

### Why Feedback Matters

Graphic design is a collaborative process between designer and client. The client provides the goals and expectations of the project and the designer turns those instructions into visual design. Both sides work together, making edits as the process continues until the final product is as good as it can be. Providing clear, constructive feedback ensures the project will move forward quickly, smoothly and successfully.

### Setting The Stage For Successful Feedback

The key to successful client/designer collaboration begins with the relationship. Establishing a feeling of mutual respect and open communication helps ensure that neither client or designer becomes resistant, defensive or dismissive of the ideas and opinions of either side. Also, if you can keep the relationship fun it will help make sure that feedback sessions don't become overly stressful or unproductive.

### How to deliver feedback

The best time to deliver feedback is after you've thoroughly reviewed the work and organized your thoughts. Once you are ready, set a time and place—this ensures that you are prepared to deliver feedback and the designer is prepared to receive it. Surprise feedback sessions often result in incomplete or confusing direction and/or defensiveness on the part of the designer.

#### Key points to remember when delivering feedback:

- **Be positive:** focus on improvement. Designers will be more responsive if the feedback is upbeat and not demanding or harsh.
- **Focus on goals:** focus on the goals of the project and don't get sidetracked with minor aspects that won't have a meaningful impact the project.
- **Discuss the work, not the person:** all feedback should be about the project itself, not the designer. Avoid "you" statements such as "you used the wrong color!" in favor of neutral statements like "the color should be PMS 165."
- **Be timely:** designers are usually juggling several different projects at one time, so try to deliver feedback when your project is still fresh in their mind.
- **Be reasonable:** sometimes emotions run hot, resulting in conflict. Delivering feedback in a calm and rational manner helps guarantee that the feedback will be heard and applied.
- **Be honest AND polite:** the best work can only be accomplished if both sides are honest and forthright about their opinions. However, this is not an excuse to forgo civility and kindness.

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- **Be specific:** vague feedback is the worst feedback. Be precise about what works or doesn't work. Provide examples or benchmarks of what you like or want to see.
- **Don't problem solve:** you don't have to come up with the solution for the designer, only provide feedback on what is working or not working. However, you should feel free to provide suggestions or insight.
- **Consolidate:** if several stakeholders are involved, consolidate all feedback into a single point of view. Providing contradictory or conflicting feedback only slows the process.
- **Put it in writing:** this is the only way to ensure that your feedback is interpreted correctly after the fact.

## Feedback Principles

### Understanding, Not Judgment

The feedback process isn't about delivering judgment on the work—it's about making the work as good as it can be. Listening to the design rationale allows you to better understand why particular design decisions were made. Seeking understanding first will help you deliver better, more actionable feedback.

### Questions, Not Statements

People are always more receptive to questions than statements. Feedback delivered as statements such as "I hate this color" will be met with defensiveness. Instead, try a probing question such as "why did you select this color?" Not only is it less threatening, but it requires the designer to answer with thoughtful design rationale.

### Provide The Why

Be transparent as possible with your feedback and give the real reasons you think or feel the way you do. It's okay to be arbitrary or subjective, as long as you acknowledge it as such. Providing the reasons for feedback will help the designer avoid similar missteps and pet peeves in the next iteration.