



IS **DESIGN**
ESSENTIAL TO
THE SUCCESS OF
YOUR BUSINESS?



FROM THE OWNER OF AVID CREATIVE:
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DESIGN for FOOD & DRINK — Is design
essential to the success of your business?

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LET'S GET TO IT

DESIGN FOR FOOD & DRINK



This document may contain delicious information that can help your business.
Thanks for reading!

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FOOD PRIMER

Born and raised in Toronto, I have seen restaurants, bars and cafés come and go. Since we know that the industry is pretty cut-throat, good food may not be enough to bring in customers. Whatever the reason may be, there is always room to help prevent this from happening. In this document I will share information with you that can be a key ingredient in the success of any restaurant through proper (research-driven) design.

Since I began my business — I've set out to tackle the food and drink industry mainly because of the passion behind it. I have read case studies, observed trends, and given much thought to the different elements that can increase the sales of any restaurant, backed up by psychology and business insight.

I have a whole story behind the launch of my business (I won't go into the details - you can read this on my blog) but it had a lot to do with a trip I took to Europe many years ago. Great culture, great people, and the food! Oh the food! I was in love with it all!

Based on my experience, I brought together two great things that I love: Design and Food, and Voila! You have Avid Creative.

This venture guided me to create a freelance strategy that will help you understand how important design really is, through menu engineering, signage and branding.

And not to forget what is happening with food trends; both nationally and internationally. The revolution happening in the food industry is causing such a drastic change, it is baffling to see it ignored!

Lastly, the big question concerning you is; will you see a return on your investment. Speaking to you as a fellow business owner, I can relate to the business side and show you samples of return on investments in design.

So let's dive in, and I hope you enjoy, embrace and learn from my Design for Food & Drink primer.



Ashley A. Howell
Owner of AVID CREATIVE

WHAT IS DESIGN?

Various elements that effect the success of a restaurant includes: consistency, hygiene, engagement, and obvious points like good food and good service. When you talk to a returning customer, how do you uncover what really makes them come back? If you hear complaints, do you act on them? Do you act fast? Which great qualities does your restaurant have, and how do you keep it up? Consider Seth Godin's statement: "...the futility of the 'Under New Management' sign on a restaurant. People who like the place don't want to hear you're changing everything, and people who didn't like the old place aren't in such a hurry for a new place that they'll form a line out the door."

What does this all have to do with design? It is about your brand — the biggest all encompassing facet of how you are perceived in the public eye. You want to consistently communicate to reinforce your brand into your materials and your restaurants voice. Whether it is your logo, your signage or your menu etc. Do you want to stand out for something particular or are you going for a classic welcoming approach? How does your staff behave and is this consistent with the brand message? All these things should be considered when 'branding'. You are ideally setting the stage for your restaurant.

FUNDAMENTALS OF DESIGN

Many designers will refer to the fundamentals as the principals and elements of design. What a lot of non-designers don't know is, when applied properly, the principals of design can make a design stand out. Much like when you see that poster or billboard and you can't seem to look away; there is a combination of principals and elements present and used in such a way that has psychologically steered your focus.

A LITTLE BREAKDOWN:

Principals of design:

Alignment, Balance, Contrast, Repetition, Rhythm, Emphasis/Hierarchy and Unity.

Elements of design:

Line, Colour, Shape/Form, Texture, Value, Space and Size.

Some of the elements and principals of design are used in presenting a dish. You are probably using the principals and elements of design already, without even being aware!

WHAT IS A BRAND?

Your brand is the corporate image, generally formed by your audience — the customers. Your brand can not be designed but can be strategically formed so the consumer feels a certain way when experiencing your restaurant. It is an emotion tied in with the experience.

Your logo is of course crucial because it is how your brand will be recognized and part of your identity system. You can call it a badge of your brand, an icon, symbol or logo-type. Whatever you want to call it, it should be recognizable, legible in all sizes and identifies your business.

WHAT IS YOUR IDENTITY?

Your identity on the other hand is anything that the logo is applied to; ‘collateral’ is what most call it. Any form of consistent visuals including your colours, layouts, fonts, products, packaging, signage, uniforms — even the tag line.

There are countless solutions and resources involved in creating an efficient and consistent identity. Many materials can grab the attention of customers, it’s just a matter of finding what works well for your brand that is key. Do you want a chalk board menu or a digital menu — what works for your brand?

