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Lori Wagoner  
*Rowan University*

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Study of Small Business's Need for, and Interest in,  
a Course on How to Produce Effective Publications

By  
Lori Wagoner

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts in Public Relations Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
June 30, 2001

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_

Date Approved 6-30-01

## Abstract

Wagoner, Lori S.

A Study of Small Business's Need for,  
and Interest in, a Course on How to  
Produce Effective Publications  
2001, Thesis Advisor: Dr. Donald Bagin,  
Public Relations

With the advent of PageMaker and other user-friendly publications programs almost anyone can create publications, with or without an understanding of typography or layout and design. These publications represent the organization and affect its image, as well as its bottom line.

These software programs allow an organization to produce its own publications and handle its own publicity. This is a great advantage for small entrepreneurial businesses that may not be able to hire a professional to produce brochures, flyers or newsletters. The problem, however, is that unless the person has an understanding of typography and layout and design, the publication may not promote the kind of image the business wants or it may cost the business more money than it can afford to spend on public relations.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a market for a course geared towards small businesses and their publications. The study also produced a syllabus for a course on how to produce effective publications on a small-business budget.

## MINI ABSTRACT

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the help of several people. Dr. Bruce Getzan was an invaluable asset in connecting me with the local chambers of commerce. The presidents of the Gloucester County and Cherry Hill chambers were extremely helpful and supportive in getting my surveys filled out and answering any questions I might have had.

I would like to thank Richard Pokrass and Carol Paproki of Burlington County College for pointing me in the right direction at the beginning of this endeavor.

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My advisor, Dr. Bagin encouraged me and made me feel confident about my abilities. I learned a lot from all of my professors.

I would like to thank Dr. Shontz from the secondary education department, for her help with the SPSS and Excell programs I used to compile my research.

Heather Simmons, my mentor and friend, gave me advice and contacts to help me through the courses, the comprehensive exam and this thesis. I appreciate everything she taught me and all of the encouragement she gave me to pursue my education.

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  - L. *Identify Your Target Market*, by Office.com staff
  - M. *18 Sure-Fire Steps to Writing a Powerful Sales Letter*, by Russ Von Hoelscher from the TSBJ.com website
  - N. *Seven Most Common Business Writing Mistakes and How to Avoid Them*, by Christine DuBois from the TSBJ.com website
  - O. *Create a Direct-Mail Package*, by Office.com staff
  - P. *Create a Promotional Package*, by Office.com staff
  - R. *The Sales Tool That's Good to the Last Dot*, by Judith Pettigrew
  - S. *Writing Convincing Copy the Right Way Builds Confidence*, by David R. Young from TSBJ.com website

## Chapter I

### Introduction

With the advent of PageMaker and other user-friendly publications programs almost anyone can create publications, with or without an understanding of typography or layout and design. These publications represent the small business and affect its image, as well as its bottom line.

These software programs allow an organization to produce its own publications and handle its own publicity. This is a great advantage for small entrepreneurial businesses that may not be able to hire a professional to produce brochures, flyers or newsletters. Now the owner can have an administrative assistant start up the computer and use a template to create a newsletter or brochure in a matter of minutes. The problem, however, is that unless the person has an understanding of typography and layout and design, the publication may not promote the kind of image the business wants or it may cost the business more money than it can afford to spend on public relations.

According to Brian McCallum, "Every promotional flier, brochure or catalog you send out represents your organization. A poorly conceived piece conveys the message that you don't care much about what people think of you." The receiver of this message feels if you don't care what potential customers think of



you, then you probably don't care very much about the quality of your products or service.

"For building a consistent image and developing a consistent message a course on publications would be invaluable to the small business operator," observed Heather Simmons, publications administrator for Gloucester County College. "Taking such a course would build a skill set that would help small business owners achieve the marketing goals a good business would have set in its business plan."

Arthur Campbell, president of Cherry Hill Regional Chamber of Commerce, feels that most small businesses don't understand that "more is not better, less is more." He went on to say, "the least efficient producers of publications are non-profits. They think if it is big and colorful, then it is effective. They throw money away because they don't realize that their audience doesn't want them to waste money on full color, multi-page publications." They don't know their audiences and they don't realize that businesses do not want to donate money to an organization that doesn't look like it needs their money. Campbell does not expect the organization to produce sloppy work, but as a businessman he knows that he doesn't read multi-page publications from companies soliciting donations; he wants them to look like they run their organization efficiently.

The researcher will find out if small businesses know the importance of consistency and quality in publications on the image of the organization. The researcher will study the need for a course on how to produce effective collateral material for small businesses.

According to Simmons, "Everyone has access to something along the lines of desktop publishing, but doesn't necessarily know how to effectively use it. If business people have the skills to meet their marketing needs, along with a reasonable business plan, then they should be successful."

The researcher believes those businesses that realize the company's brochure may be the first thing a customer sees will want to improve their image through improving the quality of their publications. Companies that want to project a good image, but do not have the resources to hire professionals, will want an inexpensive way to learn to accomplish this themselves.

Simmons feels, "If publications are consistent and go along with the marketing goals of the business, then a course to develop skills to harness the power of the desktop publishing programs would provide a good return on the investment."

All of the research indicates professionals feel consistency is the key to effective marketing through publications. If a company projects a consistent image through all publications, from stationery to advertisements and brochures, then the company will look professional and people will believe them to be experts in their field.

The researcher will obtain market research results to justify the creation of a course for business entrepreneurs to learn how to produce their own effective marketing collateral (brochures, flyers, newsletters, etc.) by effectively using desktop publishing programs, effectively using graphics or photos and dealing with professional printing companies.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to show that there is a market for a course on producing quality publications on a limited budget. Can small businesses afford to hire professionals to produce and design publications? If not, who does this? Does the person have any training in layout and design or training on the desktop publishing program the company uses? Do small businesses understand the importance of their publications on the image of their company? Do they realize

that an ineffective brochure or newsletter not only wastes money and time, but it also costs the organization potential customers or clients? Do the owners feel that the publications project the image the company wants?

If a seminar or course were offered on how to produce quality and professional publications, small business owners could design their own brochures or fliers. The course would provide these small businesses the skills to produce quality publications without spending a lot of money to hire graphic designers or a publications company who would not know the business as well as its owner would. A course would enable small business owners, or a trusted employee, to produce quality publications without overspending.

The course would teach business people how to market the image they want as well as the product they are selling. The course would also teach business-people what a printing company needs to know to give them the best deal on printing their publications. The course would teach how to deal with outside printers; create a uniform image to customers, clients and vendors; direct the publication toward a targeted audience; effectively use photographs and graphics; write persuasive copy; effectively use whitespace; effectively use a logo; evaluate current publications and other topics the researcher will discover through her survey and interviews of small-business owners.

### Plan of Study

The researcher surveyed South Jersey entrepreneurial businesses. The researcher determined if these business-people were interested in a course on producing effective publications offered at their local Business and Industry Training Center, Community College or seminars through the local Chamber of Commerce. If the business-person felt a seminar course would be too time-consuming, the researcher asked if the business owner would hire a consultant. The

consultant would evaluate the business' publications and individually teach the person who produces the publications how to use the company's own desktop publishing software to produce publications that would promote the desired image of the company.

The researcher conducted personal interviews with small business owners to gain more in-depth knowledge of their interest in a seminar course and what they would like to learn in a course on producing effective publications. She also determined if they would prefer having someone come to them.

The researcher provides a syllabus on what should be taught in a course or seminar of workshops on producing quality publications in Chapter 5.

### Need for Study

With the availability of user-friendly graphics and publications software and quality low-cost computer hardware such as scanners, digital cameras, color printers and zip drives, everyone and anyone can create promotional materials for their organization. This can create a problem for the organization's image. The hardware and software may be high quality, but it cannot produce high quality material if it is not properly used to its potential.

Digital cameras are very exciting technology for many people, so they make use of it for their publications. But the average user does not understand that digital cameras are excellent for webpages, but may not be as good for printed publications. The average user does not know about pixels and how they are different for digital images and photographs.

Now, due to programs like Publisher and Quark, anyone can desktop publish. However, these new "publishers" may not understand typography or the most effective way to use photographs or graphics.

Susan Godfrey's thesis discovered, "small businesses often adopt a

do-it-yourself approach due to a lack of resources and the inaffordability of trained professionals." She discovered through her survey that public relations is the first thing to go if the business needs to make any budgetary cuts. These businesses know that image and the perception of their customers are important, but they think they can accomplish everything with advertising and tend to throw all their money into one marketing basket. If the first thing a customer sees about your business is a flyer, then that flyer needs to make a good first impression of your company. According to Campbell, "most small businesses' first tiptoe into marketing is their first brochure." These small businesses need to learn how to spend their publication dollars effectively.

Small businesses can not afford to waste money on ineffective brochures or other collateral publications. A course teaching business owners how to effectively use their existing desktop publishing software and how to make the most of their printing dollars would save small business owners money and time. The market research from this study will prove the need and desire for this course.

### Definition of Terms

**Entrepreneurial:** business formed, owned and operated by an individual who assumes the risk of the enterprise.

**Small business:** a business that is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field. Usually defined as having fewer than 100 employees.

**Collateral material:** publications produced for the marketing, advertising and public relations of a company. Includes brochures, newsletters and flyers.

## Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumed that small businesses would want to respond to her survey. She was seeking a 40% response rate and planned to attend Chamber of Commerce meetings to persuade businesses to reply to the survey.

The limitations of the study were the people surveyed and the availability of the people surveyed. The people surveyed were a sampling of small business owners in South Jersey.

She also assumed that most small-business owners do not have training in layout and design and therefore hire someone to produce their collateral material or designate that duty to an employee who is familiar with the software, but also has no professional training.

## Chapter II

### Research and Review of Literature

This chapter contains information from various books and magazines on how small businesses can get information on how to produce quality publications on a small budget. The researcher found pieces of good information from various sources on how to produce effective publications. The researcher also discovered that there is a need for more materials on layout and design; and how publications affect the image customers have about a business or individual.

As Godfrey discovered, there are very few books that specialize on small-business public relations. There are even fewer that focus on publications. Now there are also companies that offer seminar and on-line courses for small businesses, but few deal with public relations and none focus on publications. The researcher conducted a search of Rowan University's computerized periodicals and business abstracts data bases cross referencing combinations of the words: small business, publications, marketing, public relations, layout and design and

marketing materials.

The Library search turned up two useful websites: Office.com and TSBJ.com. The small business journal(TSBJ.com) , the Wall Street Journal's online center for entrepreneurs, had five articles on business writing and none on layout or printing. In a search for small businesses and marketing publications, zero articles were found. In a search of the archives of Office.com articles, there were no articles specifically for publications. However, three articles were relevant to a course on publications for small businesses. These articles can be found in the appendix at the end of this paper. They are entitled: *Create a Promotional Package*, *Create a Direct-Mail Package* and *Identify Your Target Market*. A search of Small Business and Publications found over 100 articles, but only one of them was useful for the purposes of this study.

Four articles were found on The Small Business Journal's website (www.TSBJ.com) about written communications for small businesses. They all acknowledge that there are differences in writing for small businesses and writing for large corporations, but they emphasize the fact that how well a communication piece is written affects the perception of the potential customer. There was little information on design, color-choice or picture-usage in publications.

Three articles, on the TSBJ website dealt with public relations for small businesses. One told how to "Hype" your small business by establishing media relations; communicating to your internal and external audiences through newsletters, presentations and writing op/ed pieces for local newspapers; and conducting an event. This article also stated, "Critical to the success of your promotional effort is careful planning, sufficient funding and being prepared to secure professional assistance. PR and publicity are the most cost-effective means of establishing credibility, creating new business and maintaining the confidence of your existing client base." This emphasizes that small businesses must be con-



vinced that a course on producing effective publications is worth the cost of the course in order to get business owners to invest the time to take such a course. Another article told what not to do to get publicity, but would have been clearer if it had focused on the positive. The third article explained how small firms can implement a public relations campaign to enhance their image. That article stated, "Good public relations is essential to any small business. It is an inexpensive way for your business to get noticed, create an impression and be remembered." This last article was written by SCORE, the Service Corps of Retired Executives, a nationwide network of retired and working business executives sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration who volunteer their time and talents to assist small business owners or those interested in starting a business. All three of these articles can be found on TSBJ.com, but are not included in this appendix.

An e-mail to the University of Kingston's small business research center resulted in the answer that, although they conduct a multitude of research projects, they have not conducted any research on the topic of publications or image through collateral marketing materials.

The most fruitful search came from Amazon.com, which turned up ten books on designing publications for beginners and/or for those on a limited budget. The most relevant of these books are listed at the end of the syllabus.

The small-business section of Barnes and Noble doesn't have any books on producing brochures or advertisements. There are several books on how to write a business plan and how to get funding. There are even some books on marketing your small business, but these books do not focus on collateral material or how to produce publications that enhance your business. If a small business hires a graphic artist to design its publications, how does the business choose a printer and know what a spec sheet is for? The researcher could find

little information to answer these questions. Even if a small business does not plan to create its own publications, there is little information on how to choose a professional who would understand the unique clientele of a small business. The books that were relevant to this topic were found in the Graphic Arts section of the bookstore. If small-business people wanted reference material on creating publications for their business, they would not find anything (with the exception of program manuals) near the computer section or the small business section. They would have to either know to check the art section or ask a knowledgeable bookstore associate.

The small business institute located at Gloucester County College offers a certificate in Small Business Management through the Rutgers Small Business Development Center through a series of seminars. Some of the courses may touch on marketing, but none of the courses teach a small business owner how to produce effective publications or how to find and deal with an outside printing company.

The Chambers of Commerce presidents of Gloucester County and Cherry Hill were both very receptive and supportive of the researcher's proposal of a course on publications. The president of the Cherry Hill chapter, Art Campbell, felt that small businesses would be very receptive toward a course that would teach them about dealing with printing companies as long as it didn't take too much time. He feels small business people do not have a lot of extra time and would be more receptive towards an on-line seminar course they could access at their convenience or personal tutoring. However, he believes such a course would be beneficial to the businesses in his chamber.

Heather Simmons, publications and marketing director for Gloucester County College, teaches a course on Quark at Gloucester County College. It is a mac-based course and most small businesses use a pc. Also, according to the

author's research most small businesses do not use Quark. However, Simmons said she did have some small business owners take her course. She said, "these students learned skills that helped them build a consistent image and develop a consistent message for their businesses." She wrote an article on how to get your publication printed, in which she explains how to find a printer and how to write a spec sheet. (A copy of this article can be found in Appendix R.)

The researcher peered into small corners of the references for small businesses and publications, as well as questioned experts in the field to find useful information about how a small business owner could project a good image through marketing publications. All of the research suggested consistency is the key to effective marketing through publications. "A course, no matter how it is presented (seminar, on-line, one-on-one) would provide the skills necessary to create a consistent image for a small business," noted Simmons. "If publications are consistent and go along with the companies' goals, then the company will make money. This would provide a profitable return on their investment in the time and cost of the course."

A course would teach small businesses how to use their own resources to generate inexpensive print publicity. Small-business people were very receptive to a course that would teach them how to promote their image without spending a lot of money. This type of course would generate a lot of interest if promoted through the chambers of commerce. The people who attend these meetings are interested in networking and promoting their businesses.

According to Godfrey's thesis, perseverance and innovation have worked for many entrepreneurs. Lack of prior public relations knowledge or training can be a hindrance, but knowing the community and the product well is a big step toward successfully promoting the business.

But, according to Joanne Brigandi's thesis, *A study of Small Businesses in South*

*Jersey to Determine the Need for Public Relations Consulting*, "Communications failings are common to many small companies today because they lack the finances or managerial talent to undertake preliminary research that is vital to an effective public relations program." Not marketing to a focused audience wastes money and time. If the publications designer knows to target the audience, and market through channels that audience respects and responds to, then the business will get a good return on their publications investment.

