

DESIGN 101

Welcome to Design 101

Before you even think about printing and distributing any promotional material, you need to nail a great design. Without an eye-catching, clear and professional look, your customers won't give your ad more than a passing glance.

As a general rule of thumb, you should be spending about a third of your budget on design. Having a good design is crucial to the success of your marketing, so it's unadvisable to try and save money in this area by scrimping – hire a designer and look for a great deal on print instead.

But if you're going to have a go at DIY (designing it yourself) make sure you get the advice you need to make a decent job of it. This guide is a great start.



BRANDING TO SUCCEED

The quality of your branding can be crucial to the success of your business – it's certainly the first point of difference to set yourself apart from your competitors. Your branding is your personality, and it is worth investing time in to get just right. Good branding needn't be expensive, but poor branding may be what's letting your business down. Compare your branding to your competitors. Is it as visually striking, is it as clear, is it saying what you want it to say?

Your logo is central to your brand. In a minimum of lines and colours, it should encapsulate the essence of who you are, what you do, and what you stand for. If your logo doesn't look better or at least as compelling as your competitors, it's time for a rebrand. Without a smart logo – or worse, any logo, your business looks amateur.

The Four Golden Rules of Logo Design

1. A logo must be describable
2. A logo must be memorable
3. A logo must be effective in black and white
4. A logo must be scalable - effective when just an inch in size

Check out some of the best logo design here <http://logopond.com/>

And learn from the mistakes of others! The net is full of collections of bad logos, just google 'worst logo designs'. Things to watch out for:

- Don't make your logo overly complicated - don't use too many lines or too many colours
- Avoid visual cliches: globes, stars, flags
- Don't let your 12 year old design your logo.
- Watch out for your logo inadvertently forming a rude picture. You'd be surprised how many do.

B BUSINESS CARDS

Your business card is small, but it acts as a mini representative of you. Think carefully about how you want to present yourself. Where your logo is placed, where the text is placed, and how the two relate to each other should all be given careful thought.

Use the reverse – double sided is barely more expensive than single and gives space for more detailed information

Think carefully about the font you choose – print out samples in different fonts to compare

Highlight your businesses key areas of expertise or benefits

If your business is hard to find, a map and directions are handy on the reverse



FLYERS & BROCHURES

Meet AIDA. When it comes to flyer design, she's your best friend.

A

Attention – In a world saturated in visuals competing for attention, your flyer needs to stand out. A big, bold, pithy headline that captures the eye is essential. Studies show you have only tenths of a second to grab attention before your reader moves on, so anything too long or complex will get passed over.

I

Interest – once you have attention, you have to create interest. Do this with short, friendly sentences telling your customers about the benefits of your product or service.

D

Desire – Make them want it. Desire comes from an appeal to emotions. Sell how it will make them feel. Add a cherry on the top to make it irresistible – a discount, a free gift. Make it seem like there's a matter of urgency – put a deadline on it to encourage impulse buy.

A

Action – A call to action is crucial to close the deal. People respond to simple, clear direction. Tell them what to do. Call now. Drop by our store. Check out our website. Use AIDA.

The Beauty of Space

Don't be afraid of white space. Blank, or 'negative' space balances your design and allows the eye to be drawn to the important visual features.

WRITING TEXT

Writing your copy

You've attracted interest with your pithy headline and striking visual design – now reel them in with what you have to say. Your copy, or the text of your brochure, has two elements; the visual – what the text looks like; and the content – what the text says.

The Visual

What your text looks like is important for readability. If text is too small, cramped, or hard on the eye, people won't read it. If text appears in big blocks with few breaks, people won't read it. If text colour is hard to see or distinguish from the background, people won't read it.

A few rules

- Paragraphs where lines line up unevenly on the right, or right ragged, are the easiest to read. The uneven spaces at the end allow the eye a break and means you don't become tired of reading so quickly.
- Avoid reverse text (eg white text on black background). Studies show people are less likely to read reverse text. If you are going to use reverse text, make the text large – nothing below 9pt bold.
- Do not use more than nine or ten lines of type per paragraph and do not average more than two or three sentences per paragraph. Shorter makes more attractive reading.
- Do not use underline or all caps as a way to stress a point. These are leftovers from the typewriter age. Use bold or italics instead.
- Avoid outlining text.
- Avoid overlaying text onto an image unless you fade out the image first. It makes it too difficult to read.

Your text content

Your brochure should look and sound professional, but this doesn't mean it should be dry and boring! Write like you're speaking to your customers. Use humour and colloquialisms. Make it entertaining, and your customers will want to read it.

A couple more rules:

- Use personal pronouns 'you', 'we', 'I', indicate a personal relationship and talk directly to the reader.
- Don't over-do the jargon – if your reader doesn't understand what you're talking about they'll quickly lose interest. Speak in their language.
- Nothing looks more amateur than poor spelling and grammar. Get a couple of people to read it over to check it makes sense and that there are no errors.
- Research shows captions are some of the most-read and remembered bits of copy, so use them and use them well. Drive home in words the competitive points illustrated by the pictures.
- Avoid really long lists. Keep lists to five or six points.
- Customers are selfish beings, and they only care about your product as far as it relates to themselves. Face up to common questions and objections in your brochure copy. This can dramatically shorten your sales cycle, especially with complex products and services or highly competitive marketplaces.

Features ^{VS} Benefits

Companies always want to list the many important features of their products. But a feature is meaningless unless your customer knows why it's a good thing.

**A "feature" is what a product has.
A "benefit" is what a product does.**

"This computer has four gigs of RAM" So what? Compare that to:
"You're a multitasker and always have several projects on the go at once. You'll love having the computer memory to have a dozen applications open at once at full speed."

START DESIGNING

If these tips taught you something, there are plenty more where they came from. Advice on different areas of design is everywhere - go online, get a book out from your library, or take a community education or university course. Nailing good design is going to be crucial to your business success, so it's well worth the investment.

Before you start designing, make sure you read our guide on [Preparing your Artwork for Print](#) too – it offers critical information on formatting your files for printing.

Happy Designing!