When a design is done right, it can trigger the right emotion, mood, and even action required to get a customer to come into your restaurant.



PSYCHOLOGY OF DESIGN

DID YOU KNOW...

- Dollar symbols on a menu make the viewer perceive the price higher than what is really there.
- Red and green marketing induces larger and healthier appetites.
- That the most profitable item should be in either the top right corner or middle of your menu to make it sell higher quantities?

Careful engineering of a menu can not only make your business more profitable but play a huge role in the success of any restaurant.

WHAT IS MENU ENGINEERING?

It is estimated that 60% of current restaurants do not use menu engineering. Out of the 40% that use it, a mere 10% succeed at it. So, what is it you ask? It is a method used to strategically analyze and place items with the design, that will psychologically sway customers into purchasing your most profitable items. This method has been proven to increase a restaurants profits by 15 to 20% – if done correctly.

SOME POINTERS ON GOOD MENU ENGINEERING, PSYCHOLOGY & DESIGN:

Dollar symbol (\$) causes the reader to perceive a higher price than it actually is.

Descriptions are key to making a customer's mouth water. If some are slightly inconsistent the longer descriptions get a higher reading rate.

On average, you want to have between 5-7 sections on your menu. Within each section an average of 6 items is ideal. The first item always being the most popular. (This menu is slightly shorter for viewing purposes).

Dinner for two & shared items are profitable and popular — a star item. Couples do not want to be seen as cheap and most of the time subconsciously fail to perceive the ‘price per person’ part.

If you have a longer menu people won't read it all, so you will want to guide the readers eye to particular areas so that certain items look more appealing — programming it as a primary choice for them.



On a one page menu, the top right is the best place to have high priced and 'star items'. Usually this is the first place someone will look when handed a menu.

You may think that images are a good thing on your menu, but it is particular to your brand. Notice fast-food restaurants have item photography, where as high-end restaurants have no images.

Successful menu engineering is used to break down your items in the following way:

★STAR: Profitable & Popular items

 PUZZLE: Profitable but not Popular

 HORSE: Popular but not Profitable

 DOG: Not profitable & Not Popular

Placing these items in a strategic order can psychologically sway a person to order a particular item.

Having the main menu separate from the drink menu can enhance the dining experience. This can increase beverage sales if the drink menu is kept on the table.

R.O.I. ON DESIGN

LET'S TALK BUSINESS

When you invest in business and in life, you always hope to get a return on your investment. Although some smaller businesses tend to put design on the back burner, this is why I have this section to inform you of the opportunities design can lead you to.

Investments are so important when running a business, having quality without breaking the bank — believe me I understand. On one hand, restaurants look to design firms to produce their collateral (which tends to be astronomically expensive). Then on the other hand, some leave the menu design up to the printer which gives you a less than mediocre result (they are printers after all — not designers). That's why I am here to tell you the benefit to hiring a freelance designer, which is what I am — a one person show to get you quality work without the lengthy bill from that design firm.

But first let's get to the ROI of design. In past history, design was looked at as an after thought. Many didn't want to invest in the aesthetics when the content was king (in their opinion). Then came along Coke, one of the most well-established brands of the 20th and now 21st century. Coke has not only established itself through the recognition of design but has built it's recognition over a century. You recognize Coke even when you see just the top stroke of the 'C' in the logo. In most recent years Apple has done a great job with its brand consistency throughout their stores, packaging and on-line media. Nike is also a prime example with its creativity, repetition and longevity of their brand. What do these three companies have in common? Their design is a huge part of their business plan; integrated and applied strategically. These examples show the efficiency of ROI of design in practice and the importance of investing in design for your business.



In a recent study called *'ROI - Measurable Design'* fosters great examples — showing tangible data backed up by case studies of design. I dare not bore you with all 143 pages, but one quote states:

'Several international studies have been conducted aiming to determine the value of design, and they have found design to have a positive impact on financial performance in terms of sales growth, product exports and market value (cf. e.g. Nyberg and Lindström, 2005).'

Even with this, there is still lack of studies of 'return on design' and is a continuous work in progress to put a solid system in place to gain more data. However, through word of mouth there are examples being shared like this one on the *'It's My Ingredient'* blog, expressing the importance of design:

'At a wine store our menus meant a different thing than what yours do at a restaurant or cafe, but the importance of good design remains. Once our menus were redesigned from basic, cluttered text into a clean and appealing design, more people picked them up in the store and used them to make orders for delivery. As a result, business (and our tips) went up.'

