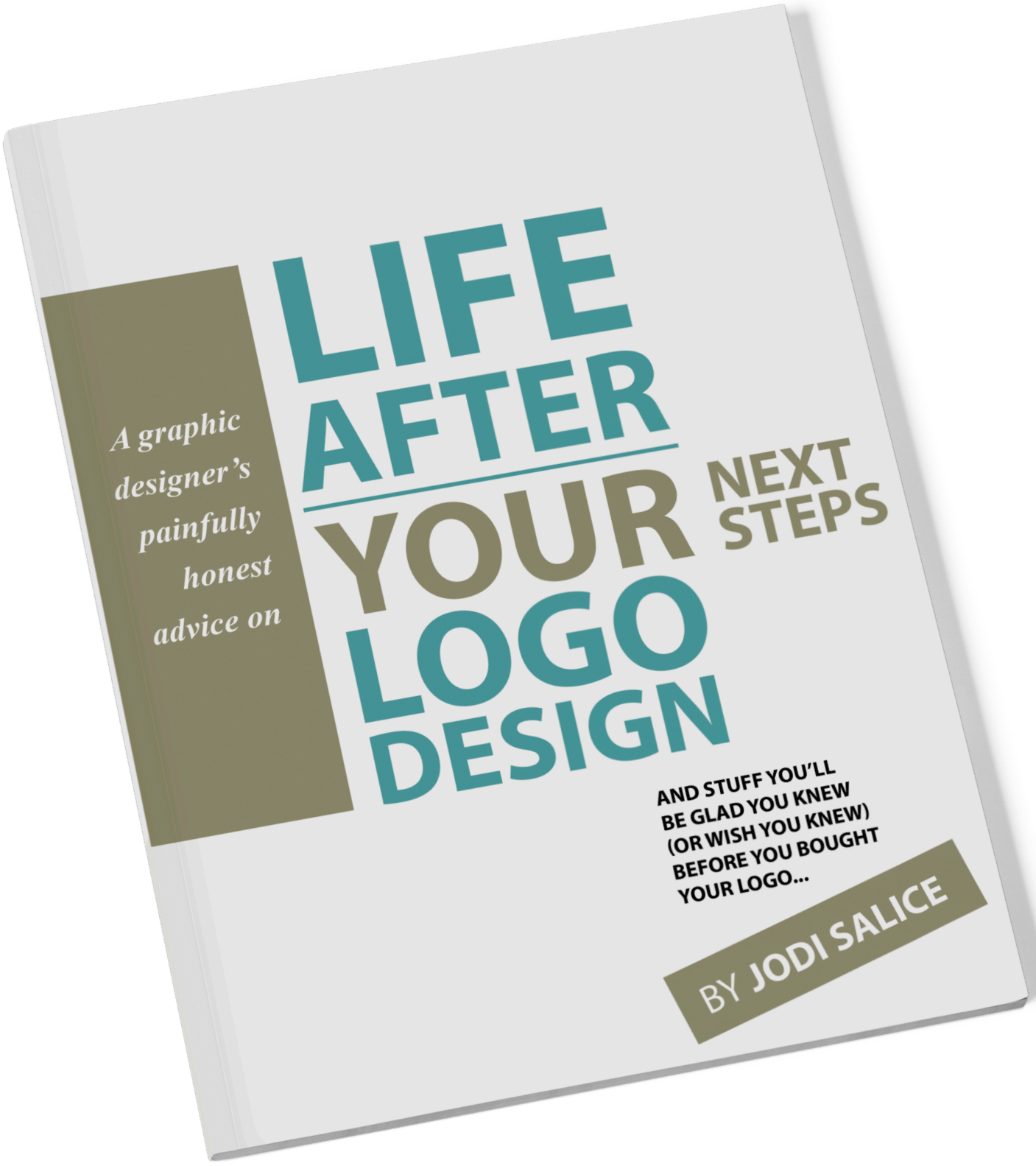
This guide is designed minimalistically to conserve your printer ink. You're welcome.



LIFE AFTER YOUR LOGO DESIGN

A graphic designer's painfully honest advice toward your next steps

and stuff you'll be glad you knew (or wish you knew) before you bought your logo...

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LIFE AFTER YOUR LOGO DESIGN

A Graphic Designer's Painfully Honest Advice On Your Next Steps

Hello!

If you recently had a logo designed for your business, congratulations. It's a huge step toward developing the face of your brand. *(If you did not buy a logo yet, then this information will still be valuable in helping you decide on a level of investment for your logo.)*

If you're reading this, it's because you probably recognize that the visual branding portion of your business does not stop at logo design. The logo is only a smart part of your visual branding story, and you'll need to be aware of some risks when it comes to putting it out there for the world to see, lest you do more damage than good.

