

Producing Marketing Materials

I DESIGNING EFFECTIVE MARKETING MATERIALS

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Whether you're developing a newspaper ad, creating a brochure, or designing posters for store windows, understanding the basic components of good design and understanding the production process result in higher quality and more effective marketing collateral.

“ A GOOD LOGO CONVEYS THE ESSENCE OF YOUR COMPANY IDENTITY IN A SIMPLE, MEMORABLE, AND DISTINCTIVE MANNER. ”

Besides conveying marketing messages, your collateral communicates with customers on other levels. Colors, typefaces, pictures, paper, and more all contribute to your company identity and shape customer perception. In addition to design choices, the quality of marketing materials also impacts perception. For example, spelling errors, flimsy paper, boring text, and bad printing reflect negatively on your company.

Understanding print and production will also save money. Knowing the options between different printing processes and making smart decisions throughout the design and production stages help keep costs down.

Most printed collateral pieces go through the same production process. In general, the steps include

1. Setting objectives
2. Choosing vendors and suppliers
3. Developing concepts
4. Designing and writing the piece
5. Producing the final design
6. Printing
7. Trimming or other post-printing activities
8. Delivery

Logos and tag lines, along with colors, typefaces and design elements, contribute to promoting your company identity. These identity elements appear throughout your business, from business cards and stationery to signs, invoices, Web sites, newsletters, and more.

1 Logo

The most basic element of corporate identity is your logo. A logo takes one of three forms: a graphic icon or symbol, the company name presented in a specific font or design (known as a logotype), or a combination of the two.

Examples of well-known graphic logos include the Nike "swoosh," the Starbucks mermaid, and Mr. Clean. And examples of companies using logotypes include Bloomingdales, IBM, and Coca-Cola.

A good logo conveys the essence of your company identity in a simple, memorable, and distinctive manner. Plan to use your logo consistently, so be sure to design something that's flexible enough to use in a variety of manners, in small and large sizes, and in color as well as black-and-white.

2 Tag Line

A tag line or slogan describes your company or market position in three to seven words. Usually placed next to the logo, your tag line should be catchy and descriptive. And like your logo, your tag line should be used consistently. However, companies will change tag lines more frequently than logos as a way to keep up-to-date while leveraging the existing company identity. Examples of well-known tag lines include "Tougher than dirt" (Tide), "The ultimate driving machine" (BMW), and "It's everywhere you want to be" (VISA).

3 Colors

When developing your logo, decide which colors best represent your company. Color evokes strong emotional responses. Colors such as navy blue, gray, and maroon appear conservative and professional, for example. Other colors appear trendy, calming, sophisticated, or exciting. Some companies "own" certain colors in our minds—for example, Tiffany's light blue, Tommy Hilfiger's red, white, and blue, and Perrier's bottle-green.

4 Typefaces

The typefaces you use in marketing collateral contribute to your image more

subtly. Choose typefaces for style, readability, and impact. Select one or two typefaces for business cards, letterhead, and other identity pieces. (See Typography below for more information.)

5 Design Elements

Another way a company can develop its identity is by using consistent design elements. Examples of consistent design include using only line drawings in ads, including graphic bars or lines in collateral pieces, or printing all pieces on recycled paper. The consistent use of these elements helps customers associate those pieces with specific companies.

6 Creating Standards

Because corporate identity is fundamental to the way your company presents itself, it's a good idea to develop standard practices for using your logo, tag line, colors, and design elements. Consider specifying the following characteristics:

- Logo placement
- Logo sizes
- Ink colors
- Layouts
- Formats

B Elements of Successful Materials

Strong creative concepts, good writing, attention-grabbing illustrations, and effective design turn your collateral objectives into reality. Whether you create your own collateral or work with a designer, decisions you make during the design and development phase impact the look, effectiveness, and cost of your marketing materials.

1 Concept

Successful collateral begins with a strong concept, the creative idea that generates themes and images for the project. Good concepts are focused, customer-oriented, and emotional.

thinking of themes or images related to your company or product. Once you have a concept idea, try to describe it in one or two sentences. If it's not easy to describe, keep refining the idea. Test different concepts with colleagues for feedback. Most importantly, make sure everyone involved in approving the piece buys off on the final concept.

2 Copy

After determining the concept, you can begin writing the text. Good writing follows the precept "Show, don't tell." In other words, describe how your product works and the benefits of using your company as opposed to simply listing features and services. Use concrete descriptive words, specific verbs, and interesting images. If you don't feel comfortable writing copy, hire a freelancer. In general, look for copy that can be described as follows:

- Concise
- Active
- Jargon-free
- Well-organized
- Benefit-oriented

As you review and edit copy, remember that different pieces use different writing styles. Print advertisements rarely feature complete sentences. Direct mail uses a conversational tone. And brochures tend to be more formal.

