

Promotion — Brochures that Bring Business

Are paper brochures still needed in the age of the Web site? There are definite advantages to hard-copy brochures. People can be too busy or lazy to go to a Web site, or may not even know of your Web site. A paper brochure can put your information right in their hands, including your Web site address, so they know where to go for more information. Whether sent by regular mail or set out for pick up at a store or show, paper brochures, if they're creative, tend to get looked at. There are even creative opportunities for brochures that all other kinds of materials lack. Good brochures get kept, passed around, and referred to.

Mistakes to Avoid

Make sure that your brochures don't suffer from these oversights:

1. Spelling and grammar mistakes. Nothing destroys confidence as much as a lack of professionalism. Have someone or several people proofread your text. It must be perfect.
2. Insubstantial paper. Thin paper looks cheap or as if you rushed into printing without considering the effect of paper stock. In a brochure, the medium is a big part of the message. Think about colour, texture, recycled content and watermarks. Together, they can convey some of the qualities you want.
3. Poor print quality. Fuzzy, streaky, smeary printing screams of a poor job. If you let that represent you, what does it say about your value?
4. Poor layout. A brochure is not an article turned into six columns sideways on both sides of a sheet of paper. Put some thought into each individual panel and how it works next to the others. Include graphics and white space. Make it attractive as well as informative.

What Does a Good Brochure Do?

Like any promotional material, there is a purpose behind every brochure. In addition to informing the reader, it is usually meant to get the reader to do something: look on your Web site, send for more information, buy something, go somewhere. Make sure your brochure clearly states what readers should do.

Attention, Interest, Desire, Action

A good brochure (and most advertising copy) uses the above words as guiding principles. Your cover should grab the reader's attention. Further copy should create interest and the desire to get involved. The last panel should instruct the reader on which action to take next. Some examples are "Register today," "Come to the opening on Saturday," and "Call for more information."

Design the Layout

A good cover has the most powerful message in the top third of the panel. It gets read first, and if it is kept in a rack with many other brochures, it is the only part that's visible. If it doesn't attract attention, no one will read further. Make the message about the reader, not about you. "Meet the artist" or "Beautiful, unique gifts" or "Learn this craft" may draw readers to find out more.

Consider the panels and folds of the brochure so that the headlines and copy work regardless of how a reader unfolds the brochure. Some headlines can be written so that different messages are conveyed depending on which panels are unfolded. Folded one way, a brochure for custom dessert baskets reads "Sweet Designs for Every Occasion." Folded another way, the headline reads "Stunning Arrangements for Every Occasion."

Make Your Brochure a 3-D Experience

Creativity can make your brochure more memorable than any Web site, ad or article. Think of turning the whole brochure itself into an artifact that represents something of your message. Here are some fine examples of arresting brochures:

1. A brochure promoting the safety of migrating songbirds, cut into the shape of a bird with wings. It even flies well;
2. A brochure inviting people to attend garden events, with a photograph of a gate on folded panels that the reader opens to get at the information inside. The experience is of opening the gates and entering a garden;
3. A brochure for a sweets shop, wrapped with a translucent cover that resembles tissue paper lining a box of chocolate;
4. A brochure for a home builder with the “gate-fold” cover to give the reader the impression of opening the front doors of a house.

If your brochure can attract attention and engage the reader like these examples do, you should see results that surpass those of Web sites and other kinds of materials.