than it may seem and is often a challenge for new authors.

2. Book size and shape: Most printers, including CreateSpace (owned by Amazon) and Ingram Spark (owned by Ingram), print standard sizes, such as 5.5 x 8.5 or 6 x 9. If you want to print through Amazon or Ingram, you will have to stick with a standard size. That does not mean that you can't have the book you want; it simply means that you will have to work a lot harder to sell it through Amazon or Ingram. This is something on which your designer can advise you.

3. <u>Presentation of your material</u>: Will it be an e-book, a soft cover print book, a hard cover, or an audio book. A designer can explain all of these options to you and help you decide which of them meets your needs. For example, you might wish to publish in more than one format, such as an e-book and a paperback print book, which many authors are choosing to do.

Packaging is the material you use for your cover. Is it going to be hardback or paperback? Is it going to have a wraparound jacket or will print be directly on the cover? Will it be glossy or matte, printed on regular card stock or extra heavy? Will it have the extra protection of a sleeve or box? Will it be a standard size or have a more custom format, such as square or miniature? Another important question is whether or not the printer you've chosen can produce the packaging you want. What you have in mind may not be practical or even possible in terms of your budget. These are all questions you would ask the printer, but few first-time authors are aware of them. A book designer not only knows what and whom to ask but can also find the answers that work for you.

Why do you need a book designer?
The simple answer is to make you look good, to save you time, and to produce a high-quality, professionally designed book.

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