How design leads to sales? Urging to get answers on this topic, I conducted a survey to really see what people were saying. The most interesting discovery in the survey was that 97% of the people answered yes to the question: 'Do you believe a well-designed product or restaurant can increase sales?' This shows that people get drawn in by aesthetics and happen to react on the appearance of something — whatever they are buying; food included. Unfortunately we do judge a book by its cover and are swayed by how well the design is achieved through packaging, advertising, targeting and marketing. In turn, I feel this can sway sales. So, should we not look at the design of a restaurant the same way?



FOOD TRENDS

In the 60's they were ...

'being told they needed canned fruit, frozen vegetables, cake mixes and TV dinners. ...

"The trend was to make it fast and easy, and what they considered easy was almost a quick summary of what you did – boil the beef for an hour and a half in a cup of wine and water and that's boeuf bourguignon," says Judith Jones' –Book editor of 'Mastering the Art'.

We have definitely come a long way but there will always be trends in different parts of the world in different eras of time, whether large or small that guide generations into common practice. Influence can be so powerful, and in Canada alone there is a huge influence of ethnic foods contributing to our multi-cultural society and appeal to ethnic diversity.

Along with our cultural pallet, earlier in the year there was a prediction made by Toronto Life that we would see a rise in Mexican food and Food trucks. Some of the other trends included: tea, fusion food, flavored milk and unusual mushrooms.

Forbes food forecast for 2014 (although American - many of these trends have come to Canada) including: Locally sourced everything, Veggies galore – mentioning the rise in the vegan movement, healthier kids meals, gluten free, mash-up dishes, umami (the fifth taste) and a bunch more!

EATING SMART:

Today with the rise of the digital era, diners and consumers are becoming a lot 'smarter' about what they eat. People like Jamie Oliver have set a standard about understanding what you are eating. He makes such great points that realistically are so simple and can make a huge difference in what you ingest – resulting in good health. If you haven't had a look at his Ted Talk I highly recommend watching it. He has started a revolution, this is partial to why I started designing for Food and Drink.

Menu language has been changing. Words like 'homemade, garden grown, fresh, organic, and authentic' are heavily shifting social interpretation, not to mention restaurants becoming smarter about what they serve. In the film 'Food Inc.' Gary Hirshberg states: "Organics have been growing over 20% annually", and will continue to grow.

Remember that documentary 'Super Size Me'? This was in the starting stages of the food revolution. Then a few years later, notice how McDonald's developed a huge campaign about the ingredients in their food. They listened to their customers by changing their menu and products, along with marketing to the consumer demands. They definitely stayed true to their brand while reacting to their concerned customers. They are very smart, that's for sure.

This leads to the importance of understanding your consumer when creating a brand and defining your target market. This knowledge takes on a huge role in designing the perfect identity system. Acquiring a good understanding of your target market along with the awareness of trends (long & short term) — can be golden!

THE FOOD & DRINK DESIGN SURVEY

Over the past 6 weeks, I sent out a survey asking people questions on food habits, and trends relating to design. I think you may be surprised with some of the results:



SEE THE FULL INFOGRAPHIC ON BEHANCE OR AT WWW.ACGD.CA/PORTFOLIO/DESIGN-FOOD-INFOGRAPHIC/

WHAT CAN I BRING TO THE TABLE?

I guarantee my service to you. With every project and client I have worked with, I dive into it with full enthusiasm and focus — I continually make sure I am aware of the food industry and the changes that are constantly happening. When I sit down with you I will look at your objectives, research the market and share my results; applying design in the best possible way to represent your brand. One of the great aspects of my service is that I never leave you wondering — communication is very important. And let's not forget the quality! First impressions are everything so delivering quality products is my objective. I offer packages to fit your needs, whether it is a consultation on establishing your brand with social media, or a whole restaurant re-brand — including your menu. I can be your go-to designer.

CONTACT

I would love to share more with you, so let's keep in touch. Sign up for my newsletter here, email me at ashley.howell@acgd.ca or connect via social media below:

· *click on the icon to be taken to the site* ·



I will end with my favorite quote from Julia Child:

“Find something you’re passionate about and stay tremendously interested in it.”

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Thanks for reading!