Visual Design Basics

frogPRINT WA

Graphic Design, Artwork and Printing

The primary goal of Graphic Design should be to support communication of the message.

Therefore, as with all writing in business, the design needs to speak the language of the audience. ANYTHING which makes it difficult for the reader to quickly and easily receive the message must be expunged.

If you are using a professional to do your artwork, tell them who your audience is so the design will reflect their language. Also, if you can provide them with a rough layout and/or samples of anything you already have in mind, it will save the designer time (and you money).

Note that not all designers understand the principles of effective graphic communication.

So, whether you are using a professional or doing the artwork yourself, here are tips to help you achieve the best possible result:

• Fancy is NOT the answer. All the special effects and multi-colours in the world won't make up for bad design. Essentially, your printed product should look interesting enough to get attention, but still be easy to read and follow. The *emphasis* should be on the message, not on how amazing the artwork looks.

• If there is a lot of text, use narrow columns. Short lines (7-10 words) are easier to read than longer ones where it can be difficult to go from the end of one line to the beginning of the next.

• Left justified or full justified type is easier to read than centred or right justified type.

• A lot of text in reverse is harder to read than dark on light.

• Backgrounds should be plain and light to keep text easy to read.

• The reader's eye should flow easily and naturally from where you want them to start to where you want them to finish. We are taught to read left to right, and top to bottom. Keep the layout flowing that way if you want to keep it easy to read.

• Don't use illustrations or photos simply to fill space. Because people look at pictures first, if randomly placed, they can harm the flow. Every picture must earn its place by supporting the message.

• Avoid fancy type faces. They make reading difficult. *LIKE THIS ONE, OR THIS ONE, OR THIS ONE.*

• AVOID WRITING A LOT OF TEXT IN CAPITAL LETTERS. ACCENDERS (LINES THAT GO UP, SUCH AS ON b, d, h & k) AND DESCENDERS (LINES THAT GO DOWN, SUCH AS ON g, j, p & q) TURN WORDS INTO LITTLE PICTURES, WHICH HELPS US READ.

• Keep text away from edges and borders.

• Body text set below 8 or 9 point is hard to read. (It's been estimated that as many as 40% of adults have difficulty reading small type.)

• Don't use a lot of fonts. As a rule of thumb never use more than three. Too many type faces looks confusing, untidy and unprofessional.

• Even if you don't know why, if something doesn't look quite *right,* change it until it does.