According to Gonnie Siegel in his book *How to Advertise and Promote Your Small Business*, "The small-business owner who becomes too deeply enmeshed in the communications business is like the country-and-western singer who decided to study opera. Success in one is likely to reduce success in the other until mediocrity is achieved in both—hardly a desired goal for the small-business owner."

Brigandi's thesis shows that small-business owners realize that public relations can result in increased profits. Susan Godfrey's thesis shows that businesses are receptive to cost-effective training. Brian McCallum's thesis shows that publications are important to image and the perception of a business's clients. And Jacob Farbman's thesis shows that good communications will attract positive attention.

In summary, existing information on the topic of small-business publications and communications can provide some help and guidance. A course where the teacher would provide examples and useful references on how to effectively produce publications that communicate a positive image of the business on a limited budget would be more advantageous to the communication public relations efforts of a small business.

## Resources and Research on How to Effectively Communicate Through Publications

Good public relations is essential, especially for the small business. Since the owner is probably already a member of the community, he or she already has a good start. Word of mouth is the best and cheapest advertising available, as long as it is positive. However, word of mouth advertising can only take the small business so far away from its own community. Publications or collateral marketing materials give the company a voice that can reach as far as the owner wants to send it.

If noise interferes with the voice, the message can not get through. A company needs to understand who its customers are and how they like to receive information, or else their potential customers may not hear them.

For a brochure or direct mail package, the company must first decide what impression it wants to create, who it wants as customers and decide how its products or services will benefit those customers. (See Appendix L for information on how to identify a target market.) Then it must learn about its audience and plan the design accordingly. For example, if the target audience is senior citizens, then the brochure text should be larger print so it is easier for the potential customer to read. The more effort it takes to receive the message, the likelihood of the person actually hearing the message diminishes.

The purpose of any publication is to generate a response from the reader. If the potential customer does not read a publication due to disorganized or sloppy layout or bad writing, then the potential customers won't respond because the publication is not easy to read. High effort reduces the interest, and if it is a direct mail piece, there is a good chance a poorly designed publication will go in the trash.

A thoughtfully designed direct mail package is a good option for a small

business, especially if it has created a mailing list of potential customers at a community event. The reader must be motivated to act and the designer must tell the reader how he/she wants the reader to act and give readers all they need to act without putting forth a lot of effort. According to Rosalinda Psolke's thesis, "A unity of style, tone and message is critical to the overall success of a direct mail package. If more than one author creates the copy, a final editor should pull the piece together." Psolke feels that publications bridge relationships and enhance the organization's image, as well as disseminate information.

A brochure or direct mail piece should tell a story. It needs a beginning, middle and an ending. The whole piece should reflect the identity of the company. Any publication should promote the company's unique qualities in a clear and concise way. The brochure is an opportunity to show the features of the product or service. The piece should flow logically and clearly. It should motivate positive action and give the reader an easy way to act, such as providing a phone number or stamped postcard. Always have someone else read over and edit the final draft before it gets printed; the original writer/designer may miss mistakes that a fresh reader may catch. Refer to Appendix O for more information on compiling a direct-mail package. Also refer to Appendix M for tips on writing a powerful sales letter.

Good customer and media relations can be maintained through the distribution of a newsletter. Henry Ford, the inventor of the people's automobile, published one of the first known in-house newsletters, *The Ford Times*, to enhance his promotion of the Model T. Today, Henry Ford has a reputation as a businessman who cared about his customers. Newsletters reach out to current customers as well as potential customers. They should provide factual, useful and contact information about the product or business. It is important to include pictures and to focus on community-relations activities of the business. The

newsletter should be informative and easy to read, as well as interesting to the target audience.

Small-business publications need to strike a balance between a full-color fancy publication and a cheap one page black and white publication that looks like it was run off on the local library's copier. If the publication looks expensive, especially for non-profit businesses, the customer or potential donor may feel the company has money to waste. If the publication looks cheap, the customer or potential client may feel the company does other things cheaply or just doesn't care about how its customers view the organization.

Referring to publications that appeal to the designer will help generate ideas for a good layout and design. The design obviously worked if the publication was enticing enough to pick up. Another suggestion would be to refer to the book, *Limited Budget—Building Great Designs on a Limited Budget*, by Lesa Sawahata. This book shows examples of publications that worked although the company had little money to spend.

No matter how pretty the publication looks, it will be ineffective if it is not written well. Bad usage or obvious spelling errors jump off the page screaming to the potential customer that this business does not pay attention to details. If the company makes errors on its promotional pieces, the perception will be that it makes errors in other parts of its business. Professional writing makes the business look good and helps build customer confidence. Some customers or clients may only know the business through its publications; therefore, these collateral materials must communicate the company's image. The company's voice should come through in its written communications.

The advice, "Write like you speak," means "sound like yourself" not write *how* you speak. In writing, grammar and punctuation are noticed; these things may not be emphasized in speech. Refer to Appendix S for more on the differ-

ences between written and spoken English.

Communicate conversationally, convincingly, clearly and concisely. People do not read more than they have to and they stop reading if the writing becomes difficult to read due to clarity or usage errors. Good marketing copy creates a mental image by using vivid language. Sending a message by showing, rather than telling, lets the readers draw their own conclusions. Write for the reader. This is one of the reasons it is important to know the target audience. It is important to know exactly what action the piece is supposed to generate from the audience. A reader can not ask for clarification of something he or she may have misunderstood, so the writer must be clear and vivid.

The four basic rules of writing, according to the TSBJ.com article (Appendix R) on *The Sales Tool That's Good to the Last Dot*, by Judith Pettigrew, are: Know what you want to say, Sound like yourself, Keep it simple and Get your grammar and spelling right. Keeping these rules in mind when writing will help the writer avoid common business-writing mistakes when producing a marketing publication. Refer to Appendix N for an article on the seven most common business-writing mistakes and how to avoid them.

Choosing the right medium to communicate a message is important to the cost of producing publications. If all a company does is produce brochures, it may be missing a large part of its target audience, thereby losing potential customers. The article, *Create a Promotional Package Overview* from the Office.com website (Appendix P) gives advantages, disadvantages and recommendations for using different mediums for disseminating promotional information to the small business's target audiences. If an advertising medium is not paying off, the company should change tactics and not continue wasting money on ineffective advertising. If a company's client-base is senior citizens, it would be a waste of money to advertise at the local dance club, unless it featured a



senior night.

In conclusion, small businesses can save money just by knowing more about how to communicate clearly and effectively. When the message is clear, vivid and directed to the targeted market then the package does not have to be expensive to attract attention.

## Chapter III

### Procedures

The researcher first reviewed Brian McCallum's thesis on "Producing Effective Brochures;" Jacob Farbman's thesis, "How to Produce Award-Winning Newsletters;" and Susan Godfrey's thesis on small business public relations behavior. She also spoke with Susan Godfrey about her thesis and survey strategy.

Related research was conducted using ProQuest under ABI, using keywords "publications and image and public relations and small business." An Internet search using keywords: publications and small business, marketing collateral and small business, public relations and small business was also conducted. The researcher looked at the International Association of Business Communicators website ([www.iabc.com](http://www.iabc.com)).

The researcher conducted a websearch for websites directed toward small businesses. The small business journal, the Wall Street Journal's online center

for entrepreneurs, had five articles on business writing and none on layout or printing. In a search for small businesses and marketing publications, zero articles were found. In a search of the archives of Office.com articles, there were no articles specifically for publications. However, three articles were relevant to a course on publications for small businesses. These articles can be found in the appendix at the end of this paper. They are entitled: *Create a Promotional Package*, *Create a Direct-Mail Package* and *Identify Your Target Market*. A search of Small Business and Publications found over 100 articles, but only one of them was useful for the purposes of this study.

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An e-mail to the University of Kingston's small business research center resulted in the answer that, although they conduct a multitude of research projects, they have not conducted any research on the topic of publications or image through collateral marketing materials.

A review of course booklets, credit and non-credit, of the six South Jersey community colleges was conducted to ascertain whether any of them already offer a course focusing specifically on producing effective publications. The researcher conducted a survey of South Jersey small businesses. These businesses were chosen from the South Jersey Chamber of Commerce directory and through the Chamber of Commerce of Cherry Hill and the Chamber of Commerce of Gloucester County. Would these companies like a course on preparing collateral marketing materials (brochures, flyers and newsletters) offered at their local business and industry training centers or community colleges? Do these owners understand that publications project an image to their audience? Do entrepreneurs feel preparing quality publications should become part of their start-up skills? (See Appendix A & B for copies of the mailed survey and the fax-back survey)

The researcher interviewed the Vice President for Lifelong Learning at Gloucester County College, Bruce Getzan, to learn if he felt there is a market for this type of course.

The researcher spoke with Carol Paproki, public relations assistant at Burlington County College. She is in charge of deciding what courses should be offered in their small-business training center.

The researcher also gleaned information from Arthur Campbell, president of the Cherry Hill Regional Chamber of Commerce, about whether he thinks small businesses need such a course and whether he feels they would be interested in such a course.

Heather Simmons, publications administrator at Gloucester County College spoke with this researcher about her experience with small business people through her course on Quark at Gloucester County College and about her experience with publications through her position at the college.

Surveys were mailed to 125 small businesses in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties. In addition, the researcher handed out 150 surveys at two Chamber of Commerce networking events. A total of 275 surveys were sent out. A compilation and review of the results are presented in Chapter 4.

A completed syllabus and course description of the proposed course, "How to produce effective publications on a small-business' budget," is presented in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 4

### Results and Conclusions

One hundred and twenty five surveys were mailed to randomly selected small businesses in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties. The surveys were addressed directly to the company owners. In addition, the researcher handed out 150 surveys at two Chamber of Commerce networking events. A total of 275 surveys were sent out. Ninety-one surveys were returned.

Following are detailed results of the survey and an analysis of what these results mean to this study. Graphs and charts are supplied in the appendix (D through J).

#### 1. Do you use a personal computer in your business?

Total number of respondents: 91	N	%
Yes	80	88
No	11	12

It is not surprising that a large number of respondents use a personal computer. What is surprising is that 12% do not.

2. Do you use desktop publishing software?

Total number of respondents: 90	N	%
Yes	52	58
No	38	42

Even though the majority of respondents use desktop publishing software, a surprisingly large number don't. Some respondents needed clarification of the term desktop publishing.

2a. If you use desktop publishing software, which one(s)?

Total number of respondents: 52

Microsoft Publisher	42	81
Adobe PageMaker	15	29
Other	13	25
Quark	11	21

See Appendix E for a bar chart depicting the relationship of those businesses who use desktop publishing software to the programs they use.

The "others" listed were Corel 8.0 (pc), Corel 9 (Mac) and Adobe PhotoShop.

PageMaker is the Adobe desktop publishing software. Photoshop is used to manipulate photographs, not as a layout and design program. It is usually used

*with* a desktop publishing program. Professional desktop publishers prefer Quark, which only 21% of respondents use. The software most used by respondents (81%), Microsoft Publisher, comes with a Microsoft Office Package. So this is the most accessible to the small-business owner; therefore, it is likely that the business person did not decide ahead of time that he or she wanted to produce publications. According to Graphic design student Brandon Morton, "people who design publications choose either Quark or PageMaker." Publisher allows the user to choose templates and just fill in information, while the other two programs rely solely on the user's creativity.

3. Which of these methods does your company use to inform potential clients and customers about your products/ services? (mark all that apply)

Total number of respondents: 276	N	%
Brochures	49	18
Newspaper ads	46	17
Flyers	44	16
Direct mail	42	15
Internet	40	14
Newsletters	29	11
Trade publication ads	26	9

See Appendix F for a bar chart on which methods companies use to inform potential clients about products and services. The respondents marked



all methods they use to inform potential clients and customers about products and services. Trade publication ads and newsletters were used least often. Depending on the type of company, newsletters (internal or external) can be a valuable image-building tool. If the company knows its target market, advertising in trade magazines can be less expensive than other advertising. Brochures were most used to inform potential clients, with newspaper ads, flyers, direct mail and internet all following closely behind. If brochures, flyers, ads and direct mail pieces are not eye-catching with a clear message, they are a waste of money because people will either not read them at all or have an unfavorable perception of the company.

4. Who has been responsible for designing your company's publications (brochures, newsletters, print ads, flyers and menus)?

Total number of respondents: 130	N	%
Owner/president	59	45
Graphic designer	19	15
Employee	18	14
In-house PR department	14	11
Publications or PR consultant	13	10
Public relations firm	4	3
Publishing company	3	2

See Appendix G for a bar chart on who is responsible for designing company publications. In most small businesses surveyed the owner or president designs the company's publications-45%. Twenty-nine percent of respondents said a graphic designer or employee designs their publications. Most small businesses don't seem to use professional firms or companies for their publications. The question wasn't asked, but most likely this is due to a cost factor.

5. If you answered owner/ president or employee to the previous question, has this person had training in layout and design? (If you answered anything else to the previous question, skip to question 6.)

Total number of respondents: 60	N	%
Yes	20	33
No	40	66

Of the 60 respondents who answered this question, 33% said the owner or employee who designs their publications has had some training in layout and design and 66% said this person has had no training.

5a. If yes, what kind of training?

The types of training listed were:

previous life-experience as an illustration draftsman

on-the-job training (three respondents)

single seminar course

a college course

2-year college degree in design (two respondents)

BS in commercial art  
 BA in graphic design and illustration (two respondents)  
 AA in retail marketing  
 on-line certifications  
 certificate in desktop publishing/ computer graphics-Moore College  
 worked in ad agency  
 high school newspaper experience  
 art school at Drexel University

In conversations with some survey respondents, the researcher learned that respondents were interested in more training, as long as it isn't too basic. As one respondent said, "We know how to turn on the computer. We don't have extra time to waste on stuff we already know."

6. If a professional (firm, publishing company, graphic designer or public relations consultant) produces and designs your publications, do you feel this person or company understands the needs of your customers and company?

Total number of respondents: 55	N	%
Yes	45	82
No	10	18

Of the 55 respondents who answered this question, 82% said they were satisfied with the professional who designs their publications. Only 10% were dissatisfied. However, according to question 8, respondents are interested in learning how to evaluate their publications.

7. Which types of publications does your business send out?

Total number of respondents: 234	N	%
Brochures	52	22
Flyers	43	18
Direct mail	41	19
Print ads	40	17
Newsletters for clients/ customers	30	13
Newsletters for employees	17	7
Catalogs	11	5

See appendix H for a bar chart illustrating the responses about the types of publications companies send out. Respondents marked all that applied, therefore the total number of responses for this question was 234. Most of the publications businesses send out are brochures. Few small businesses send out newsletters to their employees or produce catalogs. A follow-up study might be to find out how the small business communicates with its employees. Employee support is critical to small-business public relations. However, this number may be low because 64% of the respondents employ fewer than 7 people. Since it is a small business, it is likely that if there are only 7 employees or fewer, then the employees are family; so there is no need for an internal newsletter to keep employees informed. Direct mail, flyers and print ads made up 19, 18 and 17 percent of responses. Thirty respondents (13%) send out newsletters to current clients/ customers.

8. Which things would you be interested in learning in a course on producing publications?

	N	%
Total number of respondents: 222		
How to market the company's image as well as products	42	21
How to write persuasive copy (i.e. brochure text)	34	17
How to effectively use desktop publishing software	33	16
How to effectively use photographs and graphics or logos	32	16
How to direct your publication toward your audience	30	14
How to evaluate your own publications.	30	14
How to deal with outside printers.	18	8
Other	3	1

See Appendix I for a bar chart depicting the topics of interest for a course on producing publications for small businesses. Respondents marked all the topics they were interested in learning about. There were a total of 222 responses. Twenty-one percent of respondents are interested in learning how to market the company's image as well as its products. Only 8% of respondents want to learn about how to deal with outside printers. A follow up question may be whether business people already know how to deal with printers or whether they don't print enough to worry about it. The second highest response, writing skills, received 17% of the responses. Effectively using photos or logos and effectively using desktop publishing software received almost the same number of

responses. How to direct the publication to a target audience and how to evaluate publications both received responses from 14% of the respondents.

