

Elf design marketing for small biz

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True to its name, elf design of Belmont has carved out a niche providing marketing and design services to small business.

Founder Erin Ferree launched the business four years ago, just as “everything was going bust up here.” Yet elf has not suffered for want of customers.

“I’ve literally worked with 400 clients in the last four years,” said Ferree, who spent time in a variety of fields, including computer science, photography and architecture, before graduating with a degree in graphic design.

After researching the marketplace, Ferree discovered a true need for small businesses to have affordable design options.

Ferree helps her clients develop a brand identity in a number of outlets, including logos, graphics, marketing materials and Web design.

The biggest challenge facing a small business is the ability to stand out and be remembered, Ferree said.

“The philosophy I use is to develop marketing materials that tell a story of what makes the business different,” she explained, “and then to tell that story in a consistent and repetitive way just so that people will start to remember.”

Ferree even has been called upon by others in the industry to revamp their look. One East Bay group of marketing consultants had been so unhappy with its old logo that the consultants hesitated to hand out business cards.

Business skyrocketed after Ferree designed a new logo for the firm featuring an illustration of many pieces coming together to form a whole.

Last month, elf design won two awards for logo and Web site design from the American Graphic Design Awards, sponsored by Graphic Design USA magazine.

Ferree’s success has much to do with the fact that she just jumped into the business without worrying the difficulties in getting clients.

“I really didn’t know any better,” she said.

It doesn’t hurt that Ferree follows her own advice and markets elf design all the time.