

"The very next day, Maria sent me a **layout that achieved the goals** I wanted, way below budget!"

Roger C. Parker

www.designtosellonline.com

AT A GLANCE

Many ask: what is good design?

Publication success is based on following proven design principles, rather than following the 'trend' of the moment.

Technology is no substitute for the basics of design.

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Is technology too much of a "good thing?"

Has technology replaced fundamental design principles...

Design is supposed to complement your copy; support it. It has to lead your audience through your piece. When designing you always ask who your audience is. You build a type of profile and that helps set the tone for the piece.

Computers have provided us with a creative freedom that had previously not existed: we have limitless possibilities, limited only by our imagination and software knowledge.

Thanks to computers we can instantly see how changes in color, type and other graphic elements impact our designs. We have become more obsessed with learning programs and applying filters than we are with the theories of proper design.

Let's now examine some common design mistakes and what you can do TODAY to improve your publications.



The Top 10 common design mistakes and how to avoid them

1. Inconsistency

Examine previous designs for the product/service you are designing for. Is there a particular "look" they were going for? Do they have specific colors they use? Fonts? Consistency is key.

2. Lack of focus

We are designing for one of three reasons: to inform, to entertain, or to sell. Design should guide the reader through the copy by making it easy and effortless and connecting with the reader emotionally. The focus should always be on the message.

3. Overuse of special effects

Using too much type and photo/image manipulation can distract from the message. Judge what is appropriate by knowing WHO you are designing for and why. Image manipulation should be kept at a minimum as is type treatments.

Good Design is all about the details—

none is too small to be overlooked.

BONUS

#1 Spelling Mistakes

With today's spell checkers, there's no excuse for spelling errors!

#2 Hyphenation

Beware of hyphenation in a document, left up to your computer it can lead to very embarrassing situations. "Therapist" hyphenated, "the-rapist" while grammatically correct, can really leave your readers with a negative impression.

Headlines use heavy, subheads are bold, body text is medium (maybe even light) and **for stress and/or emphasis:** italics, small caps, uppercase, and occasionally underlining

4. Complexity

Too much type, too many images, and a lack of white space, can result in a page that is cluttered and thought of as too much "work" to read through.

5. Clutter

Unreadable and inappropriate type selection, wrong color choice and use of clip arts can lead to an amateurish design. Always keep your intended audience in mind whenever selecting anything that goes in your layout.

6. Chaos

Type hierarchy and layout hierarchy need to be observed.

Achieving type hierarchy is easy: it's done through type weight, which reflects and leads your reader through the different levels in your copy.

Title

Main Subheads

Subheads

Body Text

Emphasis/Stress

EMPHASIS/STRESS

EMPHASIS/STRESS

Emphasis/Stress

Powerful designs all have one thing in common: they make each page's content hierarchy obvious at a glance.

7. Type details

We are no longer on our typewriters. A tell-tale sign of an unprofessional design is typing as though you were still on one. There are "new" rules for typography since the invention of the computer (to be examined in an upcoming issue).

8. Hard to read pages

Dark backgrounds with light colored type is hard to read. It distracts from your message and lose readers as the copy becomes unreadable. Make it as easy as possible for them to go through the layout.

9. Low quality images

Images should be set at 300 dpi for optimal print results. Blurry and pixilated graphics can give the impression that it's a second-rate publication which most likely is not the impression you want to give.

10. Use of distorted images

If your images are scaled, then they should always be scaled by the same amount — both vertically and horizontally. Maintaining a consistent number guarantees the photograph's integrity and also avoids distorted images that appear too wide or too tall.

To learn more

Good design is all about the details: no matter how small. To find out more on how I can provide you with a fresh perspective on your design challenges and get more done in less time, visit my web site www.mygraphicsnotebook.com or call me at 514 256-0134.