

PRINTtips

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Getting the Word Out: Say It with a Brochure

For many businesses and organizations, the company brochure is a fundamental piece of printed marketing literature. Often the next item to be produced after business stationery (business cards, letterheads and envelopes), a brochure puts a brief, targeted message directly in the hands of prospective customers in a format that is portable, easy to store and easy to pass on to others.

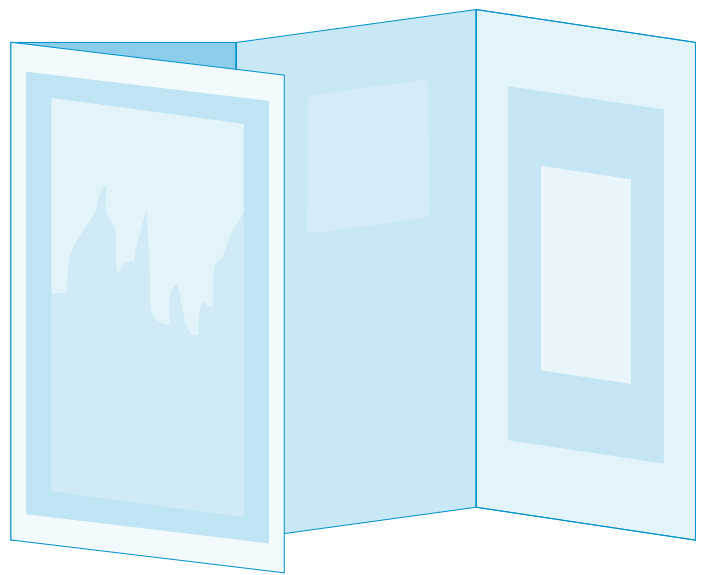
A brochure is also integral to the buying process. It functions as a leave-behind following a sales call or meeting with potential customers. It is a way to respond to inquiries about your products or services or to introduce your company, organization, products or services when cold calling. As part of a direct mail marketing campaign, a brochure can be included with a sales letter or sent on its own as a self-mailer. And finally, a brochure is a point-of-purchase display to interest customers in additional products or services or provide information.

Brochures have an additional advantage: they can be tailored to meet any printing budget. Whether a simple two-color trifold or an elaborate full color die cut folder, a brochure effectively serves your company's marketing function.

The anatomy of a brochure

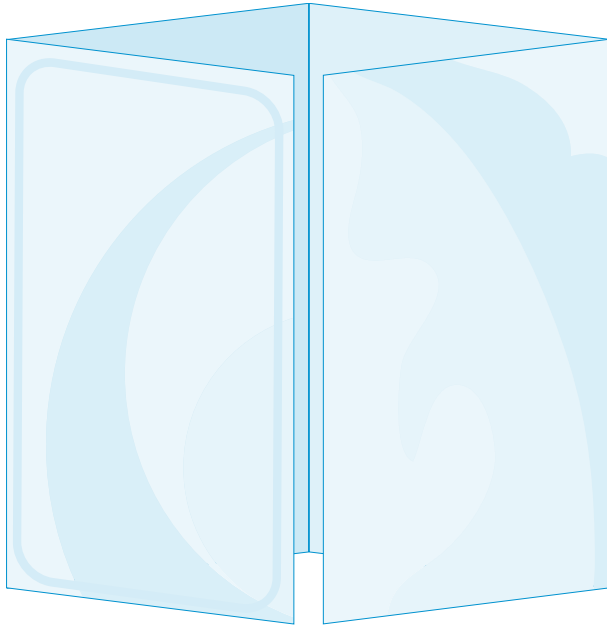
Whether your brochure provides information about your company as a whole or features an individual product or service, it is composed like a miniature book – a front and back cover and a series of interior panels. And just like a book, the brochure tells the story of your company, product or service by using text and graphics that engage the reader's attention, inform, and move the reader to action.

