



## Partner with Your Designer. Simplify Your Life.

By Debbie Manning



**I occasionally get calls from people who are interested in developing goals for their businesses – creating long range goals, developing sales strategies, etc.** Although marketing is my interest, “thinking” is not really my field. “Implementing” ideas is more my concern. Graphic and web design is a support business – designers try to support your ideas and your marketing thoughts visually.

**Graphic designers love people who have lots of ideas.** Some of my favorite clients are speakers and writers who have **tons** of ideas – and they want to present them attractively. They know *exactly* what they want to say. They want a graphic designer’s assistance in getting their point across effectively.

Most of us are very visual. We imagine all kinds of things. We dream very well! With a little back and forth communication, a designer who takes the time to listen to your thoughts can communicate your ideas ... the way *you’re* seeing them in your mind. The designer can work with you to develop ideas, and can partner with you to communicate these ideas to your audience.

**Many of my clients, however, think they don’t have any ideas** – they have a sense that they “need” a new logo, or a business card. Or they know that they should have a website to support their business presence (they should!).

Actually, most of us do have creative ideas even if we haven’t recognized them officially yet. We have preconceived ideas about most things ... colors we like, shapes we prefer, and ideas we want to communicate.

In designing websites, I have a form that I give my new clients to help them think about what they really do like. I ask my clients to surf and note sites they like – and sites they don’t

like. Many clients who believe they have “no ideas” are actually very definite about their likes and dislikes.

**The partnership we form gives clients the freedom to put words to their thoughts and dreams.** The designer’s goal then is present these thoughts professionally – and effectively.

To prepare for easy future transitions (when you begin thinking you might want to update your support materials), try to recognize some of your own preferences now. Start a file with marketing materials you like – and materials you don’t like.

When you’re ready to have an ad created to put in your favorite magazine, this will be an invaluable time-saver for you and the ad designer!

**Quite a few of my clients have spent years “doing it themselves.”** They finally hired bookkeepers and accountants, and most of them realized that, like taxes, their expertise was also not in design. They’re much happier doing what they do well (be it selling, or physical therapy, or training), and leaving the layout to me.

**Although some clients are corporations and associations, a good number of my clients are small entrepreneurs like myself.** My goal is to “partner” with clients. I work to support my clients so that they can do what they do best, while I take care of creative materials, doing what I do best.

**I occasionally design a single business card or brochure.** However, one-time projects are not the bread and butter of my business. Generally, I develop long-term relationships with clients. If I’ve been working with you over the past year on various other projects, creating your brochure is going to take less time and be more cost effective for you than if your first project is a laundry list of technical requirements for a brochure you need by next week.

**Recently a new client brought me her ideas for a logo.** In a few hours time I was able to lay out her logo (she had it *very* well thought out) – and design business cards, letterhead, labels and invoices. The pieces needed were the same for each project, so she was efficiently able to save money.

Many of my best relationships are with clients who say “I’m doing a big presentation at XYZ

Company. Here’s my PowerPoint presentation. Work your magic! I need a handout.”


**They do what they do best – educating and speaking. And I do what I do best – preparing an easy-to-follow, interesting handout in PDF format** (don’t you think those PowerPoint Notes Pages are way too common – and boring?). I already have their logo, their

contact materials, pieces of previous handouts ... saving hours of time. I can put together a handout for them very economically.

**Sometimes clients will say “let’s use the material we put together for my ad in ABC to start a website.”** And, I’ll happily recommend hosting companies, URLs, etc. A well balanced, diversity in client types can give a designer a wealth of knowledge about “how to” accomplish projects.

**For example, I discovered a local printer who prints full color postcards for less than 20 cents a card.** Clients all benefited from that knowledge – and some, who hadn’t considered postcards before, are printing cards to hand out like business cards – others are printing coupons. One client printed invitations to an anniversary party as a postcard. Full color cards used to be only for corporations with lots of money – no longer!

**If you have ideas for print or web design projects, please call 630-668-0603 or visit my website [www.debmanning.com](http://www.debmanning.com).**

 *Debbie Manning has been creating graphic and web designs in DuPage County for over 11 years. She specializes in communication support materials such as logos, business cards, brochures, newsletters, websites, etc. One of her favorite projects is the bi-monthly design of DuPage Woman Newspaper™!*

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