9. If your local community college offered a course on how to produce effective publications on your office computer, would you be interested in either taking the course yourself or sending a trusted employee?

Total number of respondents: 87	N	%
Yes	58	66
No	29	33

A majority of respondents are interested in taking a course on how to produce effective publications. Out of 87 responses, 66% felt they would take a course on producing effective publications at their local community college.

A crosstab was also done on how many of those businesses who use desktop publishing are interested in taking a course on producing effective publications. Please see Appendix D for a table of the results. Of those who use desktop publishing software, 65% are interested in taking a course on producing effective publications, and 31% are not. The researcher believes this indicates that there is a market for a course on producing effective publications in Gloucester, Camden and Burlington counties.

10. What kind of help would you be most interested in?

Total number of respondents: 109	N	%
Course as part of Small Business Training offered at Community College	33	30

Series of workshops	24	22
Seminar course at Business and Industry Training Center	19	17
Personalized one-on-one training	17	16
Course offered at Management Institute at Rowan University	12	11
Other	4	4

For a bar chart illustrating the responses for the types of courses small businesses are interested in taking, see Appendix J. The majority of respondents (30%) would like the course to be part of small business training at their local community college. A series of workshops received a high response (22%) as well. A seminar course at the BIT center received responses from 17% of the respondents. Personalized one-on-one training received responses from 16% of the respondents. A course offered at the Management Institute at Rowan University received responses from 11% of the respondents. The reason for this may be that the University may be too far away for most respondents. Small-business owners don't have the time to travel far for a course. If the course were offered on-line through Rowan University, it is likely that more people would have responded favorably to a course through the Management Institute. The other responses were: on-line course and "the quickest and cheapest."

The following are demographic questions:

How many people does your company employ?

Total number of respondents: 90	N	%
employ 1-7 people	58	64
employ 26 or more people	16	18
employ 8-15 people	9	10
employ 16-25 people	7	8

Among business owners who responded to the survey, a large majority (74%) employ fewer than 16 people. Most of these employ fewer than 8.

How many years has your company been in business?

Total number of respondents: 88	N	%
1-5 years	29	32
21 or more years	28	31
11-20 years	23	25
6-10 years	8	9

The majority of small businesses who responded have either been in business for 21 years or more, or they are new businesses with only 1-5 years experience.



13. Which county is your company located in?

Total number of respondents: 90	N	%
Camden	37	41
Gloucester	20	22
Burlington	18	20
other	16	18

The large response from Camden county is thanks to the Cherry Hill chamber of commerce for allowing the researcher to attend their networking luncheon to distribute the survey. Gloucester county also invited the researcher to its chamber of commerce networking event. The Gloucester county response is not as large as Camden county because the Gloucester county chamber is new and much smaller. Most of the respondents from Burlington county are also members of the Cherry Hill chamber of commerce. The Burlington county chamber of commerce was less helpful due to the fact that they felt Burlington County College had recently conducted a similar study. This was an erroneous assumption on their part. Burlington County College's study was on types of courses small businesses would be interested in, not specifically publications courses.

## Chapter Five

### Reflections, Recommendations and Syllabus

The purpose of this project was to provide market research for a proposed course for small businesses on producing effective publications on a limited budget. The researcher found several sources and some helpful information for designing publications on a small-business budget.. Two books stood out as helpful references: *The Non-Designer's Design Book*, by Robin Williams and The Graphic Idea Resource's *Limited Budget—Building Great Designs on a Limited Budget*, by Lesa Sawahata. *Limited Budget* contains samples of successful designs and explanations on how the designer saved money. The Robin Williams' book contains illustrations and explanations about how a non-professional can achieve professional results. The author explains the main design concepts and shows why certain layouts work and certain ones do not work as well. Robin Williams also wrote, *The Mac/PC is Not a Typewriter*. This book (actually two books, you choose the correct one for the type of computer you have) explains

typography and font usage, and explains how to use your computer to achieve the typographical look you want.

To implement this course, the researcher suggests the teacher refer to the handouts supplied in the appendix as well as the list of books at the end of the syllabus (located at the end of this chapter). Other suggestions would be to visit the Office.com website and The Small Business Journal Website ([www.TSBJ.com](http://www.TSBJ.com)). Also, local chambers of commerce could provide input, publicity and contacts for guest speakers, specifically a local reputable printer.

The researcher feels this study proves the marketability of a course on producing effective publications on a small business budget. The style of course and location of the course appears to be irrelevant, as long as it is convenient for the busy schedules of small business owners. The researcher believes the majority of survey respondents chose a community college course as the preferred type of course because community college courses are inexpensive and the location is quick and easy to get to for the small business person in each community. There is little information available on producing publications for the small-business person. According to the people the researcher spoke with, small businesses would welcome the information and skills a course or seminar would provide.

### Recommendations for Repeating this Study

There are several recommendations the researcher has for anyone interested in repeating or expanding on this study..

A researcher should ask for type of business in the survey because different types of businesses behave differently. Some types of businesses may not have a need for publications at all.

The researcher should skip mailing and use fax-back surveys and personal appearance pleas at chambers of commerce or small-business group meetings. Cooperation of chambers of commerce is essential for a good response.

Do not attempt to use SPSS unless you are proficient with the program. This researcher would suggest using a spreadsheet program many people are familiar with so help is readily available if you need it.

The researcher would also suggest forming a focus group using a random sampling of small businesses to find out more in-depth information on the type of course or how business-people perceive the need for quality publications to promote their business.

### Suggestions for Further Study

The researcher would suggest conducting a study of educators to determine if they would be interested in a seminar course on communicating with parents through publications as an in-service for part of state continuing education requirements.

Another suggested study may be to research non-profits' perceptions of publications since it was suggested that they tend to "fritter away" too much money on their publications on unnecessary "bells and whistles."

## Syllabus

### How To Produce Effective Publications On A Small-Business Budget

This course will teach business people how to produce effective publications on a small-business budget. The business' image is projected through its publications. So not only is a business selling a service or product, it is selling itself through its advertising materials.

The course will teach:

1. how to create a uniform image to customers, clients and vendors
2. how to direct the publication towards a target audience
3. persuasive copywriting
4. how to effectively use whitespace
5. how to effectively use photographs and graphics
6. how to effectively use a logo or photographs
7. how to deal with outside printers
8. how to evaluate current publications
9. where to find useful information to market the company image along with the company's products

The course will last seven weeks to accommodate time constraints of small-business people. The smaller number of classes should be more appealing to busy people. The course will be broken down into different topics each week:

1. Discussion of the different desktop publishing programs and their similarities and differences.

2. Discussion of the different types of publications.

During this week's class have students bring in a publication from their business and write a short paper on what they like and don't like about it. Discuss in class. Then discuss how to evaluate a publication and have class take one of their classmates' publications and evaluate it for homework.

3. Discussion of printing the publication

During this class discuss:

- What is the best and most cost effective use of fonts and colors?
- research on readability of certain fonts and sizes
- research on use of color
- spot color vs. full color
- Publications reflect company image as well as promote product or service.
- The three main design concepts are relevance, proportion and direction
- Unity of style, tone and message is important to the effectiveness of the publication

4. Dealing with a Printing company.

- What does a printing company need to know to give you the best deal on

printing your publications.

- Write a spec sheet (what is a spec sheet and how do I write one?)
- how can I get the most for my money
- what does camera-ready copy mean?
- how do I choose a printer that is right for my business?
- Handout "Target Market Worksheet" from Andy McLaughlin's handout packet Hiring outside publications companies

#### 5. Effectively using photographs and graphics or logos

- research on use of photos
- What is the difference between a tif, gif or jpg?
- the integration problems with macs and pcs.

#### 6. Persuasive copy-writing

- writing to your audience, not for yourself
- choose your target audience
- keep it concise
- use vivid language
- write as if you are talking to one person
- be specific-use concrete examples and facts. Testimonials are persuasive
- Know your audience and tell them what they want to know. Your product or service is the answer to their question or problem.
- keep it organized and logical. Offer easy access to the information.
- what do you want the audience to do after reading your publication? Make sure you convey this to your reader.
- targeting publication to audience

7. Summary of course and How to evaluate publications to tell if your outside company is doing an effective job and to decide who to hire as outside designer or outside printer.

-Evaluate work they did for other companies.

-Also want to speak to current and past customers

-Last day of class give out an evaluation survey to determine if class was helpful to students and what they would recommend for subsequent classes.

Suggested Texts to have by your computer:

1. The Mac is Not a Typewriter : A Style Manual for Creating Professional-Level Type on Your Personal Computer, by Robin Williams

1a. The PC is Not a Typewriter : A Style Manual for Creating Professional-Level Type on Your Personal Computer, by Robin Williams

2. The Graphic Idea Resource's Limited Budget—Building Great Designs on a Limited Budget, by Lesa Sawahata

3. AP Style Book

4. Dictionary

5. Thesaurus

6. Program Book for the desktop publishing program of your choice



7. The Non-Designer's Design Book, by Robin Williams

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[www.tsbj.com](http://www.tsbj.com) - The Wall Street Journal's online center for entrepreneurs

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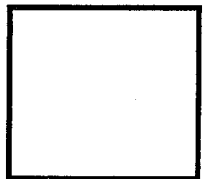
Lori Wagoner  
773 Quail Place  
Deptford, NJ 08096

.....

# Attention Small Business Owners



*This survey could improve  
your bottom line, as well as  
help the  
academic future of a poor  
graduate student.*



.....  
**Questionnaire**  
.....

Dear small business owner:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University conducting research for my thesis. My thesis seeks to supply information to community colleges and business and industry training centers about whether small business owners would be interested in taking a proposed course. The course will teach how to effectively design publications that project the image the business owner hopes customers and clients see.

Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and return it to me. I have included a stamp for your convenience.

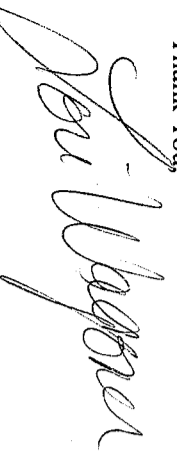
Feel free to include any further comments on the subject of this survey. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey results, please include your name and address or fax number. Your anonymity will be protected.

Thank you for your quick response and helpful input. Your responses are important to my research and chances for future employment.

Please return this survey by  
April 30, 2001

Just cut along the dotted line and either staple or tape closed before mailing. I have included postage for your convenience.

Thank You,



.....  
1. Do you use a personal computer in your business?  
.....

Yes  No

2. Do you use desktop publishing software?

Yes  No

2a. If so, which one(s)?

Quark

Adobe PageMaker

Microsoft Publisher

Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Which of these methods does your company use to inform potential clients and customers about your products and services?

Newspaper ads

Trade publication ads

Brochures

Flyers

Newsletters

Direct mail

Internet

4. Who has been responsible for designing your company's publications (brochures, newsletters, print ads, flyers and menus)?

Owner/president

Publications or PR consultant

Employee

Graphic designer

Public relations firm

In-house PR department

Publishing company

5. If you answered owner/president or employee to the previous question, has this person had training in layout and design? (If you answered anything else to the previous question, skip to question 6.)

Yes  No

5a. If yes, what kind of training?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. If a professional (firm, publishing company, graphic designer or public relations consultant) produces and designs your publications, do you feel this person or company understands the needs of your customers and company?

Yes  No

7. What types of publications does your business send out?

Newsletters for clients/customers

Newsletters for employees

Direct mail such as solicitation letters or postcards

Flyers

Brochures

Catalogs

Print ads

8. Which things would you be interested in learning in a course on producing publications?

How to effectively use desktop publishing software

How to market the company's image as well as products

How to deal with outside printers. For example: how to tell them what you want and get the most for your money.

How to effectively use photographs and graphics or logos

How to write persuasive copy (i.e. brochure text)

How to direct your publication toward your audience

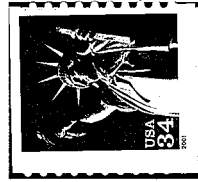
How to evaluate your own publications.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
continued on back.....  
.....

9. If your local community college offered a course on how to produce effective publications on your office computer, would you be interested in either taking the course yourself or sending a trusted employee?

- Yes             No



10. What kind of help would you be most interested in?

- Seminar course at Business and Industry Training Center
- Series of workshops
- Personalized one-on-one training
- Course as part of Small Business Training offered at Community College
- Course offered at management institute at Rowan University
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

11. How many people does your company employ?

- 1-7     8-15     16-25     26+

12. How many years has your company been in business?

- 1-5     6-10     11-20     21+

13. Which county is your company located in?

- Burlington
- Camden
- Gloucester
- Other

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Lori Wagoner  
773 Quail Place  
Deptford, NJ 08096

# Attention Small Business Owners



*This survey could improve your bottom line, as well as help the academic future of a poor graduate student.*

Dear small business owner:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University conducting research for my thesis. My thesis seeks to supply information to community colleges and business and industry training centers about whether small business owners would be interested in taking a proposed course. The course will teach how to effectively design publications that project the image the business owner hopes customers and clients see.

Please take a few minutes to fill out this survey and fax it back to me.

Feel free to include any further comments on the subject of this survey. If you would like to receive a copy of the survey results, please include your name and address or fax number. Your anonymity will be protected.

Thank you for your quick response and helpful input. Your responses are important to my research and chances for future employment.

Please Fax this survey by  
April 30, 2001

I have included a fax cover sheet for your convenience. Please answer the demographic questions on the cover sheet as well.

Thank You,

# Fax Cover Sheet



Attention *Lori Wagoner*

Subject: *Survey*

Fax to: *667-1464*

*Demographic Answers:*

1. How many people does your company employ?  
 1-7     8-15     16-25     26+

2. How many years has your company been in business?  
 1-5     6-10     11-20     21+

3. Which county is your company located in?

- Burlington
- Camden
- Gloucester
- Other

Further comments on the topic of this survey.