There are best practices to consider, as well as many risks that may end up hurting how folks perceive you in the marketplace. It is very easy to put your logo out there, but are you giving yourself a good chance for brand awareness?

In all the years I've been practicing graphic design, I've had clients provide me with all different qualities of logos they had designed by other designers - some logos made my work easy, and many came with expensive challenges. On the receiving end of a very wide spectrum of quality, I can tell you that there is a substantial difference in the value of either.

Most folks I have met over the years, at no fault of their own, do not understand the difference between "budget" logos and premium logos, and end up making poor initial choices with expensive consequences. So this is where it will get **"painfully honest,"** because I need to get you to understand the differences over the spectrum of design so you can have some control over your wallet over time. The next pages will explain the differences and potential risks. Then I will advise you on your next steps based on where your logo came from.

by Jodi Salice

From Where Did You Buy Your Logo?

Here I'll describe the different levels of designers and what you can expect to receive from them.

The $99 (or less) Designer

While I don't advise this option for my clients, I am a firm believer that everything has its purpose. Cheap logos are a valid option for non-profits or ventures with very small markets, short life expectancies, low profiles, and/or limited goals. They are designed by amateur designers who need to get a quick dollar or a foot in the door of doing business, so everyone benefits in some way.

However, the cheap logo was not designed with longer-term strategy in mind, nor discovery of your venture and market, nor anything that is critical to a successful branding effort. You told the designer what you wanted, and without any regard given for business aspirations or problems to be solved, the designer aspired to give you what you asked for. Hopefully, they did not plagiarize it to save time or mental effort, but unfortunately, this is very often what happens.

Note: The very famous Nike logo was designed for $35 by Carolyn Davidson who was a student at the time at Portland University. The logo was such an incredible success, that the logo's estimated branding worth as of 2011 was $13,000,00. Since Nike's success was largely in part to the ingenious logo design, the founder rewarded Carolyn with shares of stock that were worth over $1-million! There are two things to note here: 1) This is not the norm. 2) The company was willing to reward its designer because she helped them in their meager beginnings. This attitude of heart of likely a very huge reason for their success.

Middle-of-the-Road Designers

You can get some very excellent work and start-up strategy for this range of design. You will find a mix here of some of what you'll find with cheaper designers and premium designers, so it's advisable that you are cautious and make sure you feel confident about who you hire.

These designers will provide you with the same things you would receive with a $99 logo, except that with it, you might get a well-thought-out logo guide to help you maintain the integrity of your visual brand. You should have received color codes, fonts (included if free, or listed if you have to purchase) and instructions for all their usage. It is a more reasonable place to start for small to medium sized businesses. Expect to invest anywhere from hundreds of dollars to several thousand.

If this is you, then, bravo - you're off to a decent start, maybe a great start depending on your business goals. Your logo designer might be the person who works with you from this point moving forward, designing all of your visual elements that they can handle from print marketing to web graphics. If not, and your logo designer only designs logos, then you'll need to transition to a designer who can take on the rest.

Premium Business Designers

On the higher-value end of the spectrum, your designer should have set you up with strategy above all else. They are 100% focused on your business goals and problems and gear their designs with the fullest intentions to support and solve. With that, your logo is something of a byproduct. You could have received everything above plus a more comprehensive logo/strategy guide, supporting illustrations and graphics if the strategy calls for them, style scapes, mood boards, and anything else that might be custom to your particular branding strategy. All of these things will tighten up your branding efforts and work together toward establishing your business as a true leader in the marketplace. It is a substantial investment on your part, but you can feel confident that your visual branding is going to fully support and enhance your business efforts. Risk is minimized tremendously.

Note: A famous designer worth mentioning at this level is Paul Rand who commanded as much as $100,000 for a single logo design. He was the creator of the following famous logos: ABC, air-wick, Esquire Magazine, IBM, NeXT Computers, UPS, Westinghouse, Yale University, and many more.

Understand Certain Risks (to name a few)

If you bought a logo on the cheap, then you need to be aware of the risks before you make any decisions with it. Even if the logo is a beautiful piece of art and looks exactly as you dictated it to your designer, it was not given any real thought as to your actual business.

Because of this, you risk having your target market not connect with it. How much money will you invest on your marketing, not to get enough return because your market was repelled by your logo?

And what if your target market DOES connect to your logo on a visual level, but it does not work across different modes of production? You may have to pay for a redesign to make the logo work, potentially alienating your market or causing them to perceive your business as unstable, inspiring them to do business elsewhere. And with all that, your former marketing efforts can no longer be used because your old logo is, well, old.