The fact that a brochure unfolds to reveal its content means that information must be placed on the brochure panels so it appears in the order the reader is expecting to see it. Beginning with the cover, each successive panel needs to draw the reader further into the brochure by logically presenting the information or main points.



This *progressive disclosure* characteristic of brochures presents a design challenge much different from a sell sheet or a newsletter. Because a brochure is a series of small panels (in contrast to the full page of a newsletter or sell sheet), there is simultaneously less space and more opportunity to present information. Less space because each panel is a fraction of the overall sheet size, and more opportunity because each panel can stand alone presenting a unique topic.

A useful technique for deciding what information to include and in what order to present it comes from working with a blank sheet of paper folded like the finished brochure. After outlining the main points to be covered in the brochure and selecting photographs or illustrations that reinforce those points, associate each point and its illustration with a brochure panel by writing the point on a panel of the folded brochure dummy. Then give the mockup to someone else to review for logical progression of the main points.



Brochure graphics

An effective brochure has a consistent graphic design that unifies the individual brochure panels even if they each cover a different topic. Consistent graphic design means selecting a color palette, type fonts and type sizes and using only those throughout the brochure. It also means consistent type alignment – fully justified, ragged right, or centered – on each panel.

Be aware of what graphic elements attract the reader's attention.

In general, readers first notice photographs, then headlines, then other visual elements. Body copy is the last thing a reader looks at. The power of your message will be greatly enhanced if the reader can comprehend it by glancing at photographs and reading headlines.

Experiment with photographs. Close cropping to highlight a detail or using a single, large photograph on a panel may convey the message more effectively than using several smaller photos. Consider adding photo captions as an additional way to emphasize a point. And remember that photographs often evoke emotion which is what purchasing decisions are based on.

Brochure covers

As the first element to invite reader attention, the brochure front cover needs to be visually appealing to the target audience. This is especially important if the brochure will be used in a point of purchase display or a literature rack where it is competing for attention with other material. In this case, a good design practice is to be sure the top one-third of the brochure is strong enough on its own to attract attention or compete with other brochures.

One test of the effectiveness of the cover design is to ask whether a prospective customer would know within ten seconds what the subject of the brochure is and what audience it is for.

If the brochure is a self-mailer, the back cover is a good location for the mailing panel. Other possibilities for back cover content include complete company contact information (mailing address, phone, FAX, e-mail and URL), company logo, and brief company history.

Professional design and printing of brochures

Because a brochure needs copywriting, design, stock photographs and layout, it can represent a greater expense than a business stationery package. This may tempt you to undertake part or all of the work using desktop publishing tools and equipment.

We urge you to resist the temptation.

The cost of designing and printing a brochure is partially attributable to the fact that it is a complicated project involving not only graphic design, but also prepress skills. The brochure template has to adjust panel widths to accommodate the fold, with the amount of adjustment changing depending on what paper is being used for the brochure. Selecting fonts and point sizes to be effective in small panels requires experience in typography. And since the cover of a brochure is so important for attracting reader attention, it requires the training and talent of a graphic designer.

We have been designing and printing brochures for our customers for years and we're experts at it. We will be happy to provide you with an estimate for budgeting purposes or a quotation if you are ready to proceed. Call today for an appointment to discuss your brochure project.

a vocabulary of the graphic arts

worlds

Accordion fold: a type of parallel fold consisting of two parallel folds in opposite directions. Each panel of an accordion fold is approximately the same size. When viewed on end, the fold forms a Z or W. Also known as Z-fold or concertina fold.

C fold: a type of parallel fold that creates six panels from a sheet of paper. Commonly used for bi-fold, tri-panel brochures, the C-fold is also known as letter fold, trifold or brochure fold.

Characters per inch: the average number of a specific type face and size that fit into one horizontal inch or pica of type.

French fold: a type of right angle fold that creates an 8-panel brochure.