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---



---

1. Do you use a personal computer in your business?
- Yes       No
2. Do you use desktop publishing software?
- Yes       No
- 2a. If so, which one(s)?
- Quark
- Adobe PageMaker
- Microsoft Publisher
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which of these methods does your company use to inform potential clients and customers about your products/services?
- Newspaper ads
- Trade publication ads
- Brochures
- Flyers
- Newsletters
- Direct mail
- Internet
4. Who has been responsible for designing your company's publications (brochures, newsletters, print ads, flyers and menus)?
- Owner/president
- Publications or PR consultant
- Employee
- Graphic designer
- Public relations firm
- In-house PR department
- Publishing company
5. If you answered owner/president or employee to the previous question, has this person had training in layout and design? (If you answered anything else to the previous question, skip to question 6.)
- Yes       No
- 5a. If yes, what kind of training?
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
6. If a professional (firm, publishing company, graphic designer or public relations consultant) produces and designs your publications, do you feel this person or company understands the needs of your customers and company?
- Yes       No
7. What types of publications does your business send out?
- Newsletters for clients/customers
- Newsletters for employees
- Direct mail such as solicitation letters or postcards
- Flyers
- Brochures
- Catalogs
- Print ads
8. Which things would you be interested in learning in a course on producing publications?
- How to effectively use desktop publishing software
- How to market the company's image as well as products
- How to deal with outside printers. For example: how to tell them what you want and get the most for your money.
- How to effectively use photographs and graphics or logos
- How to write persuasive copy (i.e. brochure text)
- How to direct your publication toward your audience
- How to evaluate your own publications.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. If your local community college offered a course on how to produce effective publications on your office computer, would you be interested in either taking the course yourself or sending a trusted employee?
- Yes       No
10. What kind of help would you be most interested in?
- Seminar course at Business and Industry Training Center
- Series of workshops
- Personalized one-on-one training
- Course as part of Small Business Training offered at Community College
- Course offered at management institute at Rowan University
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



**Crosstabs**

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
use desktop publishing software * interested in taking course on producing effective pubs	91	100.0%	0	.0%	91	100.0%

**use desktop publishing software \* interested in taking course on producing effective pubs Crosstabulation**

			interested in taking course on producing effective pubs			Total
			yes	no	no answer	
use desktop publishing software	yes	Count	34	16	2	52
		% within use desktop publishing software	65.4%	30.8%	3.8%	100.0%
		% within interested in taking course on producing effective pubs	58.6%	55.2%	50.0%	57.1%
	no	Count	24	12	2	38
		% within use desktop publishing software	63.2%	31.6%	5.3%	100.0%
		% within interested in taking course on producing effective pubs	41.4%	41.4%	50.0%	41.8%
	no answer	Count		1		1
		% within use desktop publishing software		100.0%		100.0%
		% within interested in taking course on producing effective pubs		3.4%		1.1%
Total		Count	58	29	4	91
		% within use desktop publishing software	63.7%	31.9%	4.4%	100.0%
		% within interested in taking course on producing effective pubs	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

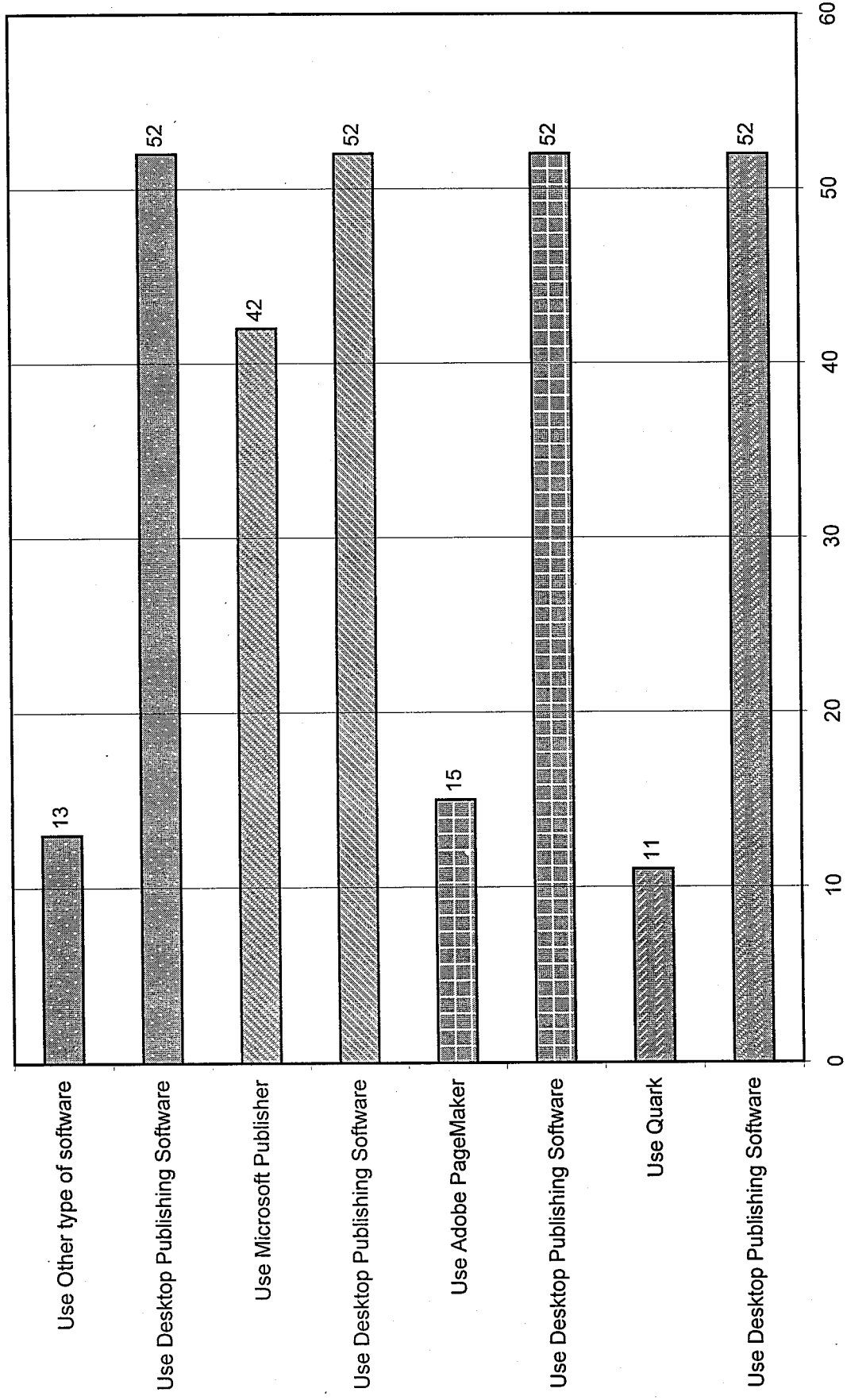
**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.064	.104	.607	.545 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.053	.106	.502	.617 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		91			

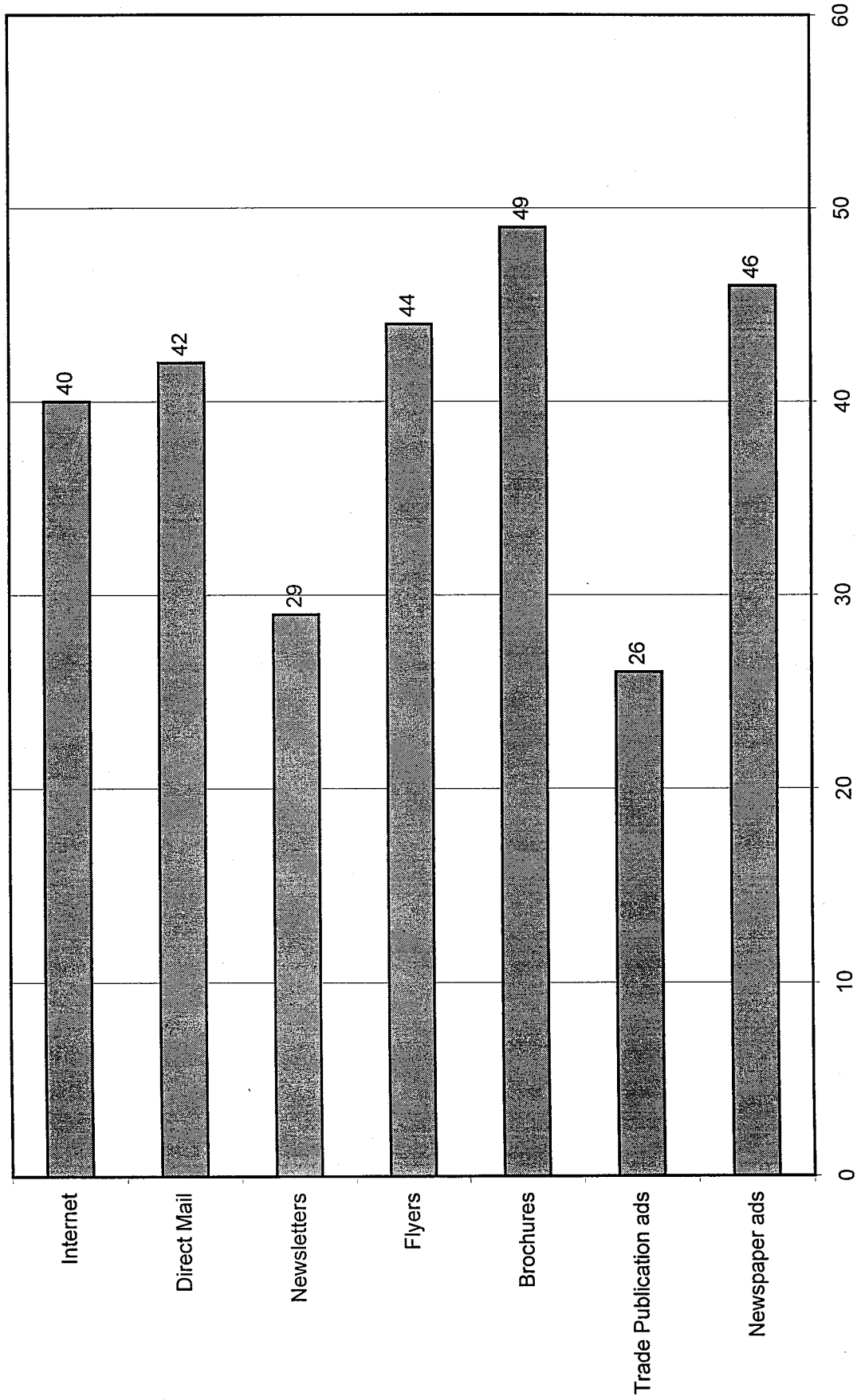
- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
- c. Based on normal approximation.

**Frequencies**

Types of software businesses who use desktop publishing software use

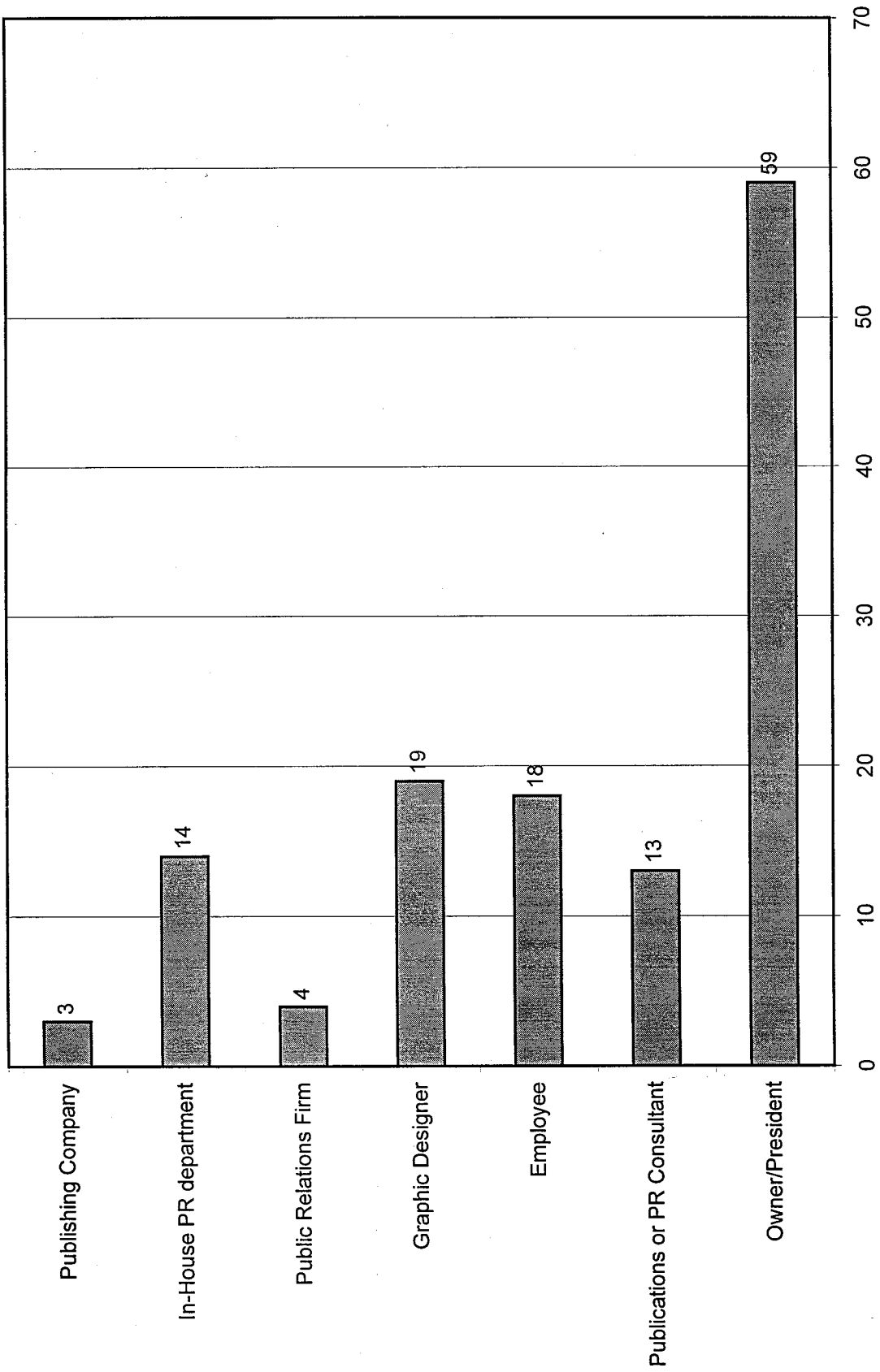


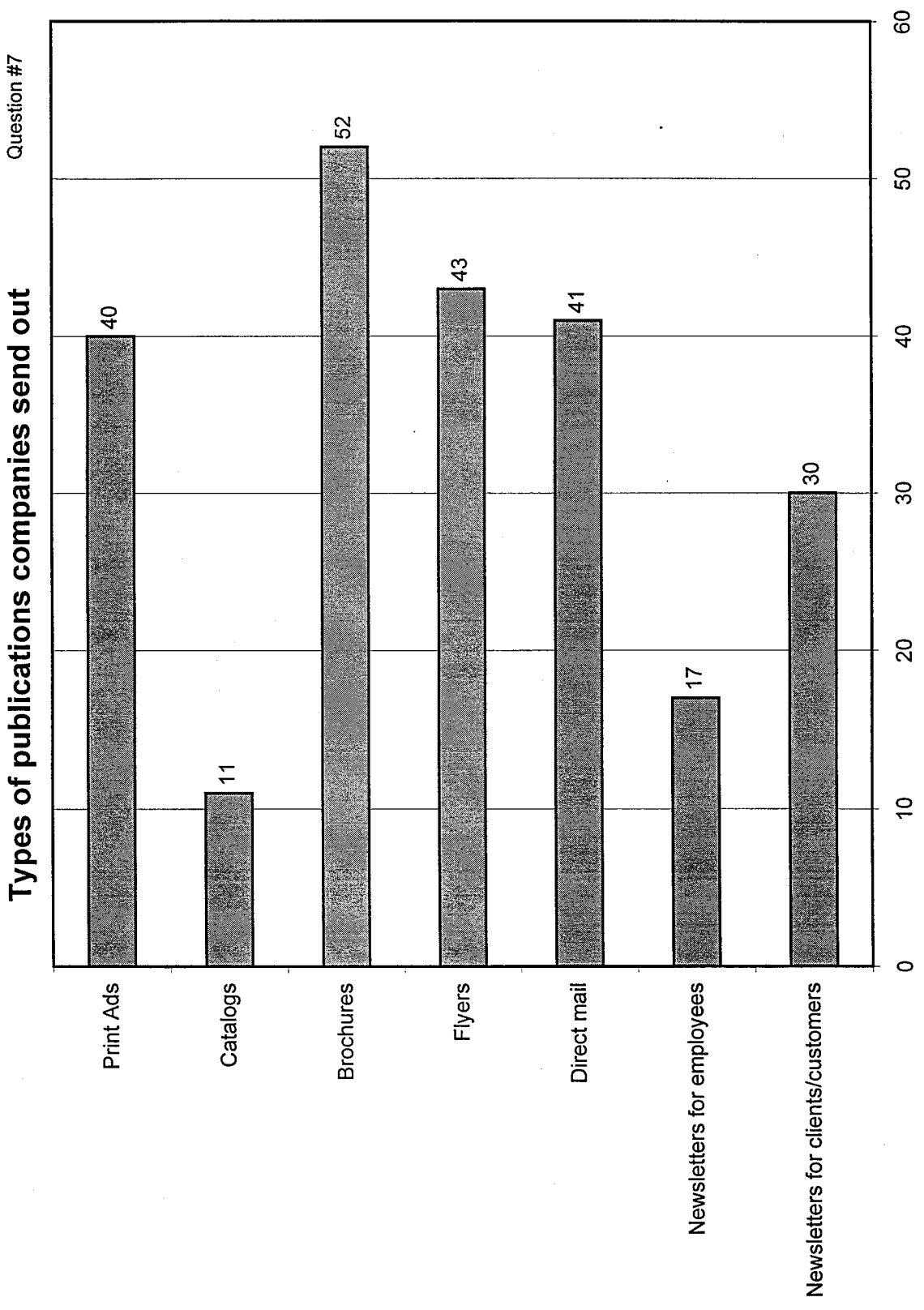
Methods companies use to inform potential clients about products and services



