Looks matter (or, invest in good graphic design)

Have you ever visited a website that looked as if a teenager built it by trying out every single font and programming code out there? Or have you picked up a brochure that looked like your dad's secretary typed it out back in 1962? If so, you know instinctively that looks matter.

Years ago I had a client who ran a tutoring service. He knew how to write and had written a fairly good brochure (although he was not highlighting why you should hire his company…and that is where I came in). He had also "designed" this brochure, and it looked like it. Because his brochure was "home-made" he looked small time. It wouldn't appeal to the diplomats that were his target audience. I convinced him to spend some money on professional design. He was very pleased with the end result and agreed that with a properly designed brochure, his business LOOKED professional, and seemed "big time."

Looks matter.

Would you go to a hospital that looks dirty? Would you trust your tax returns to an accountant who seems shady? Would you hire a personal trainer that you met while eating at McDonald's? No, no, and no. Your impressions of each of these would be negative in relation to the image you are looking for. Your image of an ideal hospital is one of white walls and the strong smell of disinfectant, right?

Dan Kohan, a graphic designer and owner of the Washington-based graphic design firm Sensical Design, says this:

> *Graphic design communicates nonverbal information, the same way our facial expressions or clothing communicate when we're having a conversation. When people are presented with a*

*magazine, say, or a website, they respond first to how it communicates visually—whether it looks attractive and professional or amateurish and cheap, whether it's easy to read, whether it draws your attention to what's important—and only then do they read the content. **So, effective and appropriate design is crucial if you want your message to be heard.***

Not only does design help make you LOOK professional, but it actually is part of your message.

Looks matter. Are you paying enough attention?