



The Business Growth Association
Of America

COURSE 4

Professional Graphic Design for Small Business Owners

Polished, consistent, professional-looking designs, made yourself, quickly, with simple tools.

\$500 - \$5,000

estimated yearly savings
by doing it yourself

1% - 10%

potential
sales growth

A 12-month program | 30-60 minutes per week | Simple tools only

Course Overview

THE PROMISE Create polished, consistent, professional-looking designs (logo, social posts, flyers, presentations, documents) yourself, quickly, using simple tools, and know when and how to hire a designer for the big jobs.

Core Idea

Professional design isn't about artistic talent. It's about a few repeatable rules (consistency, contrast, spacing, hierarchy) applied through templates and a brand kit. Learn the rules once, and every design afterward gets faster and better.

Tools Used

- **Canva** as the main tool (beginner friendly)
- Optional free alternatives, plus a simple AI image tool for ideas
- No design experience or expensive software needed

Format for Every Step

- 30-60 minutes per week
- Each step ends with a clear **"done when"** checkpoint

Roadmap

Phase	Timeline	Goal	Output
1. Foundation	Month 1	Learn the rules and define how your brand looks	Brand Kit + shared folder
2. Practice	Months 2-3	Produce everyday designs from consistent templates	Starter set of branded templates
3. Professional Quality	Months 4-6	Move from "good enough" to polished and persuasive	Portfolio folder + feedback review
4. Design System	Months 7-12	Build a repeatable process that saves time	Brand Guidelines + template library

Why Run It Yourself?

Designers and agencies charge for every logo, flyer, and post. With a brand kit and templates, you can handle most everyday design yourself.

\$500 - \$5,000

Estimated yearly savings when you create your everyday designs yourself instead of sourcing them out

1% - 10%

Potential sales growth from consistent, professional designs that build trust and drive action

Where the Savings Come From

- **Simple, low-cost tools.** Canva and free alternatives replace expensive software and per-project fees.
- **Templates make every new design fast.** Reuse a flyer, post, or proposal layout instead of paying for each one.
- **A Brand Kit prevents redesigns.** Getting colors, fonts, and logo right once avoids paying to fix inconsistent work.
- **Licensing know-how.** A simple checklist helps you avoid costly image and font mistakes.
- **Hire a designer only for the big jobs.** A clear creative brief cuts revisions and billable hours.

Where the Sales Growth Comes From

- **Consistent, professional branding** that builds trust and recognition across every platform.
- **Designs that sell:** attention-grabbing headlines, clear offers, and strong buttons in ads, promotions, and email headers.
- **A content calendar and measured results** that keep you visible and show which designs earn clicks, saves, replies, and sales.

Track Your Results	Month 1 baseline	Month 6	Month 12
Yearly design spend			
Designs created per month			
Clicks, saves, or replies			
Sales growth vs. baseline (%)			

Savings and growth figures are estimates of potential, not guarantees. Actual results vary by business, industry, and how consistently the plan is carried out.

Learn the Rules, Build Your Brand Kit

***Goal:** Understand what makes design look professional and define how your brand looks.*

Week 1: See like a designer

- Learn the 5 core principles in plain language: contrast, alignment, spacing, hierarchy (what the eye sees first), and consistency.
- Exercise: collect 10 designs you admire and note which principle each uses well.

DONE WHEN you can point out the principles in any ad or flyer.

Week 2: Colors and fonts

- Learn color basics (how to choose 1 main color, 1-2 supporting colors, plus neutrals) and the "two-font rule" (one for headlines, one for text).
- Choose your palette and fonts using the provided guide.

DONE WHEN your colors (with codes) and fonts are written on one page.

Week 3: Your logo

- Decide: refresh your existing logo, create a simple one in Canva, or hire a designer (decision guide provided).
- Learn logo file types (PNG, SVG, JPG) and which to use where.

DONE WHEN you have a final logo in light and dark versions, with a transparent background.

Week 4: Assemble your Brand Kit

- Combine logo, colors, fonts, photo style, and tone of voice into a one-page Brand Kit and load it into Canva.

DONE WHEN the Brand Kit is saved and every team member can access it.

DELIVERABLE A one-page Brand Kit and a shared design folder.

Create Your Core Designs (Practice)

Goal: Produce the everyday designs your business needs, using templates that keep everything consistent.

Month 2: Social media and marketing basics

- Learn the standard sizes for each platform and a simple layout formula (headline, image, one call-to-action).
- Create 5 reusable social templates (promotion, tip, testimonial, announcement, quote).
- Learn photo basics: how to take clean product or team photos with a phone, and how to use free stock photos legally.

Month 3: Business documents and print

- Design a business card, a flyer, and a branded proposal/quote or invoice template.
- Learn print basics: the difference between screen and print (RGB vs. CMYK), resolution, bleed, and how to order from a printer.

DONE WHEN you have a template for each, saved and shared with your team.

CHECKPOINT A complete starter set of branded templates you can reuse in minutes.

Level Up to Professional Quality

Goal: Move from "good enough" to polished and persuasive.

Month 4: Layout and typography

- Learn alignment grids, white space, text hierarchy, and readability.
- Practice by redesigning one of your old flyers (before and after).

Month 5: Design that sells

- Learn how to design effective ads, promotions, and email headers: attention-grabbing headlines, clear offers, strong buttons.
- Create a presentation deck and a one-page sales sheet.

Month 6: Visual storytelling and simple video

- Build short animated posts or videos (Reels, short ads) with templates.
- Learn to use AI tools safely for ideas and image generation, and how to check licensing before using anything commercially.
- Run your 6-month review.

CHECKPOINT A portfolio folder of your best work and a feedback review: does everything look like it came from the same company?

Make Design a System

***Goal:** Build a repeatable design process so your brand stays professional and you save time.*

Months 7-8: Batch your designs

- Build a content calendar and create a month of posts in one sitting, using templates.
- Set up a simple approval flow if you have a team.

Months 9-10: Train your team and set guidelines

- Create a short "Design Rules" sheet (what they can change and what they can't).
- Learn basic file organization, naming, and backups.

Month 11: Measure and improve

- Compare which designs performed best (clicks, saves, replies, sales) and update your templates based on results.
- Learn legal basics: image licenses, fonts, and trademark.

Month 12: Annual brand review and designer hiring

- Review the year's work and refresh anything outdated.
- Learn when and how to hire a professional (what to ask for, how to write a creative brief, typical budgets and timelines, reviewing proofs).

DELIVERABLE A complete Brand Guidelines document, a template library, and a yearly design plan.

Resources and Pitfalls

Course Materials to Build

- Design principles cheat sheet (1 page, with visual examples)
- Color and font selection guide
- Brand Kit template
- Logo decision guide and file-type chart
- Social media size and layout guide
- Template library: social, flyer, business card, proposal, presentation
- Print ordering checklist
- Creative brief template for hiring a designer
- Image and font licensing checklist
- Monthly content calendar
- Common Mistakes (a short bonus lesson)

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Using too many fonts and colors
- Cramming too much text into one design
- Low-quality or stretched images
- Inconsistent branding across platforms
- Using images or fonts without the right license
- Starting from a blank page instead of a template