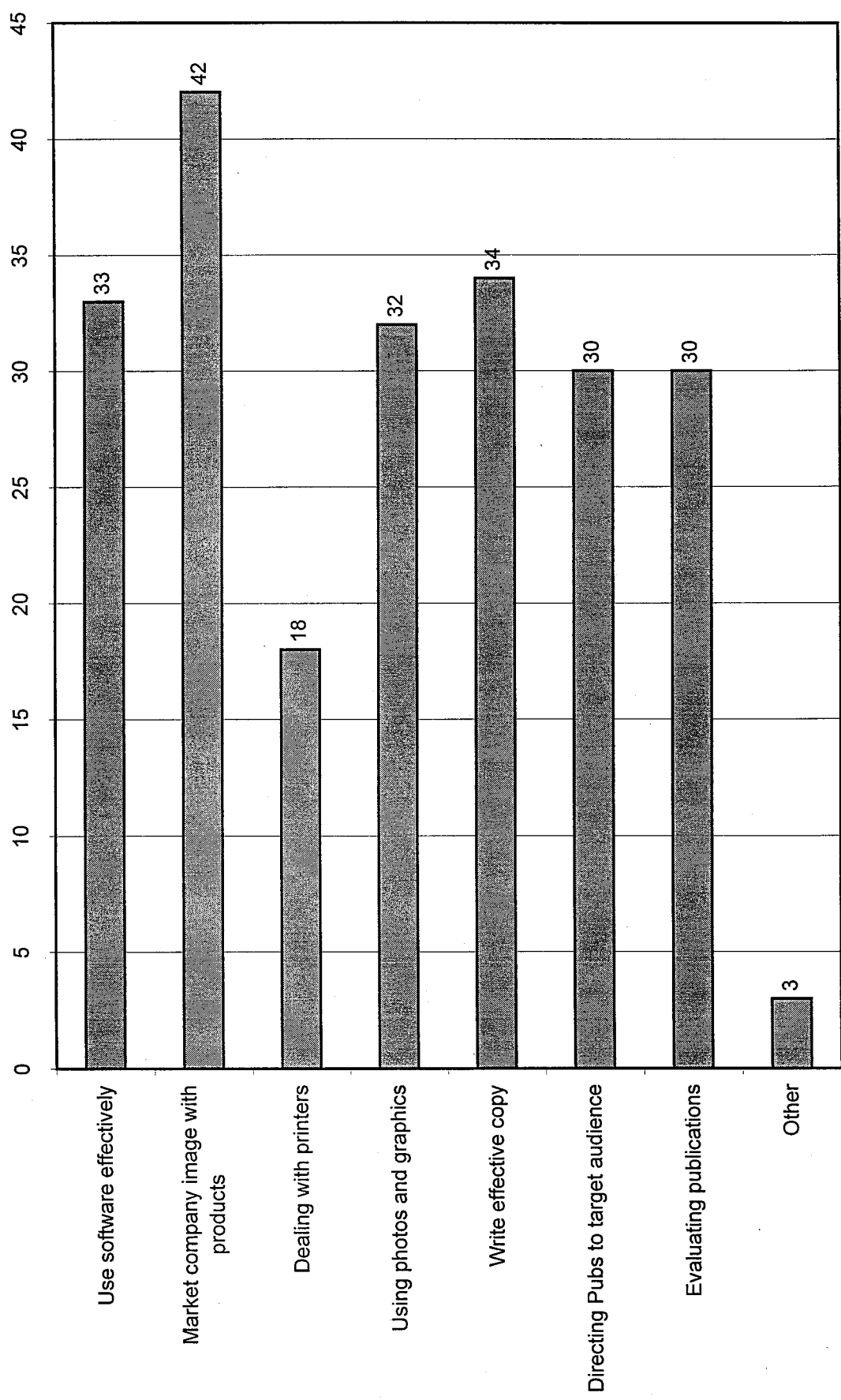
### Who is responsible for designing company publications

Chart number 4  
Question

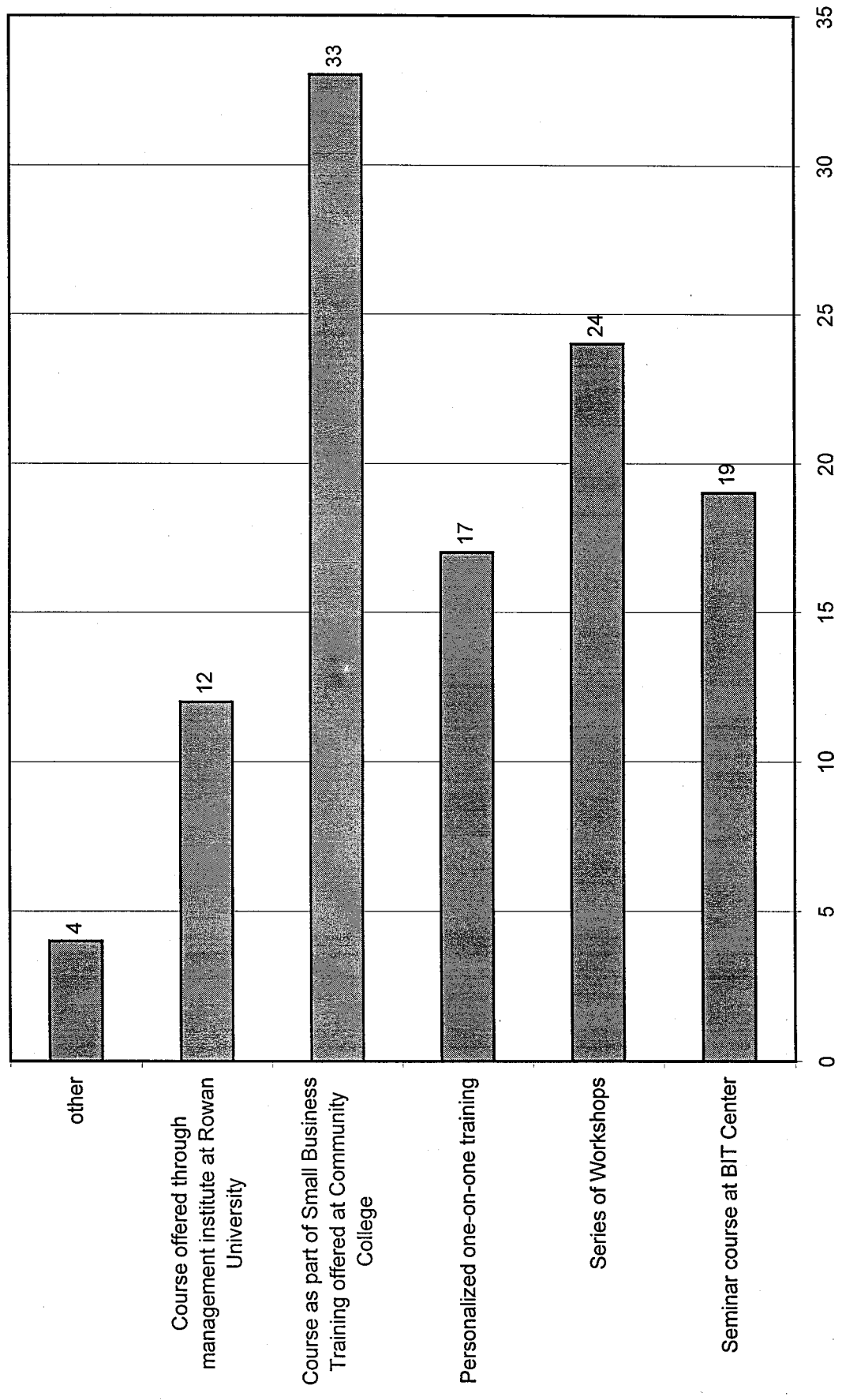




### Topics of Interest for Course on Producing Publications for Small Businesses



Types of courses small businesses are interested in taking



Appendix J

# PRINT IT!

## *A Beginner's Guide to Dealing with Printing Companies*

*by Heather Simmons*

Your prose simply dances with excitement. The photography and art just about sing. You've worked hard to design and layout this brochure, and to look at the proofs, it shows.

But this piece is not complete. You still need to get it printed.

For many graphic artists and desktop publishers, novices and seasoned pros alike, design is the easy part. Translating design into final product presents the true challenge.

Why? Developing a brochure, or any printed piece, is a communications process which begins with the client and ends with the audience who reads it. But also involved in the process is the printer.

Too many graphic designers underestimate the importance of this player in producing an effective brochure. They blame the printer for missed deadlines, underwhelming color and overblown costs. In truth, the blame does not always lie with the printer. A good printer is an artisan, like a designer. Graphic designers need to find artisans in the printing field, build relationships with them, make them part of the creation process, and eliminate the need for blame ... on any front.

How? Remember, development of print pieces is a communications process. The key to effective communication is preparation. Do your homework. Get your background facts straight before you begin the project, write up a job specification sheet, and determine the best kind of printer to do the job.

### **The Spec Sheet**

Being prepared to meet with a printer who can get your design from disk to completion involves writing a job specification sheet (see Appendix I). A spec sheet is a

sort of outline that describes your brochure in language the printer can understand. A well-written spec sheet will help the printer assign an accurate price and a timeline to the job. Your quantity, your time constraints, delivery sites, ink and paper are among the factors which dictate cost and time.

More than that, the spec sheet will help provide a visual image of the piece you are developing. Choices of paper and ink, sizes, folds, and bindery work together to give your printer an idea of the path you're taking.

A good printer will use the spec sheet as a point of departure from which to seek clarification, provide accurate answers, and suggest appropriate solutions to printing challenges you present.

But we've gotten a bit ahead of ourselves.

### **First Things First ...**

You should begin writing your spec sheet long before you lay out the brochure or meet with a printer.

From the first meeting with your client, establish a clear purpose for the brochure. Know the audience for the brochure, the budget you're working with, and means of distribution.

How does all this background impact on the spec sheet? Size of the audience dictates quantity. Things like age and experience of the audience speak to the look of the brochure. (Are you designing for the MTV crowd or Wall Street Journal readers?) Knowing your audience will also help your layout. What information do they need? Where will they look to find it? What colors or types of photographs do they respond to?

Your client's budget takes you a few steps further. A limited budget will restrict your choice of paper and number of ink colors. It could narrow your options of



brochure size and means of distribution. Budget constraints may even make you limit the audience size. In short, budgets force you to be realistic.

Your understanding of postal regulations, including layout size, color and weight restrictions, cost and time-limits for different kinds of mailings and sources of mailing lists will help define your distribution choices. It will also help you establish deadlines.

It's often helpful to consult with a postal representative when you're working on a brochure and spec sheet. Find out which options are the most cost-effective and timely for your piece. Get it in writing if possible, and try to meet with the same representative every time you go to the post office. Developing a relationship with someone you can trust at the USPS will benefit you, your clients, and your printer.

If you're still confused about mailing, talk to your printer. He or she will often have lots of experience with the post office, and won't want to waste time and money on a brochure that fails to meet postal regulations.

All this preparation is moot, however, if your brochure lacks purpose.

If you cannot spell out specific objectives to be achieved by this brochure, don't waste time or money creating it. The brochure should inform, persuade, affect behavior or call readers to action.

## Writing Job Specs

Your background research complete, you can begin writing your job spec sheet (see Appendix I). Below are some guidelines for describing paper stock, ink, folds, bindery, composition, proofs, delivery and overruns on specs.

**STOCK:** The paper you choose may account for as much as 50% of the cost of the job, and significantly influences a piece's look. How can you choose a stock that's best for your brochure? Begin by collecting samples of brochures you think are effective. Look for paper in smashing colors. Gather samples of different weight paper. Take note of how ink colors and photos look on various finishes. Keep in mind the effect different colors of stock have on ink colors when choosing paper, ink and graphics.

Finishes lend distinct personalities to stock. You'll see wedding invitations printed on paper with a linen finish, for example, which is very classy and elegant. An environmental group might choose to print its brochure on paper in natural tones with a felt - or rough - finish, which results in an earthy feel.

Paper comes in multiple grades. Each classification is appropriate for particular types of jobs due to their weights and finishes (see Appendix II). Within each grade, paper is further broken down by weight (measured in pounds) and opacity. Opacity is a measure of paper transparency. As a rule, the heavier the paper, the more opaque ... and the more expensive.

Be aware of availability of paper. Take a look at the

paper catalogs your printer has on-hand. Try to find what you're looking for in those pages if you're on a budget and a deadline. If a printer has to specially order an obscure stock, you'll end up adding lots of time, and even more money, to your job.

**INK COLORS:** There are two basic ways to talk about color in printing, spot color and four-color process.

A splash of color adds depth and interest to your design. To printers, this process is usually referred to as spot color or flat color. A printer can mix just about any color you're looking for using the Pantone Matching System (PMS), which catalogs hundreds of colors and formulas to mix them. PMS is an industry standard, and most printers are familiar with it. It's worth the investment to buy a PMS matching chart or swatch book, so that you can specify your spot color by Pantone number or name on your spec sheet.

Full-color graphics and photographs are produced in printed pieces using four-color process, known as CMYK. All the colors found in full-color work are created using combinations of cyan, magenta and yellow ink, the secondary colors of transmitted light. The printer uses filters of the primary colors (red, green and blue-violet) to produce color separation negatives. Negatives are screened and the positives are made into plates which are used for printing.

While it may seem logical that you would get black by simply mixing cyan, magenta and yellow, you actually get a muddy brown color. So the fourth color in the process is black, referred to as key by printers. Thus the name CMYK emerges.

On your spec sheet, specify the use of full-color photographs or graphics. Your printer will need to know how many full-color pieces of artwork you'll be using, their sizes and page placement in order to accurately price out the job.

Presses usually apply two, four or six colors in one printing. Six colors? PMS colors may be your fifth or sixth colors, applied after the four-color process. This could be done to match a specific color, such as orange, which does not often develop well out of four-color process. Pantone also offers a wide range of specialty colors, including pastels and metallics, which may account for your additional colors. A clear or opaque varnish can also be added to coat your entire brochure, or to accent a particular part of the piece, such as a photograph or logo.

The cost of the brochure and the time required to produce it depend in large part on the number of press passes your job requires and the quantity of printed pieces you need. Ask your printer about drying time as well. Some PMS colors, such as reflex blue (one of the few PMS colors assigned a name rather than a number), require additional drying time which may impact your production schedule. The paper you choose may also affect drying time. High-gloss stock, for example, can absorb ink more slowly and require longer to dry.

**FOLDING AND BINDING:** Once your job is printed, it will usually need to be folded and bound. Most printers have equipment which will gather, score, trim, fold and bind paper efficiently. But you need to be aware of your options. The illustrations at right show a few common folds for brochures. Talk to your printer about which options will work best for your job.

