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PRINTtips

Desktop Publishing: Idea To Execution



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Printing is one of the most important occupations in America. Without printing, America as we know it would cease to exist.

As printers, we are proud of our work, and humbled by the responsibility to uphold the values and traditions of our great nation.

An important part of our printing business is to ensure that you have a professionally presented message to describe your business, organization, product, or service. Getting from your idea to the final printed piece requires a few simple steps – creating and editing the text, selecting images that illustrate the text, and putting it all together in a cohesive design. Whether you are functioning as a desktop publisher by preparing files from which we will print, or using our graphic design department, the road from idea to execution is the same. In this issue of *Printips*, we will travel the road together and discuss the functions required – planning, writing, design, production art, and preparation for printing.

Function 1: Planning

Is it any surprise that the first task in taking an idea to completion is to plan? By this, we mean determine the *purpose* of the project. Is it to provoke an inquiry from a prospect? To introduce your company? To enhance or change your company's image? To secure an order?

You will also need to determine the audience for the project and learn as much as you can about how to motivate them. This will be the basis for your design decisions.

Function 2: Composing the message

The primary guideline for composing the message is to think in terms of the reader. To be effective, your message must be able to answer the reader's most important question – “*What's in it for me?*” One way to satisfy this



requirement is to stress the benefits that the reader will realize if they buy your product or service: the problems that will be eliminated or avoided; the positive emotions that will be experienced; the desirable goal that will be achieved.

We are all intimately familiar with our own organization, product, or service; therefore, it is much easier to think of the features that describe us – how long we've been in business, our staff, our equipment, how our product is made, or our service delivered. Composing this kind of features-centered message without showing clearly how the features translate into benefits for the audience is a common mistake. Not only does it impose a burden on the audience, you also have no guarantee that the reader will make the connection you have in mind.

Function 3: Selecting the format and design

There are many possible formats for your message. Flyers, brochures, and sell sheets are common formats for describing products and services.

Desktop Publishing: Idea To Execution (continued)

Newsletters provide information and education. Self-mailers and post cards present information and offers for specific products and services.

To create a printed piece that attracts attention, consider using an unexpected format, such as a newsletter designed to fit on a post card or a brochure formatted as a miniature book. We will be happy to suggest some unusual alternatives and show you how they could work. Just call **513-248-2121** and describe your project.

Function 4: Preparing the artwork

The printing term for assembling all the elements of a design into the chosen format is *production art*. In the days before desktop publishing, an art director provided specific written instructions for graphic design, copywriting, typography, photography, illustration, and layout. Each activity was performed by a separate individual trained in a specific area. Everything came together at the desk of the *production artist* who was responsible for following the layout instructions to produce a *mechanical*, the artwork from which a press plate was made.

Early desktop publishing focused on typography, then expanded to layout and design. This means that today's desktop publishers must master three disciplines in order to produce professional-looking materials.

Typography

Typefaces have a pronounced effect on the appearance of a printed piece. More than merely making the words easy to read, typography is also an important design element.

- For body copy or running text, *serif fonts* are most effective. The letters are formed with a small stroke at the end of the main strokes (known as *serifs*) and have thick and thin strokes. These characteristics function to draw the eye along from left to right. This makes serif fonts easier to read and explains their popularity for newspapers, books, and

magazines. Serif fonts you may recognize are Times Roman, Garamond, Palatino, Century Schoolbook, and Caslon.

- *Sans serif fonts* lack the serifs (*sans serif* means *without serifs*) and weight of serif fonts and thus form a good contrast. Use sans serif fonts for titles, subheads, captions, and very small type. Sans serif fonts you may be familiar with are Helvetica, Gill Sans, Futura, Univers, and Franklin Gothic.
- *Display type* is type used in large sizes – typically at least 14 points – and is used primarily for headlines, subheads, and titles. Display type also can be used for short text blocks such as pull quotes. Cooper Black and Brush are examples of fonts that can serve as display type.

Design

A good design commands the reader's attention and leads the reader's eye through the message. The best way to develop a good design is to use a *grid* – a series of columns and gutters that establish the underlying structure of a layout. For the reader, a grid provides an invisible organizational structure that indicates the most important parts of the message. For the production artist, the grid shows how to line up each design element on the page.

