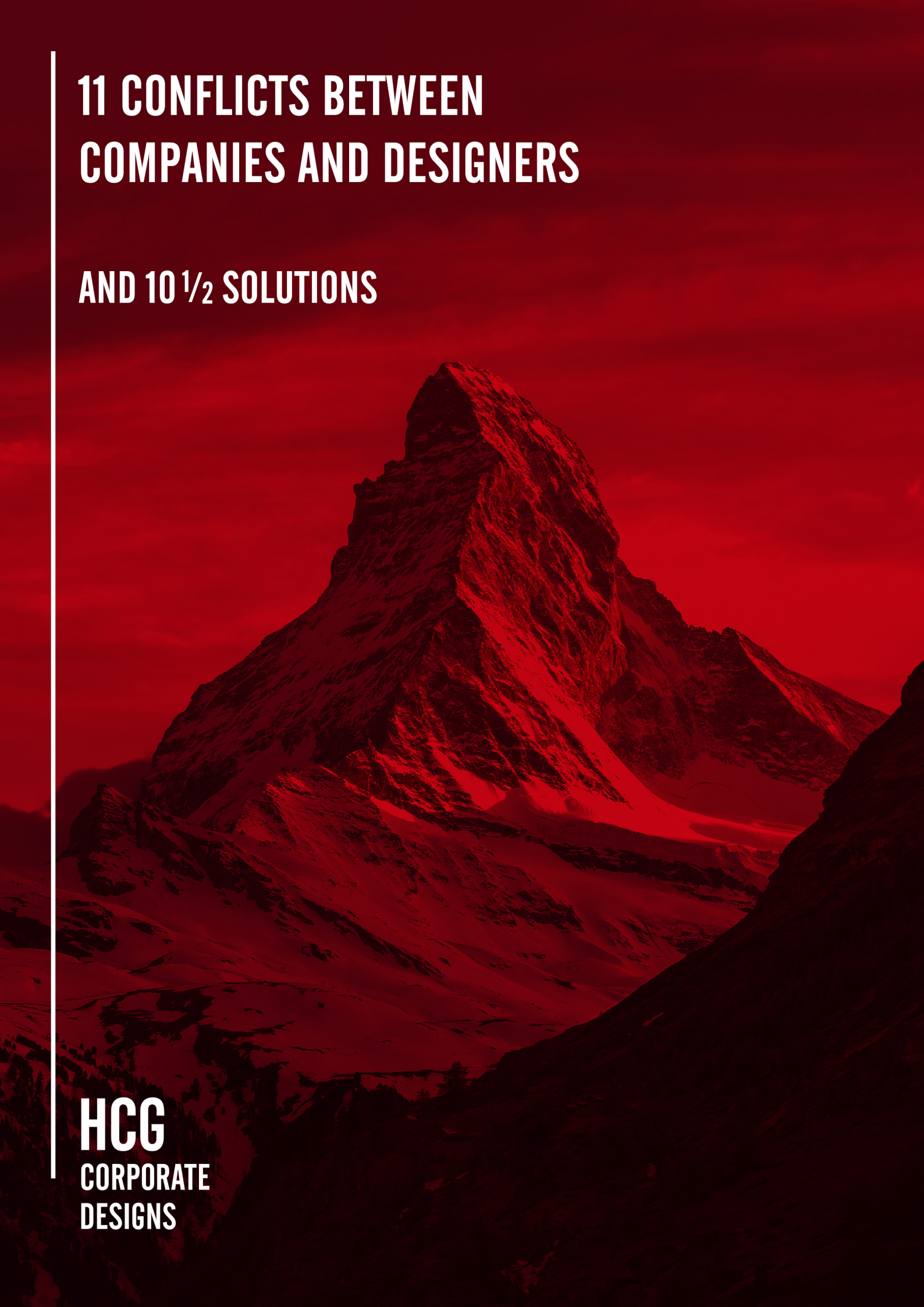# 11 CONFLICTS BETWEEN COMPANIES AND DESIGNERS

AND 10 ½ SOLUTIONS

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"Companies want the best design at the lowest price within 24 hours."
Designer X

"Designers just want to draw and paint a little bit and take ages. Then they think they can charge money like for a Picasso."
Company Y

I admit, these made up statements are very exaggerated. However, their core is not so untrue. Like in any (business) relationship, there can be dispute between the client and the graphic designer. This whitepaper is about 11 common conflicts – and 10 ½ possible solutions for them.

1 *"No idea ..."* Company Y

Asking the clients about their company, their target group or the USP of their products, the only response is "no idea". Unfortunately, no design can be developed that fits the clients' needs this way.

Solution: Every successful collaboration is based on a thorough briefing. Companies must know who they are, who their clients are and what they want. Designers should communicate this from the very start. Otherwise it doesn't make much sense to work together.

2 *"Be creative!"* Company Y

An all-time classic; clients want designers to "just start to design something and be creative". That can happen when clients don't know why they want a design. This mostly results in unnecessary many working hours and an unneccessary high invoice for the clients. And at the end, clients say something like "Gosh, that is so expensive, I just wanted a poster desgined" – for example.

Solution: Good design does look good, but primarily it fulfills a purpose. This purpose has to be communicated in the course of the briefing. A poster, to stay with this example, can be designed in maybe 100 different styles and transport many different messages. Clients have to let the designers know what message shall come across. Just being creative for the sake of it, leads nowhere.

