

1. **Please address the concern from professional designers about the practice of asking designers to work for free, entering competitions/contests, or doing spec-work.**

Comments from Mayor's facebook page:

Rebecca Silber *Many graphic designers choose to not participate in contests because it cheapens the profession. The publicity surrounding the contest isn't the issue, the issue was that there was a contest at all and that it was promoted by the Wisconsin Chapter of the AIGA. "Going forward designers—individually and as a community—must continue to communicate the worth of investing in design services, always offering a sense of the value created for the client from hiring a qualified professional designer, and by explaining that the client is the one who loses out with crowdsourcing or spec competitions." --Richard Grefé, director emeritus of the AIGA*

Linda Gonzales *Ryan Yatso A very limited contest, however...*

Andrew Hoffmann *Rebecca Silber Nice I never considered the effect of design contests on the industry. TIL*

Jessica Heiden *Ya, that would be great!*

Andrew James Shelp *Second graders could literally come up with a more creative and distinct flag than this garbage. Also, it looks like a free design because it WAS a free design. It's clip art at best. Pay some folks to come up with some real designs. Sheesh...*

Ian Powell *Rebecca Silber I agree to a certain point but in a way the client was the people of Milwaukee and so a contest we're they vote on what flag they thought best represented the city feels like a legitimate strategy to decide on a design. And honestly the new flag is better than the everything but the kitchen sink flag we have now.*

Rebecca Silber *Ian Powell I'm going to keep standing up for my profession because no one else in Milwaukee is doing so. This would have never flown with the AIGA in Chicago or New York or Minneapolis. There are standards to the profession—if a finance person organized a contest to re-do the city's budget, I would hope true professionals would be leery about participating.*

Daul Pettmann *It was a public contest with a public comment period and a public vote. We really don't need to go through it again.*

David Kiefer *Richard Schwalb good to know comrade.*

Daul Pettmann *Rebecca Silber it wouldn't have happened at all without the contest. Your profession can get over it.*

Rebecca Silber *While this may seem petty to some, this is an extremely important read in the context of this flag design. The Wisconsin Chapter of the AIGA openly rallied behind the Milwaukee flag design contest, ignoring the National AIGA's firm stance against crowd sourcing. Crowd sourcing cheapens the work that we graphic designers do and opens it to criticism such as that displayed on this post. Whether or not this flag concept is strong (and I do feel that it is), this flippant handling of an important symbol of our city is harmful to the industry and it doesn't represent input of the greater community.*

*<https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/against-crowdsourcing.../amp/> AIGA | the professional association for design
Tom Barrett Nik Kovac*

Rebecca Silber *Another important read (and an explanation about why as a graphic designer I want to speak out): <https://www.aiga.org/whats-the-harm-in-crowdsourcing>*

Jim Ward *Power to the people!*

Steve Kodis *AIGA Wisconsin was part of this initiative Rebecca Silber...*

Rebecca Silber *Steve Kodis I'm well aware of that, and they should NOT have been. The AIGA does not promote spec work, and AIGA Wisconsin did. As I mentioned elsewhere, AIGA New York, AIGA Chicago, AIGA Minneapolis, etc. would have NEVER been part of such an initiative.*

Rebecca Silber *Can you imagine NAPFA or the CFA Institute sponsoring a contest to redo the City's budget? Or promoting any sort of finance contest? And what if your financial advisor participated in such a contest? It would be difficult to not think less of their professional standards at that point.*

Rebecca Silber *And that is why this was not a fair process. Because there are local graphic designers who do not feel comfortable entering design contests because of industry standards and personal/professional convictions against spec work. Those talented designers did not participate.*

Rebecca Silber <https://portland.aiga.org/design-contests-are-unethical/>

Rebecca Silber <http://apexcreative.net/why-design-contests-are-bad-for.../>

Rebecca Silber AIGA also states (on the AIGA WI website) that "AIGA encourages thoughtful, responsible discourse. Please add comments judiciously, and refrain from maligning any individual, institution or body of work." 80% of the negative comments about this flag on this City sponsored post are maligning its design. This hurts the industry and such a setup should also not be advocated by the Wisconsin Chapter of the AIGA, or by Mayor Barrett.

Manage

AIGA Wisconsin Rebecca, we appreciate and respect your views on this matter, but please understand that per the above referenced link from AIGA Portland: "Students and professionals may draw different lines on what constitute unacceptable practices."

We fully support the People's Flag initiative, which was not a "contest" and did not result in prize money or monetary compensation. It did not seek nor take advantage of the designers that were engaged in this process. Rather, this was an educational initiative aimed at furthering the AIGA mission of "bringing design to the world".

Our goal was to engage the community and educate them about the power of design, and to further empower local designers to take control over the branding (or lack thereof) of the great city of Milwaukee. If you have any further concerns or would like to discuss any of the above topics in greater detail, please inbox us so that we may connect you with our chapter president, Drew Lettner directly.

Rebecca Silber AIGA Wisconsin thank you for your thoughtful reply! I won't hesitate to contact the chapter president should I feel the need to discuss anything in greater detail.