Some popular binding options include saddlestitching, side stitching, perfect binding and spiral binding, all shown below. Stitching a job is to staple it. The name saddlestitch is derived from the v-shaped saddle that holds paper. Saddlestitched books lie flat open and are easy to read, but the process cannot handle great amounts of paper. Consult your printer about limits based on your stock's weight and number of pages in your book.

Side stitching is used for books with greater bulk. Staples are set along the back edge of the paper, requiring a larger margin on inside pages.

You'll see perfect binding on publications like the phone book or standard paperbacks. Signatures, or groups of pages, are gathered and glued along the edge. This is more cost-effective than sewing, a heavy duty, older version of the same process.

Spiral binding is also a popular choice for ease of reading and a modern look. While some kinds of spiral binding are automated and cost-effective, others are labor intensive. Also, many printers will need to subcontract it. In general, expect higher costs and more time for this binding option.

**COMPOSITION:** The proliferation of desktop publishing gives graphic designers lots of choices when it comes to composition, or the form in which you provide your layout to the printer. Specify on your spec sheet whether you intend to provide mechanicals, disk or negatives for composition.

Mechanicals are a hard copy of your brochure including color separations (individual printouts for each color used in the brochure), registration marks (used for positioning separations) and crop marks (indicating page size). See page 4 for an example of registration and crop marks.

In many cases, you can simply print your layout on high quality paper using your laser printer. Most desktop publishing and graphic design software programs will allow you to print color separations and registration marks to make creating mechanicals very easy. And a

large percentage of the laser printers on the market offer a resolution of 800 or 1200 dpi (dots of toner per inch). This method will suffice if your brochure is text-heavy and uses very few screens, or tints.

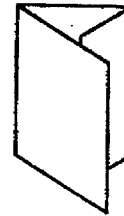
If your brochure contains multiple colors, tints, graphics or photographs, you may want to provide the printer with the document on disk. Depending on the equipment available to the printer, he or she can output - or take off the disk - the brochure using a resolution three to four times higher than your laser printer can provide.

If your printing company cannot output your brochure in-house, it may pay for you to take it to a service bureau. This type of company will take your brochure off disk and will usually prepare negatives for your printing company.

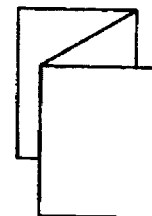
When supplying disks or negatives, always give



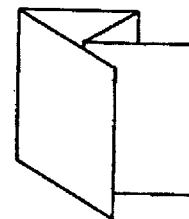
Four-page folder



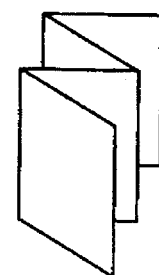
Regular six-page folder



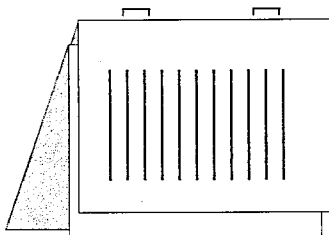
Accodrian six-page folder



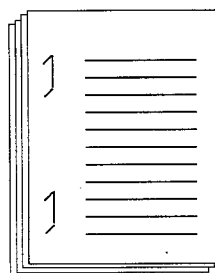
Parallel eight-page folder



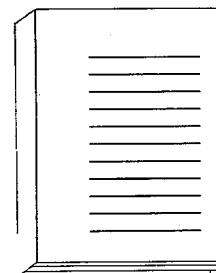
Accodrian eight-page folder



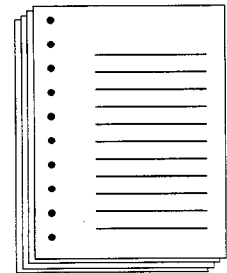
saddlestitching



side stitching



Perfect binding



Spiral binding holes

the printer a rough printout or mechanical. It's always helpful to have a sample on-hand to make sure the brochure will look the way you designed it.

Discuss these composition options with your printer. Your design and the equipment available to you and the printer will determine the best course to take.

**PRINTERS' PROOFS:** On your job spec sheet, indicate that you want to see a printer's proof. The most common proof is a blue line, or velox, which is a print of the job made using a photographic emulsion. All of the text and graphics appear in shades of light blue on this type of proof, thus the name blue line.

Prior to receiving the blue line, arrange for your client read it. Someone should be the designated sign-off at this juncture, since this will be your last chance to make corrections before the final piece is printed. Build the time proofing will take into the publication schedule.

Changes at the blue line stage cost money, from \$10.00 on up per page, depending on the number of colors and complexity of the job. If the changes are your mistakes, you incur the cost. These types of corrections are referred to as author's alterations, or AAs. If the printer has made the mistake, it is called a printer's error, and the company absorbs the cost.

**DELIVERY:** Your spec sheet should include a delivery date and location. Be sure to account for the cost and time involved in delivery.

**OVERRUNS:** As a matter of standard practice, printers will produce as many as 20% more copies of your piece than you ordered. If some brochures are damaged during the printing process, overruns ensure you'll still receive the quantity you need. It is also nearly impossible to load on press the exact amount of paper needed to print a job, especially on large runs. Better to end up with more than you need than not enough.

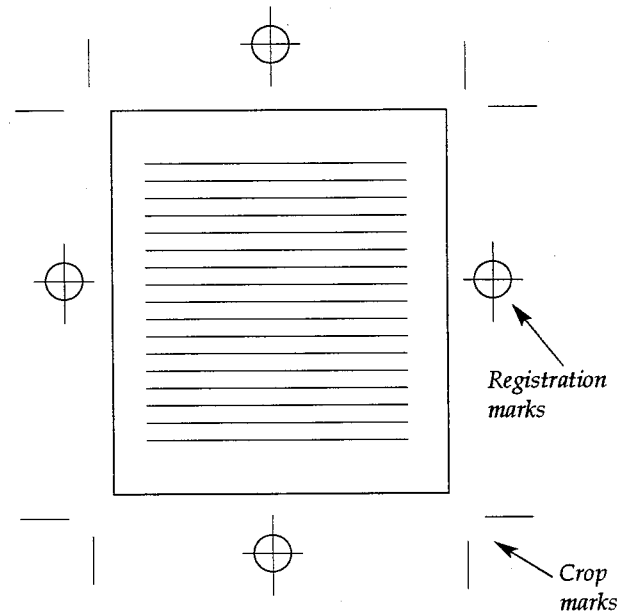
While you should expect overruns, you shouldn't have to pay for them. On your spec sheet, state simply that your organization will not pay for overruns. Getting that in writing will prevent an unexpected charge from appearing on your bill.

## What's Next?

Spec sheet in hand, you're ready get this brochure produced. Which printing company should print it? How can you narrow down your choices? You guessed it. Do some homework.

There are three general categories of printing companies to choose from, including quick-print shops, sheet-fed printers, and web presses. The latter two are both commercial printers.

Quick Printers, including Sir Speedy and PIP printing, excel at small runs (generally fewer than 1,000 copies, but up to 5,000) with one or two colors of ink. They are best at text-heavy designs and simplistic binding and folding. If, for example, you need 500 copies of a six-page fold brochure with one ink color on a standard text



stock, you'd probably find your best price and turn-around time from a quick printer.

Quick printers become less of a bargain if you're looking for more paper and ink choices. Many quick printers keep supplies of standard paper and ink colors on-hand, and will charge you extra to deviate from their stock. They are also inappropriate venues to handle complicated designs, out-of-the-ordinary binding and large runs.

Faced with these demands, you may want to check out a commercial sheet-fed printer. Sheet-fed printers are so-called because the stock they use for their presses comes in various sized sheets. Good sheet-fed printers are the best choice for medium- to large-sized runs (usually more than 5,000 pieces). Depending on the size of the operation, sheet-fed printers can provide competitive pricing for jobs ranging from one to six colors. This type of printing company usually has access to a wide range of stock and ink, and can handle multiple binding, folding and printing methods in-house. Look for them to be exacting and versatile, as well as trustworthy sources of advice and information on printing.

Like many sheet-fed printers, web presses can provide competitive pricing and professional production. Web presses use paper that comes in huge rolls, such as newsprint. Web printing is extremely fast, thanks to the rolls of paper, and is most cost-effective on large runs, like newspapers and catalogs. While speed is beneficial to your deadline, the downside is quality control. For best results, look for a web printer who fastidiously monitors print runs and who comes highly recommended.

Once you've decided which type of printer will best suite your needs, you need to narrow your search. Personal recommendations are the best place to start. If that's not available, try the phone book.

Before you hand over your spec sheet, make a visit to the print shop. First impressions should be lasting ones. You want to see a shop that's neat and clean. A company that takes pride in its shop will take pride in its work, and yours.

Ask to see samples of prior jobs, preferable ones that are similar to your project. If no samples are available, leave ... immediately!

When you examine the samples, don't critique the design. Rather, examine the printing quality. Are the colors sharp? Are there any stray marks or smudges? Have the photos reproduced with clarity? Are the folds exact?

Also look for tight registration (proper alignment of successive colors). If a job has been properly printed, the break between colors will be seamless. If registration is poor, you'll see white space between colors, and full-color photographs may look more like watercolor paintings.

Satisfied with samples, pull out your spec sheet and ask for an estimate on your job. An estimate is non-binding, and you should make it clear that you will be visiting more than one printer.

Along with your spec sheet, try to bring a sample of a brochure that's similar to yours in color, size fold, or the like. Also try to bring along a laser printout of your brochure, complete with paper and ink swatches.

Once you've obtained three estimates, choose your printer based on quality, cost, and ability to meet your deadline. At this point, contact your chosen printer and obtain a quote for the job, or a binding version of the estimate.

Next discuss your printing and delivery schedule. When do you want to drop the design to the printer for production? Where and when will you see the blue lines? When do you need the final product delivered?

Now you're all set. You've done your homework and presented yourself as a well-prepared professional. You know your audience, your budget and time constraints, and your design. And you have properly communicated with your printer, another professional who can help you turn all that information into an attractive, cost-conscious and effective brochure.

## APPENDIX I: The Job Specification Sheet

The spec sheet you prepare for your printer may include some or all of the information below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Your company name)

**JOB SPECIFICATIONS**

This company maintains high standards which require a good, clean, professional publication.

JOB NAME:

QUANTITY:

SIZE:

# OF PAGES:

PAPER STOCK:

INK:

COMPOSITION:

BINDERY:

COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS/  
ARTWORK (sizes, placement):

FOLD(s):

DELIVERY  
DATE:

COPY TO  
PRINTER DATE:

PROOFS:

OVERRUNS:

This company maintains that unless otherwise authorized, job specs  
will be followed and delivery dates met.  
No substitutions are permitted without written consent.  
For questions about specifications, contact \_\_\_\_\_  
at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone number)

## APPENDIX II: Grades of Paper

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Finishes</i>	<i>Best Uses</i>
BOND	bond, laser, writing	linen, parchment, wove	resumes, letterhead, fliers, newsletters, forms
BOOK	book, offset, opaque, coated offset, gloss, matte	antique, vellum, wove coated: gloss, dull-gloss	books, brochures catalogs, programs, booklets, newsletters
TEXT	text	linen, felt, laid, smooth antique, flannel	invitations, brochures, books, posters
COVER	cover, bristol, text cover C1S (coated one side) C12 (coated two sides)	linen, felt, laid, smooth, antique coated: gloss, dull-gloss	business cards, book covers, invitations, menus

sources: "Specifying Paper." *Dynamic Graphics* vol. 1 number 3, Sept./Oct. 1996: 74; and Brian Francis, Vice President, Fort Nassau Graphics. Personal interview. 30 October, 1996.

## Identify Your Target Market Overview

Imagine practicing archery with your eyes closed or throwing a football wearing a blindfold. In both cases, your inability to see your target would make it nearly impossible to hit it. This concept can easily be applied to business, as well. Doing business without knowing who your target market is will prevent you from reaching your objectives whether they are increased sales, market share or brand awareness.

In years past, mass marketing was the method of choice, but today's experts are singing the praises of 1-to-1, or relationship marketing. And rightfully so. Today's consumers, as you've heard many times, are savvier than ever. With access via the Internet to nearly any piece of information they want, consumers don't want salespeople spouting off scripted presentations. Rather, they need advocates who are willing to help them find real solutions. How can you do that? By learning who your customers are, by finding out their real needs and by offering them tailored products and services that work for them. This Office.com Business Tool (OBT) will assist you in choosing a customer base that is appropriate for your business.

### Outline:

1. Identify Potential Customers
2. Conduct Market Research
3. Compile a Customer Profile
4. Resources

### 1. Identify Potential Customers

There are two types of customer groups you can target: individual consumers or other businesses. Individual consumers are somewhat more difficult to target because they are diverse and unpredictable. They typically have small individual budgets, and their buying preferences may change as they age. Businesses as a target market tend to be fairly stable over time and have large budgets to spend on various products and services.

It is not necessary to choose just one customer group. You may choose to target both businesses and individual consumers if it makes sense for your company. If you choose to go this route, however, modifications may need to be made for your product or service. For example, the owner of a gift-basket business may target mostly individual consumers as her main source of revenue, but have a secondary revenue stream from corporate customers. For the individual consumers, she may offer many customized options to satisfy their diverse tastes, and she would probably charge a higher price to ensure a good profit margin. For her corporate customers, she would likely offer a more limited product line – at quantity discounts – to allow her to mass-produce the baskets for large orders.

### 2. Conduct Market Research

There are many sources of market research – much of which is free – that you can use for basic information about your prospective customer group. Search the Internet and your local library for studies and data about your particular industry.

L-2

For more specific information on your prospective customer group, you will need to either hire a marketing research firm to conduct formal surveys for you, or you'll need to learn how to do it yourself. Since marketing-research firms are rather expensive, most small-business owners will opt to conduct the research themselves. While the research you gather may not be as structured or as in-depth as that of a research firm, you can get sufficient information to identify your customer base at a fraction of the cost of hiring a market-research firm.

The most important objective of conducting market research is to find out what markets your competitors are currently serving, where market opportunities exist, and which markets will be most profitable for your business.

To start, make a list of all of your competitors, including everything from large corporations to small mom-and-pop shops. If they have Web sites, visit each one and gather as much information about their products and services as you can, including prices, customer-service policies, delivery methods, warranties and return policies. If some of your competitors do not have Web sites, call the company and ask for the information from one of the customer-service representatives.

After gathering the information, compile it into a table or spreadsheet. Detail your competitor's strengths. Identify areas that are weak or absent to identify possible market opportunities. For example, if you find that none or only a few of your competitors currently offer same-day delivery of products, this may mean that there is a market opportunity to serve a group of customers who must have your products the same day they order them. Don't forget: You can charge substantially higher prices for convenience of same-day delivery of your products.

Ask yourself:

What products or services are my competitors not offering that I could offer profitably?

What competitive advantages do I possess that my competitors can't offer customers even if they wanted to?

What do my competitors offer that I could improve on?

Once you have a handle on your competitors, focus on your prospective customers. Surveys are an easy way to find out your prospective customers' needs, buying preferences and spending habits, which in turn will help you identify if they will make a good customer base for your company. Keep in mind that you should offer some sort of benefit or inexpensive giveaway to motivate customers and prospects to fill out your questionnaire. Consider offering coupons or discounts on the next purchase they make from your company.

Your survey must include questions that obtain information on the following aspects of your potential customers:

- Demographic information – Includes age, sex, marital status, household income, nationality (if necessary), etc.
- Psychographic information – Includes lifestyle data such as hobbies, interests, opinions, etc.
- Geographic information – Includes information about where the subject lives and purchases products and services. This can be as broad as the country or state in which they live, or as narrow as the county, city and neighborhood.
- Behavioral information – Includes information about how the subject uses products or services.
- Benefit information – Includes information about the perceived benefits the

L-3

subject receives from products and services.

