

10 WAYS TO A BETTER BROCHURE

By Brad Thompson

The corporate brochure is a staple of business both large and small. A simple piece, yet it can be extremely effective in communicating your message. Therefore, here are ten ways to craft a sleeker, smarter and better brochure for your company.

1. KNOW YOUR MESSAGE

Don't have some idea or a vague notion and expect the audience to just "get it." Be specific. If you don't know what you're trying to say, how can your audience possibly have any chance of understanding? Take the time to plan ahead of time and craft a thoughtful, solid message that is relevant to your target audience.

2. HAVE A WAY TO RESPOND

In the "biz" this is called a Call to Action or CTA and should be included in every marketing or advertising piece you create. Whatever you make your call to action – either a website address, phone number, or your company location – craft a gentle yet powerful instruction – not just "call" but "call now!"

And never make the reader work to find it, because they won't. In other words, don't bury a call to action in the copy of a paragraph somewhere in the middle of the page. Always display it prominently, all by itself, so your reader will have no choice but to recognize it.

3. MAKE IT A NO-BRAINER

This is very important. Humans, by nature, are very vocal, explanatory people. We like to talk and describe things. Unfortunately, this does not usually translate well in print. Therefore, keep your brochure – and any printed message – as simple as possible. Bold all the really important statements. This is especially helpful for the vast majority of people who quickly scan a piece without reading every word. If you make the essential elements of your piece stand out, you can be sure that the reader will remember those, if nothing else.

4. BE CONSISTENT AND BE IDENTIFIABLE

If you have other messages – whether printed pieces, mailings or websites, sticking with a consistent look and tone will help your message be heard above the clatter of the competition. It may take a few times, but soon enough, clients will begin to recognize your brand simply by the colors you use or a certain phrase. This is called brand equity and it's what every company in the world wants to get.

5. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BENEFITS

There's a very old copywriting maxim that says, "Sell the sizzle, not the steak." Simply put, it's the benefits of a product that are more important than the actual features. In brochure writing, this is especially important, as you are trying to sell potential clients a way to better their lives in the span of a few short paragraphs.

6. MAKE IT VIRAL

It's the 21st century version of "word of mouth" and it's the best kind of advertising you can get because it's free and it's honest. It is imperative that you do everything you can to make your brochure so relevant, so packed with information and so engaging that your customers will actually want to pass it on to their friends and co-workers, thus becoming mouthpieces for your company.

7. KEEP THINGS INTERESTING

When you hear the word, "brochure", what do you think of? Usually an 8.5x11" paper, folded into thirds, with a couple stock images of people shaking hands. However, if you sell something like auto parts, how about a circular brochure that looks like an air filter? Be inventive and make your brochure square, round, add sounds...the only limitations are your budget and imagination. Remember that the more unique you can make your presentation, the higher the likelihood that people will positively respond to your message.

8. CREATE CREDIBILITY

"Because I said so" may have worked when a parent told you to do something as a child, but it won't work with your customers. Therefore, when you have pertinent facts, figures or other points of differentiation that help distinguish your product amongst others, prove it. Use expert testimonials, case studies, pictures, charts and tables. The main idea is to convince the reader that your brochure is more than mere words – it's solid, accurate and useful information.

9. START SELLING AS FAST AS YOU CAN

A brochure is not the place to tell the customer your company's life story. Save that for the "About Us" page on your Web site. Instead, use this opportunity to immediately dive in and start speaking to your reader on a personal level about why he or she should buy your product or use your service instead of the competition.

10. HIRE A COPYWRITER

It's a pitfall many clients get snared by. They think "I write volumes of letters, e-mails and various business papers...I can crank out a simple brochure!" However, the truth is that copywriters are trained professionals skilled in one thing – accurately and effectively communicating your idea to a broad audience.

A good copywriter will know exactly what questions to ask up front, how to dig for solid information and then how to present it in a way that not only informs your audience, but also motivates them to act. Finally, hiring a copywriter yourself enables you to communicate your needs one-on-one. And the better you communicate the message, the better the result.

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