3 *"It takes that long?"* Company Y

Companies that hire graphic designers for the first time, of course cannot know how much work is involved in doing a good, professional design job. Designers consult, brief, research, get themselves into the topic, analyse the competitors, work with different ideas, create various drafts and so forth and so on. Quality takes time.

Solution: In the course of the briefing, designers should tell their clients what steps are involved in the design process. I made the experience, that my clients always appreciate me as a designer being transparent and explaining them how I work. Then, the clients understand the pricing and the time schedule.

4 RING, RING, RING ....

It is an absolute no-go when designers are not reliable, don't show up for meetings or don't finish the project by the deadline agreed on – or worse: designers that disappear and are unavailable. This is unprofessional, horrible for the clients and damages the image of designers as a whole.

Solution: Clients and graphic designers should have contact here and there to see how far the project is. But if it's really not possible to get hold of designers and they don't react on calls and emails, you want to terminate the collaboration and claim back any downpayments made.

#5 *"Make this blue and that red."* Company Y

Also an all-time classic; some clients think they are designers themselves. Especially in creative fields, some people tend to think they are designers and can make things look "nice", even though they have no clue about graphic design. This is a very strange phenomenon. Graphic

design has nothing to do with the clients' sense of beauty or their favourite colours.

Solution: Designers have to make their position clear in front of the clients and communicate their expertise. It often helps to explain why things were designed in a certain way in the past, so clients see the expertise that went into a project. That normally makes clients understand that they are no designers themselves and let the hired designers do their job.

#6 *"I have to charge extra for that."* Designer X

It can happen that designers suddenly ask for extra money. This can be the case when the actual work is more than the work calculated for.

Solution: The more precisely the project or service spectrum is described in a written agreement, the better. The more detailed clients know what they get, the less likely there will be misunderstandings. It also helps to mention the amount of feedback/correction rounds that are included in the price – and what happens if the amount of feedback rounds set are not enough.

#7 *"You're only painting anyway."* Company Y

There are clients that think graphic designers only paint and scribble a bit. This might be the case here and there for "low price designers", but for professionals this neither reflects the truth, nor respectful manners.

½ Solution: Here designers can only make their position clear or in the worst case not even work for such clients. Also, disrespectful clients often pay late, or don't pay at all.

#8 *"A burger flyer? We wanted a cinema poster!"* Company Y

When designers miss the mark …

Solution: This problem cannot be solved afterwards, it can only be prevented upfront. With a thorough briefing.

#9 *"We won't use that for an infographic, but we do a brochure now."* Company Y

Sometimes, clients don't stick to the briefing and throw the concept out of the window – and tell the designers what they really want after the work has been finished.

Solution: The only solution here is to take a break, have a thorough discussion with the client and re-calculate prices. Maybe some finished design elements can be used or adapted for the clients' new plans, maybe not. However, the ordered and executed design work has to be paid for as agreed on – also if the clients don't need the design in the end. That also accounts for work resources that clients booked. It is helpful to clarify situations like these upfront in a written agreement.

#10 *"Yeah, yeah, I will pay ..."* Company Y

The client does not pay.

Solution: Send reminders and/or seek legal advice from a lawyer.

#11 *"By the way, I need the raw data."* Company Y

It can happen, that clients want to have the raw data in the end, without saying this at the start of the collaboration. *(Here, I don't mean templates for letterheads, or companies that hire their in-house graphic designers for working further on the design delivered.)*

Solution: In general, designers should always be very careful when clients suddenly ask for the raw data out of the blue, especially when nothing was agreed on upfront – because: for 99 % something is foul here. Clients could manipulate and fully destroy the design they paid for.
Another problem that could occur: The clients could basically steal the designers' work and sell it as their own to other people. This would be conscious betraying of the client and infringe copyright of the original designers.
Giving the raw data to clients is very delicate and requires thorough talks. Also, this has to be paid for extra of course.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hello, my name is Helene Clara Gamper. I'm a graphic designer that believes in a common thread — as illustrated in my logo. I help businesses build a visual identity, translate data into graphic landscapes and help publishers make their magazines look great.

I grew up in a publisher family. About ten years ago I started working in the creative field what in 2010 made me start my own business called HCG corproate designs.

Since then, I've designed for companies of many sizes from the German speaking area but also from other countries such as the USA or the United Kingdom. I created corporate design concepts for business start-ups, established editorial designs for publishers, designed and implemented rich media magazines for tablets and smart phones and visualized complex data for some great infographics.

When creating designs, I always try to get to the very essence of the character and the philosophy behind my clients' businesses and their products. This essence I include in a holistic design approach, that follows me through the entire creative process. Collaborating with my clients and exploring what makes their businesses and their products unique and stand out, I believe is an important part of my job as a designer. This is how I can develop unique visual concepts with a common thread running through them, which is something I'm really passionate about. It puts a smile on my face when I see people respond and interact with my design creations — and when my clients tell me about that.

Some of my clients say they appreciate my flexibility and transparency. I believe that being open and straight with my clients is a matter of fairness and respect and contributes to a positive and successful collaboration.

When I'm not designing you can find me doing sports, exploring nature or travelling. I get a lot of inspiration from seeing different places, doing new things or trying out new recipes with exotic spices I bought from different corners of the globe. In 2014, I fulfilled one of my biggest dreams: travelling through Peru and Ecuador and visiting the giant tortoises of the Galapagos Islands.

I live in the wonderful city of Innsbruck, Austria, the so-called "Capital of the Alps". The lovely scenery here inspires me every day.

Want to get get in touch?
I'd love to hear from you.

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