FROM CONCEPT TO COURTROOM: THE VALUE OF A CONCEPT

When a design project begins, I'm always excited to see what solution we will come up with. The end result is always an awesome design that we did not expect to end up with when we started. And that also creates the biggest challenge during the process of creating an effective legal design: to successfully get through the first round of the concept stage.

Legal professionals are made to pick stories apart, trained to find what's wrong and drilled on accuracy. There is no doubt that these are very valuable characteristics for a legal professional, yet they are killing the creative design process. Most legal professionals have a lot of trouble getting the most out of the concept stage of legal design. These traits are also diametrically opposed to the way *design thinkers* (including legal designers) operate and think: by association, establishing connections and fluidly categorising information. The more iterations, the happier a design thinker becomes.

A legal professional and a designer represent two different types of thinking. Creating an optimum combination between these two styles of thinking may therefore turn out to be a challenge. Yet it is exactly this 'out of the ordinary' cooperation that leads to successful results. It is through the discussion about a concept that those seemingly incompatible ways of thinking lead to a very effective legal design.

So how does a design go from concept to courtroom with very little drama? Here are some tips to get the most out of a concept stage.

DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN IN THE DETAILS

The key is to keep the main objective in mind. Trying to decide what shade of blue to use is not making valuable use of your time or budget. Professional designers know exactly what colours, shapes and images are the most effective. Please trust your design team to make the right decisions in the final design stage.

EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK = EFFECTIVE DESIGN

Work together. A concept is explicitly not an end product. It is an idea to create a dialogue about objectives. Discuss the design's intended effect and define what the key message is and what the side issues are. If you follow this approach, it will result in a legal design that gives you the head start you are looking for.

DON'T DRESS YOUR VISUAL UP LIKE IT'S A CHRISTMAS TREE

A graphic legal representation will never be as complete as a written pleading. A strong visualisation is the bridge between the written document and our memory. A design concept is therefore powerful because of the absence of details. Adding elements that 'are still missing in the visualisation' does not always produce the most effective legal design. Less is almost always more in this case. Listen to the idea behind the concept; a good designer can build a solid argument on why they chose a certain concept. Please use that as a starting point to make progress together.

HAVE FUN

The concept stage is often the best part. It offers you the freedom to think outside the box, expand your perspective, and come up with the most creative solutions – so don't forget to enjoy it!

Legal Design | *Designed to deliver*

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PS: It is very likely that there are a lot of legal professionals that have some tips for (legal) designers. I would love to hear your tips! After all, optimal cooperation is the only way to achieve a *design that's made to deliver*.

LEGAL HOUTHOFF DESIGN