Rebecca Silber And, for the record, it was called a contest and also a competition:

<http://archive.jsonline.com/.../five-finalists-unveiled...>

2. **Can you comment any further on why the local AIGA group supported this competition and also the "AIGA position on spec work" that is featured on the National AIGA.org website?**

"AIGA believes that professional designers should be compensated fairly for their work and should negotiate the ownership or use rights of their intellectual and creative property through an engagement with clients."

<https://www.aiga.org/position-spec-work>

See also AIGA sample letter for speculative work:

https://www.aiga.org/globalassets/aiga/content/tools-and-resources/aiga_standard_spec_letter.pdf

3. **Additional Reference: NO!SPEC website**

<https://www.nospec.com/>

<https://www.nospec.com/about>

What's wrong with a contest?

Aside from giving clients the impression that design doesn't have much worth, it also penalises the clients themselves. Through contests designers can't undertake proper market research required by the project, and as such can't produce the most effective outcome for the client, who then chooses on the basis of "the prettiest design."

Designers are the ones with the training, the ones with the marketing experience. They should be able to know all there is about clients' needs, to be able to guide clients and produce the most appropriate work. You wouldn't tell your lawyer how to defend you in a trial, or tell a mechanic how to do his or her job. You

research their history, hire them, then let them work. That's what designers' portfolios are for — giving clients the best opportunity to hire the right person.

Why shouldn't I hold a contest to get my logo?

As mentioned above, behind every design there's market research. A logo isn't just a pretty symbol printed on top of a baseball cap; it's what represents you and your company. It is the thing that will instantly identify you and it has to convey the right message to the right people. A contest doesn't grant designers the necessary time or compensation to undertake necessary research.

Why should I pay a professional to do work I might like when I can get lots of submissions from a contest?

Apart from promoting free labour, you impede the designer from earning a proper salary. Would you work for free with the hope of possibly being compensated? Also consider that contests largely attract inexperienced designers who are under pressure due to unreasonable time restraints and competition. You run the huge risk of ultimately receiving poorly executed designs that inadequately represent your business amongst your competitors and for future customers. It could end up costing you in the long run in terms of lost revenue and other factors. A professional will work toward developing effective tailored design solutions reflective of their years of training and experience.

[Your firm name]

NOTE: This letter is intended to be a resource for you when preparing communication with clients who may be requesting speculative work. You should modify it based on the needs of your particular situation.

Dear [name of potential client/graphic design buyer]:

[Name of your firm] would like to work with you to produce communications materials for your organization, but we are concerned that your request for proposal includes a solicitation of design concepts to be produced on a speculative basis by the professionals you are considering.

The approach you are pursuing is one that compromises the quality of work you are entitled to and also violates a tacit, long-standing ethical standard in the communication design profession worldwide.

AIGA, the nation's largest and oldest professional association for design, strongly discourages the practice of requesting that design work be produced and submitted on a speculative basis in order to be considered for acceptance on a project.

There are two main reasons for this position:

1. To assure the client receives the most appropriate and responsive work. Successful design work results from a collaborative process between a client and the designer with the intention of developing a clear sense of the client's objectives, competitive situation and needs. Speculative design competitions or processes result in a superficial assessment of the project at hand that is not grounded in a client's business dynamics. Design creates value for clients as a result of the strategic approach designers take in addressing the problems or needs of the client and only at the end of that process is a "design" created. Speculative or open competitions for work based on a perfunctory problem statement will not result in the best design solution for the client.

2. Requesting work for free demonstrates a lack of respect for the designer and the design process. Requesting work for free reflects a lack of understanding and respect for the value of effective design as well as the time of the professionals who are asked to provide it. This approach, therefore, reflects on your personal practices and standards and may be harmful to the professional reputation of both you and your business.

There are few professions where all possible candidates are asked to do the work first, allowing the buyer to choose which one to compensate for their efforts. (Just consider the response if you were to ask a dozen lawyers to write a brief for you, from which you would then choose which one to pay!) We realize that there are some creative professions with a different set of standards, such as advertising and architecture, for which billings are substantial and continuous after you select a firm of record. In those cases, you are not receiving the final outcome (the advertising campaign or the building) for free up front as you would be in receiving a communication design solution.

[Your firm name]

There is an appropriate way to explore the work of various designers.

A more effective and ethical approach to requesting speculative work is to ask designers to submit examples of their work from previous assignments as well as a statement of how they would approach your project. You can then judge the quality of the designer's previous work and his or her way of thinking about your business. The designer you select can then begin to work on your project by designing strategic solutions to your criteria while under contract to you, without having to work on speculation up front.

If you would like to work with our firm in developing a process that will benefit you most and maintain the high business standards we expect of **[name of soliciting company or organization]**, please do not hesitate to give me a call. There are many local and national designers who can provide you with solutions that will far exceed your expectations, with respect for an appropriate budget and schedule. In the end, this approach ensures a more effective, professional and profitable process for everyone involved.

Your consideration of these professional design issues is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

| [Member Name], AIGA

About AIGA

AIGA, the professional association for design, stimulates thinking about design, demonstrates the value of design and empowers the success of designers at each stage of their careers. AIGA's mission is to advance designing as a professional craft, strategic tool and vital cultural force. Founded in 1914, AIGA remains the oldest and largest professional membership organization for design, and is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational institution. For more information on AIGA, visit www.aiga.org.