

Judging a Book by Its Cover

A majority of booksellers agree that the cover design is the single most important element of a book. The truth is, a book is judged first and foremost by its cover.

If you want your book to have a fighting chance among the more than 700,000 new books published each year, your cover must trigger an instant response. And it's not just customers who are influenced by your book cover. A well-designed book can help you secure positive reviews, establish your credibility as an expert in your field, win awards and hopefully generate many book sales. That means your cover must be designed compellingly. How is that accomplished?

1. Target your audience. Who is your ideal buyer? Who is your competition and what sets you apart? Relate answers to these questions to your book cover designer.
2. Create a compelling, unique title and subtitle, which relate to your defined market.
3. Use an experienced professional designer. A veteran cover designer will ensure quality results and a cost-effective process through their design experience.

“Eight seconds ... this is the time a normal person spends on a book cover before either looking further or going on,” says Peri-Poloni-Gabriel of Knockout Books. “That is the time you have to typographically and visually communicate your book. This is even more critical in the online marketplace where the covers are just thumbnails to begin with. The key factors in a cover are readability, concept, genre appropriateness, overall impact and wow factor.”

Why hire a professional book cover designer rather than your graphic designer friend, you ask? Professional cover designers speak the same language as prepress, printers, and manufacturers and will take care of all the worrisome details. They know how to use color functionally and integrate the front cover, spine and back cover. In short, a cover designer who designs book covers day in and day out will save you from many pitfalls unbeknownst to most graphic designers.

An additional word of caution: Be careful not to be persuaded by your own personal taste. Keep in mind who your target audience is. This may not be your mother, spouse or best friend. A well-designed cover that speaks to the buyer is vital when it comes to the success of your book.

Gail M. Kearns (aka Book Sherpa) Founder of To Press & Beyond

Gail and her team at To Press & Beyond (www.topressandbeyond.com) are experts in book publishing consulting and support services. With over 16 years of experience, they skillfully and successfully shepherd your print and/or e-book through writing, editing, design & layout, printing, distribution, sales and promotion, both in trade and niche markets and on the Web. They have worked with over 400 authors and independent publishers worldwide. You can contact Gail for a half-hour gratis phone consult about your project at gail@topressandbeyond.com.