3 Illustrations

Photographs, drawings, and charts add visual impact to your collateral materials by grabbing attention, clarifying abstract ideas, and producing emotional responses. Illustrations come in a range of styles and prices. To choose, keep in mind the concept, objectives, budget, and expected printing process. As you decide what kind of illustration format to use, consider the following guidelines:

Photographs can be realistic or artistic. Use them to show products, landscapes, people, and architecture. Color photos add vibrancy; black-and-white pictures are always classic. Choose photographs over drawings when customers need to see your products before purchasing.

Drawings and graphics illustrate abstract ideas. Available in every imaginable style, drawings can add brightness to less expensive pieces thanks to two-color printing.

Charts demonstrate performance or other quantifiable competitive

advantages. Charts can work well in either color or black-and-white.

In most cases, plan to hire professional photographers or graphic designers. You can also purchase stock photographs or clip art; these are existing images that you license from their owners or creators for use in printed or online materials. Choose clip art carefully. Thousands of images are sold inexpensively on CD-ROM today. Unfortunately, many such packages feature common and uninteresting images. Many companies sell stock photography or clip art over the Internet.

4 Typography

There are thousands of typefaces available, each with its own style and attributes. Some are ideal for headlines and others for text or captions. You'll probably use two or three different typefaces in any given ad or brochure.

Types come in four main families, which can be characterized as follows:

Serif type is easiest to read. Used in books, newspapers, and magazines, serif fonts include Times New Roman and Garamond.

Sans serif type is great for headlines, online text, and casual looks. Sans serif fonts include Helvetica and Arial.

Script fonts are often used on invitations or to resemble handwriting for either a formal or an informal look. Be careful not to overuse.

Display type is suitable for logos or headlines. In general, use display fonts sparingly.

By controlling the way type appears, through size, color, weight, alignment, kerning (the space between letters), leading (the space between lines), and so forth, designers can develop distinctive, readable text for any project.

5 Color

Color increases the expense of printed materials, but it also adds to their overall look and effectiveness. For some pieces, such as clothing catalogs or high-end brochures, color is necessary. It's not important for pieces that change frequently, such as price sheets and flyers. How you use color depends on the printing process.

When using color, keep in mind the following suggestions:

Keep color schemes simple and in line with your company image.

Limit the number of accent colors to three.

Use color to highlight, separate, or link blocks of text.

Ask your print shop if it can photocopy spot colors using different color toners.

Use color copies or printers when you need only a small number of color pieces.

There are two main ways to produce printed color: using spot color and using process colors. Many people use both four-color and spot color printing for a combination of bright photographs and crisp accent color.

Spot color uses premixed ink for printing. There are hundreds of colors available. The most well-known colors are PMS colors, part of the Pantone Matching System. Companies often use spot color to print logo or company colors where consistency is important. Spot color is less expensive than process color. When you use spot color along with black in a printed piece, it's known as two-color printing. You can also use more than one spot color per piece.

Process color creates many different colors by printing overlapping dots of cyan, magenta, and yellow inks. When these inks are combined in varying percentages, the viewer's eye perceives a range of shades similar to those in a photograph. Also known as four-color printing, process color also uses black ink to add depth to the other three inks. Black is also used to print sharp details and text. Use four-color printing when you need to print color photographs and artwork.

6 Paper

Work with your designer and printer to choose paper stock for your project.

There are hundreds of paper types that can affect the piece's appearance and cost. Considerations for choosing paper include durability, use, printing processes, and more. For example, a catalog selling expensive clothing requires thicker paper and a coated finish for crisp color printing, whereas a direct mail piece, which has a short life span, needs less expensive, uncoated paper.

Some of your paper choices include the following:

Coated paper. Thanks to its smooth surface, coated paper works great for printing color. Coated paper comes in a variety of finishes, including matte and glossy. Use coated paper for brochures, datasheets, and catalogs.

Uncoated paper. Uncoated paper comes in a variety of textures and colors. It's less expensive than coated paper, and it absorbs ink differently. Use it for stationery, folders, envelopes, and other projects.

Weight. A paper's weight refers to the thickness and opacity of the page. Standard photocopy paper is 20-pound weight. Choose thicker paper for double-sided printing, greater durability, and for more expensive pieces.

Recycled paper. The number of recycled paper options is growing. Although it's more expensive than regular paper, you might consider recycled paper, especially if your company espouses environmental values.

7 Format

You also need to determine the physical appearance of your piece. How many pages is it? Will it be folded? How will the piece be used? Although there are many standard sizes, you can stand out by printing brochures or cards in unusual sizes. Some formatting decisions will impact production costs; others are relatively inexpensive. Creating custom bookmarks for a bookstore simply requires telling the printer where to trim or cut the piece for specific dimensions.

Formatting considerations should include the following:

- Size
- Single- or double-sided printing
- Binding (staples, spirals, and so on)
- Die cuts (cut shapes, business card holders, and so on)