Gutter: the inside margins or blank space between two facing panels. Also refers to the extra space allowance used to accommodate folding and binding. The amount of gutter needed varies depending on the binding method. Sometimes refers to the alley or space between columns of text in a page layout.

Pantone Matching System: a solid color communication system based on the visual matching of individual, pre-mixed colors. Colors are represented in a series of books with thousands of precisely printed colors alongside printers' formulas for mixing those colors. The original Pantone Matching System included

504 colors and has since been expanded to include 1,012 colors along with their printing ink formulations. (*Definition courtesy of Pantone.*)

Parallel fold: one of two basic types of folds; the folds run parallel to each of the preceding folds.

Pica: a unit of measurement commonly used for lines of type. Six picas = one inch. Also used to describe a typewriter type that prints 10 characters per inch.

Point: a standard unit of measurement for type; used for measuring depth of printing. One point is equal to .013836 of an inch; six points = one pica; 72 points = one inch. Points are used not only to measure the type itself, but the space around it. Points and picas may also be used to set margins, specify column widths, and spaces between columns.

Right angle fold: one of two basic types of fold; the fold runs perpendicular to each of the preceding folds.

Roll fold: a type of parallel type fold consisting of two or more folds that fold in on each other. May fold in from the right or from the left. If viewed on end, the folds spiral inward. Also known as a spiral fold or barrel fold.

When thinking about the design of a brochure, consider the order in which the various panels are presented to the reader as the brochure is unfolded. A completely folded brochure presents the front and back cover – each a discreet element of the brochure.

But when the front cover is opened, the reader may now see two or more panels simultaneously. Consider a bi-fold, tri-panel brochure. Opening the front cover reveals two panels simultaneously. These can be treated completely independently, as left and right panels, or as a unit.

Notice that when the brochure is completely open, the left panel that was visible upon the first opening can now be seen in conjunction with the remaining two inside panels. This has design implications, since one panel – the left inside – will be visible at two different times with three other panels. Its design will need to be integrated with the other three panels, or clearly differentiated to stand independently.

T H E I D E A

C O R N E R

TRICKS & tips

A very popular brochure size is an 8½ x 11 inch sheet of paper folded in thirds. Sometimes called a *trifold*, this brochure is actually a bi-fold, tri-panel that provides six areas for text and graphics (three panels on each side). It fits into a standard #10 envelope or can be created with a mailing panel to be a self-mailer.

When designing this type of brochure, keep in mind these physical requirements:

- *The need for the folded panels to nest properly.* The width of the brochure panels cannot be equal. The end panel (*i.e.*, the panel that folds in) must be 1/32" to 1/8" narrower than the other panels to compensate for the thickness of the paper. To prove this, fold a piece of paper in even thirds. You'll notice that it won't lie flat after folding, but will be slightly bowed.

- *Extra gutter between panels.* Set the line length of each panel so there is more of a gutter between panels than you would use in an unfolded piece. You'll be folding the brochure down the center of the gutter, splitting the difference between two panels, and you need sufficient white space contributed by the half-gutter to keep the panel visually appealing.
- *Point size of type.* The typical 20-pica line length on a panel may require a smaller point size for type than the common 12 point, since at this size a single line would accommodate only about 36-40 characters. Too large a point size on a small line length can also cause excessive word hyphenation.



Is a full color brochure always better than one printed in two colors?



We don't think so – and in fact there are specific technical considerations that might make two ink colors preferable to full color.

Most company or organization logos are rendered in one or two PMS (Pantone Matching System) solid colors. Pantone has translated these solid colors into their full-color equivalents (denoted as a set percentage of the four process ink colors – cyan, magenta, yellow and black). According to Pantone, the

CMYK color gamut can only reproduce 50% of the solid PMS colors, meaning that trying to create a two-color logo with CMYK inks may in some cases compromise color fidelity.

If your brochure doesn't contain a full color photograph and if you are working with a smaller budget, then 2-color printing may actually produce a better result than full color.

questions and answers