PRIN*tips*

Updating Brochures
with Clever Production Tips

Your company's brochure is a great sales tool. It conveys much more information than can be put on a business card, a display advertisement, or even a flyer. And when someone asks you for your company's brochure, it could be a signal of real interest in your product or service.

Anatomy of a brochure
Examine a variety of brochures, and you'll find they share certain characteristics: all have text mixed with visual elements such as photographs, illustrations, diagrams, charts, and graphs; all have an underlying organization; and all provide the identity and contact information of the company that published the brochure.

Writing the copy
To write effective copy for your brochure, you must know your audience, know your product or service, and translate the product or service features into recognizable benefits for the audience. An easy way to make the translation is to think of a feature, then ask yourself "What's in it for me?" For example, if your product is made of a different kind of material than your competitor's, the benefit could be that it will last longer or maintain its new appearance. Be aware that a single feature could have more than one benefit, and be sure to mention all of them.

We stated before that a brochure is a good sales tool because it can present more information than other marketing materials. An effective brochure accomplishes this with concise writing that leads the reader to the important points. Rather than a straight text narrative, brochures use bulleted lists, headlines and subheads, reverse

type, captions, and pull quotes to emphasize the message to the reader.

Creating visual interest
Visual images help readers understand complicated concepts, retain more of what they are reading, and keep them interested in the text. Images are more likely to capture the reader's attention and often will evoke an emotion – which is what purchasing decisions are based on.

The Internet is a good source for collections of images, particularly illustrations, drawings, and stock photography. Two of our favorite sites are Shutterstock (www.shutterstock.com) and istockphoto (www.istockphoto.com). Shutterstock has more than 1 million images and works on a subscription basis that allows the user to download up to 25 images per day, while istockphoto offers its images at very low individual prices. Both sites have stock photos and vector art that can be used for print and for the web. You may also be able to obtain images from a trade association or similar

professional organization within your industry. For other ideas, or to ask about our library of images, call us at 513-248-2121.

Brochures tell a story

An effective brochure is like a book – it has a beginning, middle, and ending and tells a story. The story is developed logically and by the end, the reader understands the purpose of the brochure.

When laying out a brochure, keep in mind the order in which the panels of the brochure will become visible as the reader unfolds it, and put the parts of the story on the appropriate panel. A good method to determine when a specific panel will be revealed is to fold a piece of paper into a brochure. Write a number sequentially on each panel as it becomes visible to you, and use the numbers to determine the sequence of the story.

One exception to this method is the back cover. If you are designing a brochure that is a self-mailer, then the back cover will be the mail panel where the return address, postage and addressee information will be placed. If it is not a self-mailer, then the back cover is often used for company contact information and perhaps testimonials from satisfied customers.

Formats for brochure layout

The most familiar brochure style is the standard three-fold, six-panel layout, usually on an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 inch sheet of paper. The brochure folds are parallel; the right side folds in toward the center and the left side folds over the right to create a brochure that measures 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches wide x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. Although some variation can be created by changing the sheet size, the basic format is the same: six panels on which to tell the story.

To add interest and tell your story more effectively, try a variation on the standard trifold brochure. For example, fold an 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 14 inch sheet like an accordion (aptly called an *accordion fold*) and you'll have an entirely new way of revealing the panels. In another variation, fold the front cover so it is one-half an inch narrower, revealing a glimpse of what appears inside when folded.

For another variation, fold an 11 x 17 sheet in half, then in half again to create a 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, 8-panel brochure. Or fold in thirds to create a super sized 6-panel trifold.

The key to it all is to gather several sheets of paper and start folding, unfolding, refolding, and reverse folding until you find a number of panels in the right size to tell your story, one page at a time.

