

Building Up the Brochure

12 TIPS FOR CREATING BETTER BROCHURES

BROCHURES ARE A mixed bag. They come in different shapes and sizes. Some are splashy, four-color jobs printed on glossy paper; some consist of a single sheet folded in thirds. A brochure can stand alone or it can be part of a multi-component package.

The tone of a brochure is distinctly different from a letter. While a sales letter should have an intimate me-to-you familiarity, a brochure can be less personal.

The brochure can be used:

- as a handout at trade shows;
- as a supplement at seminars;
- as a "take one" piece on a counter;
- as part of a direct mail package;
- in response to a request;
- to support other sales literature;
- as part of a multi-step selling process;
- to stay in touch with customers, investors or prospects;
- to build and reinforce your company's image.

Before writing and designing the brochure, consider the following questions.

- ⇒ What is the purpose of the brochure?
- ⇒ Where does it fit in my overall marketing strategy?
- ⇒ What do I want it to do?

Regardless of purpose, however, successful brochures

have many elements in common. Here are 12 techniques you can use to improve your efforts.

1. Use a strong cover headline. The front cover is the first thing the reader sees. You have a few precious seconds to make a powerful impact. Don't squander it.

Headlines like "The XYZ Company Makes A World of Difference" or "We're Up To Big Things At Acme Industries" are fluff. They tell readers nothing; worse, they don't entice them to look inside the brochure. Instead, follow classic attention-grabbing starters. For instance, a headline can:

- Pose a question: "Do You Know the 5 Warning Signs of Skin Cancer?"
- Stress a benefit: "How You Can Cut Your Car Insurance Premium in Half."
- Offer news: "What You Should Know About the New Tax Laws." (Making something newsworthy is a particularly powerful device.)
- Quote an offbeat statistic: "Why 63% of Doctors Don't Exercise."

2. Use a reasonable amount of text on each page. Make your brochure easy to read. Nothing is more of a turn-off than plowing through acres of text. A brochure should be an engaging reading experience. With your designer, map out appropriate blocks of copy that communicate your message in manageable pieces.

3. Use easy-to-read typefaces. A dizzying array of fonts may be exciting for you, but will it increase readability? Mix and match typefaces sparingly.

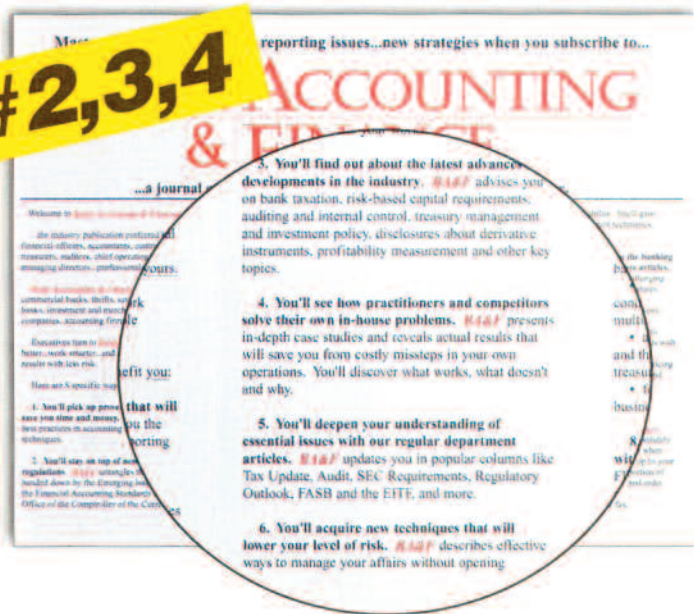
4. Indent your body copy. Studies have shown that copy is easier to read when it's indented five or six spaces.

5. Use subheads to break up copy. Subheads make a natural break in your copy flow, just as chapters let readers pause and think in a book. Subheads are hooks that can lead the reader from one selling section to another.

6. Use "text helpers" sensibly. Call outs, bullets, sidebars, check marks and similar design elements have been known to assist readability and comprehension. But don't go overboard. An overabundance of boldface, italics or all caps can disrupt the reading experience and defeat the purpose.

7. Use action photos. People respond to other people. You

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can make more of an impact with a picture of your product in use than with a lifeless shot.

8. Use photo captions. Captions should run below the photograph.

9. Prove your claims. The adage in direct mail is, "The letter sells, the brochure tells." If your brochure is part of a package, it can help you prove the claims you make in your letter. Talk about the features of your product—then translate those features into powerful reader-centered benefits. Tell the whole selling story. You should never assume that the reader knows everything there is to know about your product, service or company.

10. Include contact information. Every piece of sales literature that leaves your office must have this. Consider including your company name and address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail or Web site address—anything that allows the reader to get in touch with you. If you can attach a contact person's name, all the better. My financial consultant places a pre-printed silver sticker with her name and telephone number on every stock brochure and information piece sent by her brokerage house.

11. Tell the reader the next step. The reader has read your brochure. Now what? Do you want her to call for an appointment? Request additional information? Visit your Web site? Place an order? You should clearly and vigorously indicate the action you want her to take.

12. Include an extra order device. Although your direct

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...practical. You'll get information you can put to work immediately — not dry theories or opinions but tested strategies and know-how.
...direct. You'll get straightforward, no-nonsense advice that doesn't equivocate or cloud the issues. You'll find the writing clear, the analysis sharp, and the conclusions sound.
...convenient. Each section is methodically organized and lets you zero in on the answer without wasting time.
...comprehensive. You'll get insight into the most relevant questions, key issues, and effective tactics to successfully represent your clients. *Dividing Pensions In Divorce* is a user-friendly encyclopedia you'll want at your side every time you handle a marital or family law case.
It goes even further. You also get:
 • Sample of language you can use that will cut down on the time and expense you spend on the line of negotiation.
 • Proven information of how pension amounts should be assessed and presented to court.

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mail package probably contains a separate order card, you can raise your response rate by including an additional order device in the brochure. You can't be certain which piece in the package the reader will look at or lose. A second order device that restates your offer overcomes this handicap—and may help capture additional orders.

Adopt these suggestions and you'll increase your chances of turning out a more successful sales piece. ◆

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