When you are designing your sign; you should always utilize the resources of an experienced sign professional. However, if you wish to create your own design work - keep these criteria in mind when laying out your sign.

Visibility.

A sign that cannot be seen should not be created. Identify the type of traffic your sign is meant to attract (employees, visitors, customers, for example) and use the proper size, color, angle, lighting, and placement for maximum visibility.

Legibility.

Even if your sign is visible, if it is not able to be read by your intended audience, it has little value. Some of the things to keep in mind are the following:

1. **Letter Size.** Letters that are too small to read are commonplace in many signs today. For a quick reference on what size letters are needed for your sign, refer to Document 1137 - Visual Considerations - Signs.
2. **Color & Finish Contrast.** Letters that blend in with their background become illegible at moderate distances. This applies to polished metal letters that may reflect a similar color as the sign background to the viewer making them unreadable; dark letters that may blend into brick or stone; or other letters where there is a small level of contrast between the letter color and the background. The amount and type of lighting (both artificial and natural) is important as well to overall legibility.
3. **White/Negative Space.** Simply enlarging letters does not make them more readable. Proper letter kerning (the space between letters) and leading (the space between lines of text) have almost as much to do with legibility as letter size. Maintaining a high degree of white or negative space is important to keep the letters from running together or running into other distractions around the sign.

Rhythm.

Choosing the proper letter style and size determines your sign's rhythm. Rhythm also applies to your sign itself and to how it fits in with surrounding signs.

1. **Style limits.** Limiting your sign to a maximum of 2 styles is important. In almost all cases, more than 2 styles typically does nothing but make it hard to read or makes it look unorganized and fragmented to your viewer. A properly laid out sign also will use only styles that complement one another and do not cause the same type of "fragmentation" when viewed by your potential customers.
2. **Logos.** Do you have a logo that fits well with your sign copy? Inclusion of graphical elements or a logo should complement the sign message and in most cases not overpower the entire sign. Some logos (such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, etc.) are strong enough brands that virtually no text is needed for their sign - however this is not typical for most business owners who need to send some message to their intended audience.
3. **Neighboring Signs.** While your sign should stand on its own; in many cases it is important to examine the signs around you and your type of building or monument to make a determination on the colors, styles or sizes of your sign. Having an exact duplicate of your neighbor's sign may not be appropriate or effective - but a sign that is harshly different may also send the wrong message for your business.

Message.

Does your sign say what it needs to for your customer? The proper sign message is neither too wordy nor too concise; and can vary from sign to sign depending on what your sign is supposed to do for you. Make sure your sign has the proper emphasis on the elements of the sign that benefit you the most.

Impression.

Does your sign design make a statement? Does it have attractive elements (such as a logo) represented? In many cases, the first thing your customers see about you is your sign. The impression left on them should be a positive one. A sign in poor repair or shabbily installed will send a negative message to your customer. Likewise, even a properly installed sign but with poor layout may have the same effect. All aspects of proper layout must be considered to give your potential customers a good impression.