Finding groups of customers to take your survey can sometimes present a challenge. To find prospects, visit Web sites, newsgroups, forums and lists or contact noncompeting companies that share your prospective target market. For example, if you own a health-food store, you may contact a local health club to ask them if you could conduct surveys of their clients on their premises. In exchange for their permission, you could offer their clients a cross-promotional item. For example, give them a generous coupon for your products that is exclusive to members of that health club.

### Here are some sample questions to include in your survey:

What is your age range?

- Under 25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- Over 55

Sex M/F

Occupation:

---

---

Household income range:

- Less than \$50,000
- \$50,000-70,000
- \$70,000-100,000
- More than \$100,000

What is the highest level of education you have completed:

- High school
- Trade school
- Some college
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

What are your favorite hobbies?

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L-4

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Which of the following products do you buy regularly?

Include a listing of your products, as well as products that you are able to add if you uncover a need for them.)

What benefits do those products provide for you?

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How often do you purchase those products?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Biannually
- Annually

How loyal are you to the particular brand that you purchase?

- Not loyal (I'll purchase whatever brand is on sale)
- Somewhat loyal (I'll usually purchase one brand unless another one offers a good deal.)
- Pretty loyal (I'll always buy one brand unless it is out of stock or otherwise unavailable.)
- Extremely loyal (I would never purchase any other brand.)

Where do you normally purchase these items?

(Include a list of distributors in your area)

Also include questions that are specific to your company regarding your products, pricing and service to determine if the survey respondent is a potential customer for you.

After you have conducted a sufficient number of surveys, compile the results to determine which markets make the most sense for your business to target. Ensure that the market you choose:

- has easy access to your products and services, whether it is by visiting your store or ordering by phone, fax, e-mail or your Web site.
- is not inundated with other products and services that are indistinguishable from yours.
- is willing to pay a price for your products and services that allows you a reasonable profit margin.

L-5

### 3. Compile a Customer Profile

Just as a mission statement guides the operation of your company, a customer profile will guide your sales effort. Develop an overview of your target customers so that you and all of your employees are clear about whom you are selling to.

#### Demographic Checklist

Ensure that you include the following characteristics in the demographic profile of your target market:

- Age
- Gender
- Profession
- Education level
- Number of members in household
- Household income level
- Marital status
- Geographic location

If your target market is made up of corporate customers, include the following elements:

- Company size
- Location of headquarters
- Types of products and services they provide
- Annual revenue
- Number, size and location of branches
- Year founded

#### Psychographic Checklist

Which of the following categories fit the psychographic profile of your customers?

- Conservative
- Liberal
- Conformist
- Environment-friendly
- Socially conscious
- Power-wielding
- Fun-loving
- Cutting-edge
- Trend follower
- Fashion-forward
- Family-oriented

What hobbies and/or sports do your customers get involved in?

L-6

---

What types of entertainment do they enjoy? (movies, theater, opera, etc.)

---

What publications do they subscribe to?

---

How do they enjoy spending their free time?

---

If your target market is made up of corporate customers, which of the following psychographic categories fit them?

- Market leader
- Innovative or cutting-edge
- Liberal
- Conservative
- Environment-friendly
- Employee/family-friendly
- Fast growing/adopting new ideas
- Stable/set in their ways

What growth stage is the company in? (start-up, growth, stable or decline)

---

What is the type of work force they employ?

---

What is the company's culture?

---

What is the management style?

---

What trade associations do they belong to?

---

What publications do they subscribe to?

---

Rank the order of importance of the following criteria to your target market:

L-7

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Price	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of products or services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Brand-name recognition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Broad array of services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendly staff attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discounts and sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attractiveness of packaging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience of store location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Store appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convenience of product/service use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guarantees/Warranties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexible payment terms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Here is an example of a typical customer profile:**

Company X, an upscale sporting- goods company, targets American male executives between the ages of 25 and 35, with an average household income of more than \$100,000, who enjoy outdoor sports and purchase sporting goods at least twice per year for recreation and travel.

After you have a clear customer profile, you must learn to think like your target customers to anticipate their needs. You must track the trends and preferences of this group regularly by staying in constant contact with them and altering your products and services accordingly. Good methods for staying on top of your customer base's changing preferences include: informal face-to-face discussions, in-store surveys, direct-mailings and feedback requests on your Web site, in your store and included with all products shipped.

**4. Resources:**

[The American Marketing Association](#)

[American Demographics](#)

[U.S. Census Bureau](#)

[The Social Statistics Briefing Room](#)

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Appendix M

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COMMUNICATIONS - Written

## 18 Sure-Fire Steps to Writing a Powerful Sales Letter

by Russ Von Hoelscher

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Robotic laser tag is like bringing your favorite video game to life

The perfect marriage of magnification and miniaturization

Digital Camera & Printer team up to make the perfect memory package

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**Before you begin writing your direct mail letter, you must know the answers to these seven questions . . .**

- 1.) Your target market-who you want to reach.
- 2.) What appeal is likely to motivate these people.
- 3.) The most important benefits of your product or service.
- 4.) Exactly what action you want your reader to take (write for more information, call, send in the order, come to you, etc.)
- 5.) Your budget.
- 6.) Your competition and what they are promoting.
- 7.) What mailing list to use. The list you use is of the greatest importance. Your good sales letter must go to a responsive audience.

### 18 Sure-Fire Steps to Writing a Powerful Sales Letter

- 1.) **Use a strong lead statement.** This is extremely important. We want to quickly capture our reader's attention. If we don't succeed in doing this, they may toss our letter aside after a brief glance. The best leads are (not necessarily in this order):
  - A. **News.** If your product or service is really news, this is a great lead.
  - B. **How/What/Why** the classic newspaper approach.
  - C. **The numbered ways**, such as ten ways this service will improve your life.
  - D. **Narrative.** This approach is difficult for many to write, but a good story can capture the reader's attention.
  - E. **A provocative question** will also usually arouse curiosity and interest.
  - F. **A bold statement.** A bold, unusual, or even shocking statement (make certain it's true!) will almost always get the reader involved.
- 2.) **Stress Benefits.** Don't waste time or words on telling your reader how great you are (although a few favorable lines about yourself /your company may be

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M-2

in order); instead promise many, many benefits the more benefits the better. List the major benefits first, but follow up with the minor benefits. A minor benefit to you may be a major one to your reader.

**3.) Keep the copy tight.** If you wish to present only a one-page letter, write at least two pages and then delete needless words. There is strong evidence that a two, three, or four page sales letter will out-perform a one-pager. However, the copy must be tight. Nobody wants a full history on your company or product/service. Good advice is to write twice as many copy as you will ultimately use and then edit it down to a flowing, strong presentation.

**4.) Humor doesn't usually work.** There rarely is anything funny or beneficial about injecting humor into a sales letter. If you are called on to deliver a speech or oral sales presentation, a little humor can often work well. Not so, in most cases, with a sales letter.

**5.) Reinforce your letter with a flyer or brochure.** An effective and attractive flyer or brochure allows you to present the benefits of your offer in another way.

**6.) Make your letter "Personalized."** Direct mail is the personal medium and your letter should make this true. A typed "personal style" letter is almost always more effective than a slick, professional-looking, typeset letter. Your brochure or sales flyer probably should be typeset with the use of any appealing graphics. Just keep the letter itself personal.

**7.) Don't split your message.** While some tell half the story in the letter and the other half in the brochure, you'll do much better by telling the whole story, with all the benefits, in both elements. Keep in mind, some readers will choose to read only one.

**8.) Keep sentences and paragraphs short.** For maximum readability, keep most sentences to 12 words or less and paragraphs to no more than five or six lines. Whether it will actually take just a couple of minutes or over ten minutes to read your message, many will not get involved unless you copy looks like "a fast, easy read."

**9.) Offer a freebie.** People love to get a little extra for free. If at all possible offer a free bonus. This almost always increases results. Your freebie need not be an expensive item, but it should be something likely to appeal to the tastes or lifestyles of your readers.

**10.) Ask for action from the start.** Don't be coy about it, let your reader know what you want them to do right from the beginning. Rephrase it from time to time. Point the reader in the direction of when you will ask them to order.

**11.) Use testimonials.** Whenever possible, include a few favorable testimonials. Be certain to use the other persons full name and affiliation. Using only initials will water down this powerful sales tool.

**12.) Summarize your offer.** The last paragraph of your letter should briefly and concisely summarize your offer and its strongest points.

**13.) A 'P.S.' is a Must!** With the possible exception of your salutation and opening paragraph, a P.S. will attract the strongest attention. Make it a solid and intriguing sales pitch.

**14.) Ask for the order.** Don't beat around the bush. In both your closing paragraph and in your P.S., attract the strongest attention. Make it solid and intriguing.

M-3

**15.) Eliminate the risk.** Whenever possible, offer a strong guarantee, a free trial period, etc. A good place to inject a strong guarantee is early in your letter, and then reinforce it near the end of your letter.

**16.) Consider using a sealed inner envelope.** The pulling power of this marketing tool is remarkable. On the outside of the sealed envelope, write or type: "Please Open After You Have Read My Letter." Inside is a special bonus offer and/or a price reduction for a fast reply. A sealed inner envelope can, and often does, produce an amazing increase in response.

**17.) Include the price.** If you fear including the price it can only be because either your benefit package or guarantee may not be up to par. If your price is low, tell the reader so. If your price is high, make sure you have beefed up your benefit package.

**18.) Ask for immediate action.** When possible give a reason for a quick response. Order within the next 15 days and receive a free gift, order before this date and receive this nice discount, etc.

**19.) Make sure everything flows and reads easily.** Before you give your letter the final O.K., read it over several times, ask others to read it, and make certain it flows well and is both interesting and innovative to read. Above all else, it must motivate positive action.

**20.) Now review everything again.** Never drop your direct mail without a very careful review of all factors, including everything mentioned in my "FIRST THINGS FIRST" section above. Do all of this, and your direct mail efforts can be very, very profitable.

*Russ von Hoelscher is a Direct Marketing Master. He specializes in helping his clients make maximum profits from their advertising and/or direct mail promotions. Russ can be reached at P.O. Box 1296, El Cajon, CA 92022 or (619)588-2155.*

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Appendix-N

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COMMUNICATIONS - Written

## Seven Most Common Business Writing Mistakes and How To Avoid Them

by Christine DuBois

*Do your business letters go straight to your customers' waste baskets? Are you tearing your hair out composing your latest brochure?*

**Good writing doesn't have to be hard. With a little practice, you can learn to write easily and effectively. Start by avoiding these common mistakes:**

**1. Writing to impress.** There was a time when complex words, formal phrases, and vague, convoluted sentences were considered professional. Not any more. Nowadays, people want writing that's clear, informal and personal. Your customers won't take the time to wade through businesses, bureaucrats or any other writing disease. If you really want to sound professional, try this: Use plain English. You've been speaking it successfully for years. Write like you talk. Simply, directly, conversationally. Use familiar words and short sentences. It's easier for your readers—and easier for you.

**2. Believing everything your 7th grade English teacher taught you.** Many people are still carrying in their heads the dire predictions of long-dead English teachers. But contrary to what Mrs. Johnson may have told you, the world will not end if you split an infinitive. Lots of things you learned never to do are OK now. Like using sentence fragments. And starting sentences with "and" or "but." You can even use personal pronouns. Just let your ear be your guide.

**3. Forgetting your audience.** We all know people who get so wrapped up in telling their story they ignore the people they're talking to; we call them bores. It can happen on paper, too. Picture your audience when you write—what are their interests, skills and passions? What is their socio-economic or educational level? What do they need to know? Keeping your audience in mind will help make your writing more personal and to the point.

**4. Fuzzy thinking.** Can you summarize your message in one sentence? No? Then stop writing and start thinking. Clear writing begins with clear thinking. If you don't know what you're trying to say, your readers won't either. Before you write, state your main point in one sentence. Hang it where you can see it. It will help keep your writing on track.

**5. Saving your main point until the end.** A popular method of organization is to introduce the topic, present facts and arguments and end with your recommendation. There's one problem: Most readers don't ever get to your recommendation. Instead, begin with your main point, conclusion or recommendation. "Because orders have increased by 50 percent in the past six months, I recommend we hire two additional staff people." Then give the supporting data. Remember the summary sentence in #4? It's a great way to begin your business letter or report.

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N-2

**6. Too much passive voice.** In passive voice, things happen without any direct human involvement. "It has been determined that..." "There has been an overpayment in your account." If the person doing the action isn't in the sentence (or is hiding behind the preposition "by"), you're writing in passive voice.

No one wants to do business with a company run by phantoms. Get real people back in your writing by using active voice. "My partner and I have determined..." "You paid more than you owed us."

**7. Using abstract language.** "Hunger is a major problem in our city." "The quality of education is declining." "Good writing is important to your business." "Good writing is important to your business." What's wrong with these sentences? They're too general. They won't stick in anyone's memory. To stay with your reader, your writing must present a concrete image. "Five-year-old Becky goes to bed hungry the last week of every month." "One quarter of the sophomores at Goodtimes High don't have the math skills to balance a checkbook." "A warm, personal writing style can build rapport with your clients—and improve your bottom line." Flush out vague statements with specific examples.

Avoid these common writing mistakes, and your message will reach your customers' heart and minds—instead of their waste baskets.

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## Create a Direct-Mail Package Overview

Of all of the sales prospecting tools you will use throughout your company's life span, a direct-mail package can be one of the most effective. If you can assemble the necessary information in an appealing package, you will warm up your new prospects and increase your likelihood of making a sale before you even speak to your new clients. In essence, you are selling yourself in print, and the product comes later.

The sole purpose of a direct-mail package is to generate a response from a client or prospect: place a call, send in an order form, or request more information. How can you do that? By hard-selling the benefits that your product offers the reader.

Before we begin, it is important to note that the success of your direct-mail campaign rests not only on the creation of an irresistible package, but also on the selection of the best mailing list for your company. There are a variety of ways to obtain mailing lists, including contacting competitors or complementary businesses that share your target market or by searching the Web for businesses that compile and sell customer lists for many different types of industries. This Office.com Business Tool (OBT) will cover the elements that go into developing a winning direct-mail package for your business.

### Outline:

1. The Envelope
2. The Letter
3. The Brochure or Data Sheet and The Lift Note
4. The Reply Vehicle

### 1. The Envelope

The function of the envelope is similar to a storefront: Excite reluctant potential customers enough to come inside. Tempt them. Lure them. Tease them. The envelope should be designed in every way to make the prospect open it.

If you think of your direct-mail package as your ad, the envelope would be your headline. Teaser copy, the few lines written on the envelope, is your one chance to get it opened. Keeping within the guidelines of legality and good taste is the only requirement. After that, use whatever works. If it doesn't work, your great offer will get trashed without being opened.

Make your envelope copy crisp, strong and sharp to force the reader to open it before any other piece of mail. Writing envelopes is tough. It should be short, focused and strong. However, this copy should not be so narrow that it turns any of your prospects away. The few seconds when your prospect examines your envelope is when it's at the greatest danger point of all direct mail: falling into the trash.

0-2

You need one phenomenally great hook for your teaser copy. If you spend 100 hours writing your direct-mail package, spend 10 of them on the two or three lines that go on your envelope. Then carry the theme of that teaser copy inside and start your letter with it.

Some examples of great hooks include: "Free Gift Enclosed!" "New Prices Enclosed!" "Free Gift Offer," and "Wholesale Prices Enclosed – Please Open immediately!"

