

## 7 Ideals to Help Make Your Brochure More Effective

If you need a brochure to help promote your business, product or service, there are a few things you should keep in mind to help ensure it is an effective marketing piece. Some of these suggestions are common sense, but it's surprising how often we see companies create marketing materials that could have been far more effective, *if they had done the following:*

### **#1 Work with Professionals.**

While it is tempting (and easy) to sit down with a Word template and pound it out, your brochure will look and read much better with the help of a designer and a copywriter. A professional designer will make sure the layout of your brochure matches your brand identity and communicates visually, while an experienced copywriter will help make your message more attractive and readable to potential buyers.

If your budget doesn't allow for professionals, make sure you choose a template that matches the style of your brand identity and can be customized with the colors in your logo. You'll want to make sure you can change it enough so that your customers won't see the same brochure from the business across the street.

You *can* do it yourself, but hiring professionals is a wise place to spend your marketing dollars and may help you save more money in the end.

### **#2 Choose the Right Format.**

Brochures come in dozens of shapes and sizes. If you need to mail your brochure or place it in information rack or display, you should consider using standard sizes like the tri-fold or executive layout. If you've got the budget for something different (generally requires a professional designer), you can play around with fold-overs and die-cuts to make your brochure unique and appealing. There are even options for using gimmicks like pop-ups to engage your customers.

### **#3 Make Sure Your Brochure Looks Professional.**

Think of your brochure as a salesman pitching your product or service to potential customers. How do you want to come across? What image of your product do you want your customer to walk away with?

Choose fonts, photographs, and a layout that supports the look and feel you've developed for your brand (in fact, use the same fonts and colors used in your logo if appropriate). Avoid clipart, fonts, and images that don't fit the overall feel of the brochure.

### **#4 Don't Use Too Much Text.**

A common mistake many business owners make when creating a brochure is trying to share everything about a business or product. Don't do it. Your brochure should have one purpose and one purpose only (more on that in #6). You don't need to share your company history, your entire product line, references, testimonials, product specifications, product and lifestyle photography, contact information, and on and on. Plan on about ½ page of text for every

designed page. For the typical two sided, tri-fold brochure, plan on  $\frac{3}{4}$  to one page of text—no more!

Limiting the number of words in your brochure helps make sure the text is readable and can be laid out in a way that appeals to potential customers. And it leaves plenty of room for photography, white space, and call-outs to emphasize the most important message.

#### **#5 Write Stories, Not Descriptions.**

You could describe all the product features and reasons why a customer should buy from you. But a better approach is to tell a story about how your product helps solve a problem. See if you can note the difference in this example from a company called Amazing Back-ups:

**Description Approach:** With Amazing Back-ups, you have 24/7 access to our exclusive server co-location for data storage and recovery. If you ever experience a crash or loss of data, simply connect through our secure network and download the data you lost. It only takes a few hours and it will be like nothing happened. It's fast. It's secure. It's easy.

**Story Approach:** It seemed like a really bad dream. Halfway through the project, the servers overheated and we lost more than four weeks of work—with just seven days until our delivery date. Missing the date meant losing our best customer. But Amazing Back-ups had us up and running less than 4 hours later. No data lost. It was as if nothing had happened! Our ability to deliver on that contract led to even more business. We are growing faster than ever!

See the difference? It's the same information but the story engages, while the description falls flat. Stories show benefits. They engage your customer on an emotional level. They make promises without being slick and salesy.

#### **#6 Say One Thing and Say It Well.**

The best brochures have a single message. Imagine for a moment that you are a mechanic. You need a brochure to promote your emission testing service. Great! Don't confuse the customer by adding information about oil changes, tire repair, bodywork, biographies of your experienced team, and reduced summer hours. Focus on one thing and its benefits. You may miss a few bodywork customers, but you'll make up for it with emission testing work.

And make sure that your brochure is written from the customer's point of view, not yours. What's in it for her? What benefit does she get? Will she understand the jargon or technical details? If not, don't use them.

#### **#7 Tell The Reader What You Want Them To Do.**

This is what it all comes down to. Your customer has read your brochure, now what? Should they call and place an order? Visit your website? Stop by your tradeshow booth? Bring the kids into the store for lunch? Don't assume that your customer will know what to do next. Tell them. Then watch it happen.

