



PRINTED PRODUCTS INNOVATION

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Design?

Desktop publishing has introduced the thrills and frustration of graphic design to an ever increasing number of people. Whether you are a teacher, volunteer, coach or a newly hired marketing director of a large multinational company, you find yourself responsible for the production of a variety of printed material and you quickly realize the challenges associated with producing dynamic and effective designs.

The ultimate success of design is how effectively did you convey a message. Design is the foundation on which a printing project is based. It is critical that you understand exactly what message or idea you are trying to present. Then it is up to you to create that visual environment that makes the message special. Just as when you are communicating by speech, the use of different intonation, accent, speed of delivery and volume can give even a single word a different feeling or result, an effective design can have a similar result. As people who work with printing, I am sure many of you have heard people ask the following:

How can we spruce this piece up a bit?

Can you clean up the design of this? We have the basic elements but we need someone to make it look professional?

Our printed materials look out dated, I think we need a new look. What can we do?

Can you add a graphic or some photos to our existing printing pieces without costing us an arm and a leg?

In order to better understand how simplified design works, let's look at three of its major components:

Type

Layout

Graphic elements

Desktop publishing has revolutionized the print industry. Never before have so many people had such powerful tools at their finger tips but few have learned how to effectively use these tools. What are those secrets that Professional typesetters use? How can we make type pleasing, readable, legible, artistic, professional? Some basic rules of type can be used to help us all improve the look of our printed pages.

Use only one space between sentences, not two. In desktop publishing we use what are considered proportional fonts (characters which do not take up the same amount of space) not monospaced or typewriter characters. Everyone who learned how to type on a typewriter learned to double space between two sentences but this is not necessary or desirable as we now work with proportional fonts.

Never use all caps in body text. It is difficult to read and is not appealing to the eye. Use a different font or bold lettering to draw attention. Kern or adjust spacing between letters in all headlines where necessary. This usually gives you more space and makes the text easier to read. Use the tab keys to align text not the space bar. The space bar will not give you equal spacing. Use line spacing or leading creatively to make text easier to read and add to the overall appearance of the piece. Don't leave one or two words on a single line at the end of a paragraph or to begin a new column. These widows or orphans make text jagged in appearance and difficult to read. Use no more than 10-16 words per line when setting up your page. Break the page

up into different columns. Your reader will have an easier time following your text if there are fewer words per line. You can also use justification to create streamlined or columnar look to a piece.

Try this simple exercise. Cover up the second version of *The Solace of Travel* and apply some of the basic rules you have learned above and try to create the second version. Which one do you find more appealing and easier to read?

The Solace of Travel

To the untravelled, territory other than their own familiar health is invariably fascinating. Next to Love, it is the one thing which solaces and delights. Things new are too important to be neglected, and mind, which is a mere reflection of sensory impressions, succumbs to the flood of objects. Thus lovers are forgotten, sorrows laid aside, death hidden from view. There is a world of accumulated feeling back of the trite dramatic expression -- "I am going away".

THEODORE DREISER Sister Carrie

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In addition to choosing type, one also needs to choose the images you will use to communicate your message. It's one thing to fill empty spaces with old clip art you have on hand. It's another thing entirely to make certain graphics work in your favor. You need to use distinctive graphics but more importantly is how you present those graphics.

Take the time to determine the style of your piece and then begin to search for the right image. If you can not find that certain piece of clip art you may be able to create the image using the clip art with minor alterations. If you still can't find the right illustration or line drawing you may consider a photograph. Photos may seem straight forward: either you have one or you don't. But the truth is every photo can be presented in a variety of ways by changing the size or shape, adding color, or stylizing them in programs like Photoshop or creating unique outer edges. You should think about stylizing your photos just as you would your type. Graphics are so important that certain illustrations, symbols or photos can set the tone for the rest of your design affecting the way you eventually choose type and structure your layout. Choose graphic elements carefully.

Layout is the third key component to good design. You begin to look at how your type and graphics will interact with each other. Again you must clearly understand what your primary message is and then you must decide how to best present the concept. You should be able to write the idea and supporting facts in short straight forward statements. You must also understand who the piece is being sent to so you can determine the style of the design. Should the style be colorful, dynamic, conservative, classic, fresh or a combination of these. You need to decide which best fits your target audience. You now can begin to experiment with some basic layouts.

The building blocks for layout are usually headlines, text, pictures (photos or graphics) and most importantly, space. The best way to start is to create a grid by dividing the page into several different columns usually between three and six depending on the page size. You can now begin to experiment with type styles, type sizes and how this text interacts with your graphics. This is where experience as well as creativity comes in. Save examples of pieces you like and borrow ideas from those pieces.

The most important aspect of layout is use of space. You can usually tell immediately when someone is just beginning design or does not understand design. Those people tend to have a great deal of information but the information is difficult to read because there are no clear cut priorities and there is little white space. White space or clear area is the most under utilized design element by beginning designers today. Use the white or clear space to help draw attention to your message. Do not clutter the design with unimportant details.

Layout and the use of space is really the magic of design and can only be developed with practice and experimentation. There is no clear cut method or science to design but by trying different looks and referring to other printed pieces you can begin to develop a feel for dynamic layouts.

By keeping some of these simple ideas in mind you will have a start in the design process. Most designers use these basic concepts. It is how they use the concepts that set them apart as professional graphic artists or graphic designers. If you are looking to get inspiration for new ideas, just look around you. Begin to notice magazines, brochures, and television ads and how they effectively communicate their messages. You don't have to be relentlessly original to be creative. After all, there's very little that's totally unique, especially in graphic design. Simply by recognizing good ideas within other people's work and then successfully applying those ideas in a brand new context you can greatly improve your design success. Good Luck!

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