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BUSINESS

MIND YOUR BUSINESS

Web offers resources for turning hobby into something lucrative

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Q: Whom should I contact to help design my company logo? Also, where can I find someone to print company business cards, letterhead and various other worksheets necessary for my new business?

– Raring to go in Redwood City

A: You can spend a few dozen dollars or a half million dollars on a logo, depending on whether you're a corner store or a Fortune 500 company.

And even within the world of small business, different enterprises have differing needs.

For instance, a doctor's office may simply need some conservative-looking, black-and-white type to put on its business cards and letterhead.

But a pizza parlor may want something in color that can also go on boxes, menus and the side of delivery vans.

So assess how you plan to use your logo, and how vital it is to your business. There are a lot of inexpensive logo templates on the Web. But if a logo is important to your company's success, hire a graphic designer.

"The most common pitfall is that people don't want to pay the money, so they take shortcuts and end up with a product that is not really representative of who they are,"

said Scott Stoll, a San Francisco graphic designer with Blue Bicycle.

You can find designers by word of mouth, on Craigslist or on Web sites such as www.elance.com or www.guru.com that connect freelancers with potential clients. (Those sites are free for clients — a tremendous resource for small businesses like yours.)

In choosing a designer, ask about relevant experience. Look at work samples. Let the designer know the objectives and culture of your business.

"Ideally, you should have a company name, a target market and a few adjectives about who you are — are you fun, classy, avant-garde, etc.," Stoll said. "I also like people to send me links to their competitors' Web sites, or just logos they like."

The designer should respond with a written proposal stating the scope and timing of the project. Find out:

– If you will own the design. "We have a large client who didn't read the small print with their previous designer," said Philippe Becker of Philippe Becker Design in San Francisco. "The designer retained the rights to their logo, and they ended up in a big fight."

– The cost of multiple versions of the final design (if you need black

and white for letterhead, color for the pizza truck, etc.).

– Whether you will be able to choose from several preliminary concepts. "You should always have options," said Becker. "A good range is four to six, but if the budget is tight, it may be two or three."

Many designers have a working relationship with a particular print shop. You can also seek quotes from other printers, including online ones.

Whichever printer you choose, have the designer convey the specifications. "That's why you go to a designer, so you don't have to do it yourself," Stoll said.

Want more info? Stoll's Web site, www.bluebicycle.biz/logos/logo_21.shtml, has a useful description of what makes a good logo and how the design process works.