Your logo should be suitable for your upcoming channels of production. For example, what works for web does not work for printing, and what works for printing does not always work for decaling. An experienced logo designer will be mindful of these facts and ensure that your logo suits your plans for marketing.

Is your logo responsive? In other words, can it be altered to work in different placements and contexts? This sort of thing takes a lot of thought and planning which is not going to be achieved through a cheap logo.

You've left either yourself or another designer to fumble through further branding exploration. As this exploration comes in bits and pieces, it's going to look inconsistent and unresolved throughout the process.

As for the designers that DO take it on, there will almost always be a disconnect between them and your work because they can't get fully on board with the creative approach. There will be assumptions that can get you into expensive production and/or marketing hangups later on. There needs to be a deeper discovery process through which a designer can learn as much about your business as possible so they can plan for various situations during the design process. There also needs to be strategy, or you'll risk sending wrong messages and utterly missing your target.

There are technical risks also. You have a folder full of different file formats. Which ones do you use, and for which media? There is raster versus vector to consider, DPIs color modes for different displays, responsiveness to consider for each context, transparencies versus opaques, and there are industry-standard practices for using it.

Admit it - This was a "toss the noodles at the wall and hope they stick" approach on both your and the designer's part. You saved money up front and now you're going to pay for it in the long run with all the rebranding and otherwise good business you're going to lose along the way.

In some cases with your cheap logo you'll get a folder loaded with a plethora of different file types of the same exact snapshot of your logo, whether they work for their purposes or not. And hopefully you'll know what to do with them all, because you likely didn't receive any customized instructions.

Where to Go From Here

Regardless of where you're coming from, I can't stress how important it is for you to connect with someone who has an ongoing vested interest in the design industry and aspires to put your brand's best face forward in the years to come. Don't try to handle all that stuff yourself. It's a profession of it's own, and you have your own business to run. Get a business-minded graphic designer to handle it for you. You'll still be in control of the final decision-making.

What To Do With Your Logo Files

This will very much depend on your level of logo investment.

If you're looking to build a real, for-profit business and you bought a **$99-or-less logo**, ditch it. If you can't afford to invest more for a logo, than you'll unlikely be able to afford the losses from using it. Here's the hard truth - You didn't buy a logo - you bought a problem. It is desperately problematic and better for everyone involved to scrap it and start over. Hire an experienced designer, invest real money, and get at least a middle-of-the-road level of design if you're a small to medium sized business. Your logo is the face of your brand and requires more than you would spend a single day's outfit, so handsomely cloth your business for multiple impressions for years to come.

If you went **middle-of-the-road**, then your next designer will need everything your logo designer supplied to you, as well as a solid conversation about your business and why you feel the existing logo supports and enhances your brand. You'll want that designer to partner with your efforts for the long haul, so make sure you select someone who can get on board with your visions and goals for your business and how your branding supports it all. This is not going to be a relationship full of one-off projects; this is going to be a real partnership toward your success and your designer's success.

If you went with a **premium strategist**, then you're likely already hooked up with a long-term design team who knows your business inside and out! If not, you need to partner with a designer who is prepared to understand your brand, your strategies, and is willing to be in it for the long haul. Provide your designer with all of the assets associated with your logo and visual branding just as you would with a middle-of-the-road logo.

Final Thoughts

Whomever you choose to proceed with, make sure that you understand their working terms and how they fit into the bigger picture of your working relationship. Different designers work different ways and have different terms, but you want to make sure that you both agree on the fairness of the arrangement and be sure that you are honoring their rights to their intellectual property. You are commissioning an artist, so everything they create becomes a source of their livelihood. Show your ongoing appreciation for the ongoing effectiveness of their work.

An independent graphics provider is an excellent option to consider for your ongoing graphic design needs. I, for one, am multi-faceted in branding, print design, web graphics, and copy-writing, and handle projects from concept to production. Whatever extends beyond my skill-set, I either refer or outsource, because I sincerely want you to succeed. I qualify my clients before partnering as a graphic design advisor toward their immediate and long-term success. I have a trade-only wholesale printer with whom I have worked since 2005, and my clients receive a rich sample package, so they can be sure of the quality they're getting before they put money down on printing.

If you are interested at all in having me work with you, or if you'd like to have a conversation to see if we'd make a good fit, please send me an email to me at jodi@highrealmgraphics.com or set up a ➲ 30-minute telephone conversation.

There will be no obligation for us to work together.

With much gratitude,

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I help businesses send a clearer message to a visual world.

~ Jodi Salice ~
Graphic Design Strategist

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Take your next step.

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or set up a **free 30-minute introductory call** at www.calendly.com/jodisalice/30min.