

Ideas that matter, open your heart give blood

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Abstract

Though my paper presentation, which will be supported with reach visual materials, I would like to share with your my sabbatical project that took his a physical form during Fall 2007 semester. I will take you through this creative journey in effort to underline importance of graphic designer's pro bono involvement in project that can benefit a wider community, as well introduce you to the Sappi Ideas That Matter Grant program.

In contemporary societies the non-commercial social poster represents one of the most successful visual methods of raising people's awareness of important social issues such as the protection of human rights, aids prevention, environmental protection, and other numerous issues of regional, national and international importance. Unlike commercial posters, social posters play a much more important role. They are designed to turn their viewer's attention to important problems that exist in society, and make them think about solving such problems. The social duty of a graphic designer is to create visual means of addressing problems, to urge society to solve them and suggest ways of doing so. The designer's consciousness becomes the consciousness of society only when it takes on a physical body that communicates the message to the viewer.

Keywords

Design for non-profit organizations

Over the past thirty years my personal interest as a creative person and educator has been the design of posters that deal with a broad range of social and political issues. For this work I have received more than one hundred international, national and regional awards and recognitions. My posters are a part of collections in prestigious museums and galleries and private collectors around the world. Assigning the design of social posters as part of my course curriculum develops student's awareness of different social issues in contemporary society and also results

in acceptance of students works at juried national and international poster exhibitions.

In the effort to identify the new project that would fully satisfy my personal interest and be a creative challenge, I focused on competition for 2007 Sappi Ideas that Matter Grant, a program that supports design for the public good. Ideas that Matter is an initiative that was launched worldwide by Sappi, the world's leading producer of coated fine paper. With this initiative Sappi is providing substantial grants that enable the implementation of creative ideas designed to support social and environmental causes. Sappi's invitation is opened for graphic designers from Europe, North America and Southern Africa to create printed communication campaigns for causes they want to support. With the Ideas that Matter program Sappi has an intention to inspire designers to produce more and better communications for the benefit of society.

This grant competition was a perfect match for my personal interest as creative person. I approached Community Blood Center of the Ozarks with idea to design a new campaign for their yearly blood drives. They liked idea very much, and, through conversation I discovered that the need for blood in the area served by Community Blood Center of the Ozarks has grown by more than 60% over the past ten years. At the same time, the pool of eligible blood donors has declined due to aging population and stricter eligibility requirements. For decades, the baby boom generation has been a primary supporter of the nation's blood supply. As this generation ages and becomes ineligible for blood donation, this is vital that younger blood donors are recruited. Also, industry studies demonstrate that most people begin giving blood at a young age (under 25 years). Additionally, they have learned that the likelihood of blood donation decreases with each year after that age. In other words, it is vital to involve people in blood donation at an early age to start a habit that will last a lifetime. Target audience becomes clearly defined—high school and college students.

My research process began with evaluation of existing visual materials that Community Blood Center of the Ozarks using in their efforts to recruit new donors. It's obvious that those materials are pure designed and don't addressing defined target audience. To the some point this is understandable. They can't afford expertise of a professional designer.

Since I come up first with tag line Open Your Heart Give Blood, two symbols, hart and blood drop become unavoidable, and I was exploring visualization of word Open. This result in visuals solutions where a tag line is supported by images based on combinations of different symbols that are juxtaposed in unexpected ways. Additional goal was

to clear my solutions of any sufficient elements that will distract communication.

At that point I was happy with results and made efforts to test my audience. I show them to my students, and...a big surprise. Student's comments were: "Too simple", what means "Doesn't work". With a big disappointment I back to research. This time I research a visual solutions that target younger audience and study what kind of elements designers are using to grab attention of their audience? And elements were obvious. In the last five-six years designs for younger audience were flooded with ornamentalations that in many cases had only decorative purpose. But some examples go beyond that. Those examples where visual elements are driven out of culture heritage became inspirations for my new directions. I research the reach visual heritage of diverse ethnic groups unique to the American culture (Native American, Latin Americans, African American, European, Middle-Eastern, Oriental, Asian) and incorporate them into my designs in form of patterns that may attract a target audience.

From this point, everything else becomes almost routine job, and I design new 12 pages educational booklet, flyers, postcards, stickers, T-shirts and gift bags. Since my client in general have a conservative point of view on design, I have to be careful how much new I'm bringing to their designs. I was challenged to find the right balance between a new (in this case trendy) and traditional.

With all those new designs, and fact that my client is ready to move in new bigger space, I decide to offer them a new visual identity as well. First I design new logo that communicates much better their mission and represent its primary activity—collection and distribution of blood supply. Positions of droplets symbolically represent collection of blood supply, and whole flower-like shape symbolically suggesting its growth and expansion, which metaphorically represents distribution of blood supply to the Ozarks community. Manual of graphic standards for proper usage of logo and other elements of visual identity is additional pro-bono contribution to my client.

Thanks to the Sappi Ideas that Matter Grant, printing of all materials designed for Community Blood Center of The Ozarks was finished in March, and implementation of it during the first blood drives in April 2008.

Conclusion

In conclusion I can say that this was a fruitful graphic design journey that in many aspects benefits a wider community. My goal was to expand the Community Blood Center of The Ozarks volunteer base, encourage donations and foster social responsibility. Beyond their persuasive

function these designs are also meant to educate about our cultural heritage.

On the end I would like to use this opportunity to encourage our younger audience, students of graphic design, to take the leadership in identifying their perspective clients who can't afford service of professional designer. Needs are tremendous as well the opportunities.