Trimming the brochure layout

Here's another idea: after folding the sheet of paper into the brochure style you prefer, mark the corner of the front cover and cut off a corner or a larger part of the sheet at an angle. This will create two interestingly-shaped panels (one on each side of the sheet) that can be used to progressively reveal information. There is a slightly greater cost to trim at an angle versus a straight cut, but this is fully compensated by the uniqueness of the brochure.

Adjusting panel width for folding

One word before we leave this topic: since all the brochures we've discussed include a fold, we'd like to remind you that an adjustment must be made in some panels so the fold will lie flat. In a trifold brochure, the right hand panel that folds in should be adjusted to be $\frac{1}{32}$" or $\frac{1}{8}$" narrower than the other panels, depending on the thickness of the paper – the thicker the paper, the greater the adjustment. Remember to adjust the panel width on both sides of the paper. The narrower panel will be on the far right panel on one side and the far left panel on the reverse.

For some of the fancier folds we've mentioned in this issue, adjustments may have to be made to additional panels. If you find yourself unsure of how to make the adjustments, call us at 513-248-2121.

"Write a number sequentially on each panel as it becomes visible to you..."

"The key to it all is to gather several sheets of paper and start folding..."

Identify the Brochure Theme

Before you can begin writing and designing your company brochure, you must know what it is supposed to accomplish. Is the brochure a sales collateral piece – something that is left behind after meeting with a customer or prospect? Is it a response to an inquiry – the kind of brochure that is sent after request for information about a specific product or service? Is it a description of the company itself, the kind of brochure that would be included with a sales letter or in a direct mail marketing campaign? Or is it a point-of-purchase brochure that might typically be found in a literature display rack?

The tone and vocabulary of the copy; the photographs and images selected to illustrate the text; and even the call to action of a brochure are informed by one of these three themes:

- *Educational theme:* the brochure presents information such as the benefits of using the product or service, how the product works, or when it is used,

- *Emotional theme:* the brochure elicits an emotional response such as "I've got to have this product."

- *Behavioral theme:* the brochure provokes action such as "I must contact the business for more information."

Identifying the theme during the brochure planning process will help you write the text and select images much more quickly and efficiently.

IDEA CORNER

"Before you can begin writing and designing your company brochure, you must know what it is supposed to accomplish."

Q. *What is die cutting and how will it add to my brochure?*

A. Die cuts are custom cuts made to a printed page that creates a hole or defines a shape. A door hanger is a simple example of die cutting – a hole to fit around a door knob and a slit to enable the door hanger to slip over the door handle.

Adding die cutting to a brochure can be a very effective way to create interest. Imagine the front cover of a brochure that has been die cut in a shape at the top or with a hole through which some of the printing on the inside of the brochure can be seen. Depending on the exact nature of the design, this could create an irresistible urge in the reader to get involved with the brochure.

Die cutting does create an additional expense: the steel rule die (which can be reused until it becomes worn) and the cutting itself which is done on a letterpress. Because of setup costs, we recommend a minimum quantity of 1000 brochures if you are considering die cutting. We will be happy to give you an estimate of how much die cutting will cast and how it can benefit your brochure. Just call 513-248-2121 and tell us what you have in mind.

Q&A
questions and answers

"...create an irresistible urge in the reader to get involved with the brochure."

Cover Design Tips

There are many ways to lay out the cover of a brochure. One simple option is to use your company's name and logo as the cover design. This is a versatile option and may be quite effective if your company logo is unusual or provokes interest.

A second option is to think of the outside panel of your brochure as the front cover of a book, and to be sure the design informs the reader of the content, indicates the intended audience, and engages the readers sufficiently to catch their interest. Sometimes this can be done by using a photograph that shows people representing the target audience engaged in an activity that is related to the topic of the brochure.

If you are designing a brochure that will be displayed in a rack or other type of holder, be aware of how much of the cover will be visible when on display and plan your design accordingly. A good rule of thumb is that the top one-third of the brochure will be visible. Plan the design to be equally effective with just the top one-third showing as when the entire cover is visible.

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Please Route to the Printing Buyer