Using photographs and illustrations to emphasize or explain the message or to set a tone is also part of good design. Royalty-free photographs and clip art are readily available as collections on CD or via download from web sites offering them for sale.

Layout

Regardless of whether you are preparing a project to print on your desktop laser or inkjet printer or preparing a project for us to print, we urge you to use the proper software tool for the job. You will have more control over layout if you use page makeup software (such as MS Publisher, Adobe PageMaker, Adobe InDesign, or Quark XPress) rather than a word processing program such as Word.

“To create a printed piece that attracts attention, consider using an unexpected format...”

“...today's desktop publishers must master three disciplines in order to produce professional-looking materials.”

Desktop Publishing: Idea To Execution (continued)

Function 5: Preparation for printing

One last step remains before your project goes into print – checking the file to be sure it will print as you intend, and giving us the instructions we'll need to print and finish the project. Make a print from the file and provide it to us when you submit the file. If post-press work such as trimming or folding is required,

make a mockup for us to follow. We will provide a proof copy (printed from the file you provided) for you to check before we proceed to press.

Bringing your printing project from idea to finished product can be a rewarding experience, especially if you follow the steps above. If you would like additional information, please contact us at **513-248-2121**.

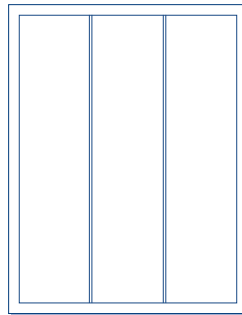
“The best way to develop a good design is to use a grid...”

Q. *What is the most important thing I can do to improve the design of my projects?*

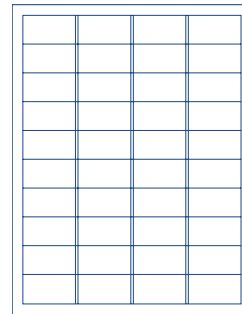
A. In our opinion, using a grid – a series of columns and gutters – will make the biggest improvement in any design. A grid provides the underlying structure of the document, showing exactly how to line up each element on the page.

To use the grid, set the line length for body copy to the width of the grid column. Then place other design elements (photographs, illustrations, captions, headlines) so they line up against the grid lines. Design elements can span one, two, or three columns.

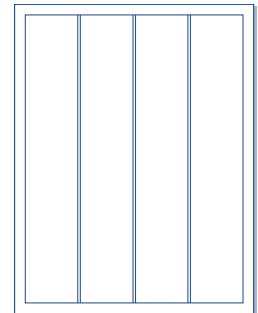
Here are some examples of grids:



3-column grid



4-column grid with additional horizontal lines



4-column grid

Q&A
questions and answers

“Design elements can span one, two, or three columns.”

Use of Royalty-free Images

When you are using royalty-free photography, illustrations, or clip art, please remember that you have not purchased the image. Rather, you have purchased from the copyright holder the right to use the image. The copyright may be held by the organization you obtain the image from, or it may be held by the photographer or artist. Images are copyrighted, proprietary, and protected by United States law.

Use of royalty-free images or collections are also governed by licensing agreements that further define how images can be used. Licensing agreements vary, though all have one thing in common - you cannot sell the image you have purchased to someone else, even if you only use part of the image or include it with other images. You can use an image as graphics printed material, for a specific purpose, but cannot use it as a trademark or service mark.

TRICKS & *tips*



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Alignment and Spacing of Type



“Adjusting the leading of lines of type can subtly improve the design...”

“Paying attention to where lines of text break is also important...”

One way to add a design element to the fonts used in your documents is to alter the *alignment* and *spacing* of the type. *Alignment* is the placement of the type in the column. There are four choices: center, flush left, flush right, or justified (meaning flush left and right). Spacing between lines of type is called *leading* (pronounced LED-ing); spacing between characters is called *kerning*.

Adjusting the leading of lines of type can subtly improve the design, especially for headlines, as shown in these headline examples:

**This is a
BIG IDEA
in a small package**

**This is a
BIG IDEA
in a small package**

Paying attention to where lines of text break is also important, both for design and meaning. Lines of text will look best when they are roughly even, unless that results in splitting a phrase between lines. See the examples below.

**This is a BIG
IDEA in a
small package**
Bad line break

**This is a
BIG IDEA
in a
small package**
Uneven lines

**This is a
BIG IDEA
in a small package**