"Gift Certificate Enclosed!" is also a very effective hook for your envelope. It works well because:

- They are inexpensive to print, at 1/3 or 1/4 of a sheet of paper or less.
- They may be printed on the same sheet as the letter, the catalog or the order form for extra savings in printing costs.
- They ship flat and add very little weight to your mailing package.
- They're much more upscale than coupons.
- They have a high perceived value.
- They are cheap to redeem; in fact, they have no cost until redemption.
- They may be targeted to specific merchandise or offers – good for overstock or high margin items.
- They are naturally easy to track.

## 2. The Letter

A letter is the most important and powerful part of a direct-mail package. Its pulling power is so strong that there are times a letter can work without any brochure or backup material. Never send a direct-mail package without a letter. If you do, you'll probably miss at least 30 percent to 40 percent of your orders.

The letter that you compose won't be a real letter, in the true sense of the word. A letter is a personal piece of correspondence you write and send to one or two people. When you send it to 10, 10,000 or 10 million people, and it's designed to sell your product, it's really a highly stylized ad designed to look like a letter.

The letter is the part of your mailing package your potential customers read. They may look at your brochure, but they read the letter. And if it's good, it's perceived as a personal note from you to them. For maximum effectiveness and believability, your letter must look like a letter. The more it looks like a piece of personal business correspondence, the better your response will be.

The letter is the place to sell the benefits of owning and using your products. This is where your powerful benefits generate the response, which is the objective of the letter. You generate a call by flaunting the benefits, then asking the reader for a response in the letter copy several times.

If the reader doesn't respond in some fashion, your package didn't work. Throughout your letter, weave explicit directions leading readers directly down the path to respond. Direct mail is, after all, a game of numbers. Use anything you can – within the realm of legality and good taste – to make that one additional reader in 100 pick up the phone and call. There is a big difference between three readers in 100 calling to place orders and four readers in 100 calling.

0-3

### 3. The Brochure and The Lift Note

Your brochure gives you the opportunity to show the features of your product. But most people won't read your brochure unless your letter piques their buying interest. After all, would you read a brochure about a Ford station wagon — no matter how nice it was — if you weren't interested in buying one? Probably not. But people who are ready to buy will read almost everything for reassurance they made the right choice, to learn more about their new acquisition and to feel good about their purchase. Of course lots of photos and four-color printing keep the initially uninterested looking at the brochure for a longer period.

Crisp printing and sharp design are important elements of a successful brochure. There was a time when it was exceptionally costly to compose four-color brochures, but costs have come way down in recent years. Short-run color printers can be found in the back of magazines and on the Web, and printing four colors from your computer disk is available from a host of first- and second-generation Indigo press printers — find them in the back of computer magazines. Although short-run printing (around 500 sheets) can be pricey at about \$1 each, it beats having 5,000 sheets printed with information that may change or become outdated. For any press run higher than \$1,000, get quotes from several different printers.

Your brochure becomes important for three reasons. People who are serious about your product want more information and will read it. So here the brochure becomes the clincher in the sale — the last push to make that one person in 100 pick up the phone and call to place an order. Next, your brochure gives you added credibility. You can tell prospects in your letter that the hotel they will be staying at is beautiful, but imagine how much more convincing it will be when you show them the pictures of the pool and the veranda in the brochure. Finally, with this additional and less personal selling space, you can show all the features of your product you didn't have the space for in your letter, which is reserved for benefits and a more personal plea for orders.

If your product has many great features, it's best to list them in bulleted fashion in the brochure. Most readers will stop to read bulleted lists, because of the time savings. I usually follow each feature with smaller type showing the benefit of that particular feature. For example:

"The blade is made of Rockwell Hardness 440 Steel. This knife will hold a keen edge longer, and you won't have to sharpen it frequently — as with cheaper knives."

Don't forget to have your company name, phone, address and complete ordering information on every brochure (and every piece of paper in your package, for that matter) in case it gets separated from the rest of the package.

If the price of developing a color brochure is a concern for you, a black-and-white data sheet or a new product bulletin is a low-cost form of brochure that may fit into your budget. Some industries, especially the electronics industry, use a data sheet for all new products. These brochures typically include a line drawing or photo and information about the features. Try to sneak in as many benefits as you can without creating a boring data sheet. Use a typeface other than the one you used in your letter so it looks typeset. Don't forget to say, "Order from ... ," before your name and address to encourage orders. A toll-free number also helps. An electrifying data sheet will spark interest from those on the verge of tossing everything out.

0-4

The longer a reader reviews your package, the better your chances of having him or her order your product. Shrewd retailers have known this principle for years. They know that the longer customers are in their store, the more likely they are to make a purchase.

#### The Lift Note

Like the brochure, the lift note can take many forms. It may be a simple "buck" slip, designed to look like a dollar or check, which offers a discount for a certain amount of goods or services. It may be a small folded sheet of a different color so it stands out from the rest of the package and commands its own bit of attention. In the early days, lift notes were small folded sheets of paper used by publishers, and they all had the same copy on the face: "Frankly, we're puzzled!" The interior copy said how the publisher couldn't figure out why you had decided not to order because they offered so many benefits: "Discount prices," "Send no money, we'll bill you," "Every month you'll get x,y,z". No wonder it lifted response.

Your lift note can say anything that you think will lead customers to a desired response. It's usually the last thing they read, so make it memorable. Use great teaser copy on the face, and don't be verbose. Lead directly to the desired response by having a big phone number or your strongest plea to order now.

#### 4. Reply Vehicle

Face it, the easiest response to generate is a phone call. It's instant gratification for the reader, and with a charge card, it's money in the bank for you. In addition, it's much easier to sell a prospect on the phone than from a sheet of paper. You can get feedback; you can find out what the customer wants or dislikes; you can joke around; and you can even ask prying questions to find out how serious the buyer is. You can make special offers or pricing considerations.

Throughout the brochure prospective, ask the customer to place a phone call. The phone number should be in large print and bolded. If you are soliciting orders directly, put a dashed border around the order form in the lower right hand side of the sheet, with an open area inside for customer data so they can fill it out and send with a check or card number.

To encourage the reluctant caller, enclose a reply envelope with an order form that slips into it. The reply envelope can be a postage-paid business reply envelope, or you can just have your name and address on it, and leave it to the customer to place a stamp on it.

A business reply card, or BRC, can also be used to solicit nonordering responses, such as a request for more information or to have a representative call. BRCs are not as effective when one is seeking payment at the time the order is placed. A reply envelope and an order form are desired when payment is desired up front. On your order form, make sure you say on the top what it is: "Rush Order Form."

The order form should be easy to find; don't make readers look for it. And the layout should be clean and simple. This is a good place to include a guarantee. Up at the top, let them know it's an order form right away by including the words, "\_\_\_YES! I'd like to order! Rush me x,y,z." Also, don't forget to put your name and address on this form in case it gets separated from the package.

Somewhere on the reply form, make sure you give both your regular and toll-free phone numbers preceded by: "To place your order immediately by phone,

05

call x,y,z." Also include your fax number. Include a recap of your offer: what you are selling, what they are getting, and the benefits if there is room, most important last. Inform the readers that you ship promptly. Make sure customers are clear about what they are ordering with this form including any upgrades, and where they are ordering from.

If your mailing envelope has a window, the mailing label should be affixed to the order form and then be designed to show through the window. This makes it even easier for the recipient to order by mail, which helps overcome the law of reader inertia: A body at rest tends to stay at rest unless everything is laid out to make it easy to order. If your initial test mailing is small, you can even place a live stamp on the order envelope.

The beauty of direct mail is that you never have to waste a lot of money because testing is very easy: You simply mail your initial package to a select group in small numbers. That way, unsuccessful packages don't turn into costly mistakes. Before you mail any big numbers – with their associated big costs – you'll know approximately to what extent your package will draw a response, and also if it will be successful.

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## Create a Promotional Package Overview

Every marketing plan starts the same way: Define your audience. Only after you have defined your audience can you figure out the best way to reach them. Naturally, different audiences require different media and campaigns — referred to as a promotional mix — to reach them most effectively and efficiently. To begin, you must ask yourself, “How tightly can I pinpoint my target audience?” “How large is this group?” “How easily can it be reached by the media?” The answers will dictate the type of promotional campaign you choose.

Anyone can create an advertising plan, but only a few can create a cost-effective media plan that produces a good number of higher-quality leads that convert into sales. In this Office.com Business Tool (OBT), we will take a look at some different types of promotional media and discuss the pros and cons of effectively reaching a target audience through each.

### Outline:

1. Analyzing Costs
2. Magazines
3. Direct Mail
4. Yellow Pages
5. Radio
6. Web Advertising
7. Trade Shows
8. Television
9. Card Decks
10. Newspapers
11. Alternative Media Options

## Resources

1. Analyzing Costs

The benefit of choosing an effective promotional mix is realizing lower costs by delivering your advertising messages to only high-quality prospects who are most likely to buy your products and services. By choosing the right medium through which to broadcast your messages, you'll spend less money initially and have less wasted advertising expense throughout the life of your business.

The cost of reaching people with your advertising message can be defined in terms of CPM, or cost per thousand. You can figure out the cost to reach 1,000 customers by dividing a medium's circulation by the cost of an advertisement. If, for example, a full-page, black-and-white magazine ad costs \$2,000, and the publication reaches 50,000 people, the CPM is \$25. In other words, it costs \$25 to reach 1,000 people in that magazine. (This CPM for each magazine can also be found in a reference book like Oxbridge Communications Directory of Magazines.)

CPM can also be applied to other media, like radio or television, and these figures are the language of salespeople in those industries. Perhaps more important are the terms CPI (cost per inquiry) and CPO (cost per order), which is the make-or-break number for your business.

Final consideration in promotional-media selection is how much each prospect is worth to you if you close a sale. For example, if you are selling printing presses for \$500,000 each, you may sell only one press every 18 months to two years. You may only close one prospect in every 20,000 leads, and your CPO may be \$8,000. But if you're selling newsletter subscriptions at \$39 a pop, you may need to close three of every 100 direct-mail pieces you send out (3 percent).

## 2. Magazines

Magazines have good reach but poor depth. Magazines reach both consumer and business-to-business markets, and most industrial products are traditionally marketed through this medium. There are more than 10,000 magazines to select from, and almost every industry has several of its own trade journals.

**PROS:** May be tightly focused on a particular market or niche. May have the most efficient and cost-effective CPM, CPI or CPO. The only way to reach some targeted markets efficiently besides direct mail. Circulation figures are general guidelines only. Readership is generally highest in colder months like January, February and March.

**CONS:** Magazines aren't read every month. Most magazines are just scanned by readers. Smaller ads run in the back, and some readers never get that far. Competition for reader's attention and response on every page make your ad easy to miss. The most common response vehicles are the bingo cards (which allow readers to request more information about advertisers in the issue) or reader-response cards, but these are the worst quality of leads. While circulation figures remain steady year-round, be aware that readership falls off in the summer as more people spend time outdoors. Almost every inquiry needs to be followed up with a phone call, a direct-mail piece or both. A three-month lead time to measure response is normal for most magazines. Don't believe pass-along readership figures; they're typically grossly exaggerated.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Some publishers will give you free ad space if you create a clever press release — the most valuable single sheet of paper in all of marketing. A press release can be used to test the effectiveness of a publication to see if it will pull a response before you place an ad. Ad position is always a negotiated factor. Many magazines discount heavily from their published price list — always ask and negotiate (start by asking for the 12-time rate). Never place three ads in three consecutive issues without running a test first. If the first ad fails, you won't have time to cancel the other two.

To find magazines in any particular market, look up the market classification (i.e., photography, banking) in the SRDS Business Magazine Directory, Oxbridge Communications Directory of Periodicals, Burrelle's Directory of Magazines or Bacon's Magazine Directory. Consider advertising where competitors consistently run ads.

## 3. Direct Mail



You can reach any market or a selected part of a market and sell almost anything with direct mail.

PROS: Creative, interesting mail is well-received. Long copy that is well written can hold a reader's attention, sell products, build loyalty, create brand awareness, overcome objections and reach higher-level purchasers.

If initial tests are successful, rolling out your mailing to an entire list may be extremely profitable and easy to do.

CONS: CPM may be quite high at \$500 or more. Incorrect selection of a list may completely wipe out the appeal of a great product, a great package or a great offer. Testing may also be expensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Long copy that is boring or dull is usually thrown out, so keep your message short. Include an electrifying letter in every direct-mail package, and fill it with benefits. Reminder: Benefits are what the customers get from the features of your product. For example, a feature of a teacup is its handle. The benefit of that feature is that you can hold a hot cup of coffee without getting burned.

Lead with your biggest benefit, then, expound on that. A short bulleted list of benefits gets high readership. Don't forget to ask the reader to call several times in the letter. A brochure should be included to build credibility and show the features. The secret of direct mail: Show the features in the brochure, show the benefits in the letter, and get the reader to call you.

#### 4. Yellow Pages

A necessary evil if you are a retailer. This medium can be one of the most effective advertising sources for some businesses, like emergency drain cleaning and appliance-repair services.

PROS: Reaches consumers at an excellent time — when they are ready to shop or need information about products they are about to purchase.

CONS: Expensive. You are quoted monthly rates by sales personnel, but your contract will be for a year.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Everyone likes to shop in their own backyard, so you should prominently display your location in your listing. Use short, crisp wording that issues a call to action (“Large stock of widgets. Huge inventory. Call for fast, friendly help.”).

Don't forget, the primary objective is to sell the call. The objective of the call is to have the customer come in or buy your service.

#### 5. Radio

An effective medium if the listener doesn't have to write down your information to remember it. Works well with large events and broad-audience demographics. Most effective when ads are repeated over and over. Stations are priced by their Arbitron ratings, and rates are always negotiable. Stations cater to specific audiences, usually grouped by age.

PROS: If you need a general audience and have more than one or two locations around town, this medium may be ideal.

Radio stations may even write your ad and produce it for you. Since it has quick response, it's easy to test. Works well with immediate sales.

CONS: Tough to benchmark results. Can be expensive. Small numbers of ads don't test well. Audience must be willing to drive to your location for your product. You pay for reaching everyone in the entire area that can receive the station. If they aren't all potential customers, you may want to rethink this medium. Commercials may need to be obnoxious to be noticed.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Great for businesses with a broad-based audience and easy-to-remember contact information. Works well with vanity numbers that spell a word (1-800-FLOWERS, for example). Can also work well for insurance, disk jockey services, sports events, shows and big sales events.

Spots are assigned to run at approximate times like "morning drive" or "midday," each at varying rates. Negotiate. There is a big difference between 8:30 a.m., when everyone is in their cars, and 9:05 a.m., when most are at work. Never buy run-of-station (ROS), which means the station places your spots anywhere they want. After all, it's your money that's lost if the ad fails to draw a response due to poor placement. Radio is immediate — virtually all of your response will come within two or three days of the ad, unless you own a restaurant — where there may be some delay for patrons to schedule. Remember, there is a commercial on right before yours and another right after yours.

## 6. Web Advertising

Although still being perfected, the Web's banner ads can be a nice supplement to your overall advertising campaign. And while it's yet to be determined exactly how effective they are, banner ads can drive viewers to your site — where they will find all of your product and service information. Another way to draw people to your Web site is to obtain reciprocal links with other sites that may share your target market, such as industry magazines. You can also visit chat rooms and usenet groups to let people know that your site exists. Once you have the viewers at your site, it is your job to use your promotional materials to make the sale.

PROS: Cutting-edge technology — it pays to stay in the loop because there are new opportunities opening up every day. If you can get people to your site and keep their attention, you have a great method for communicating with them. It allows them to shop price and research almost anything else about your company.

Highly targeted medium — you can purchase space on search engines or other sites that are tailored to viewers in your target market.

CONS: Viewers only stay on Web pages for seconds at a time, so it is tough to get them to click on your ad, which brings them to your site. Creating banner ads is very different from traditional ads; you may need to hire a specialist to help you.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Look up site profiles on the SRDS Interactive Advertising Source, which shows company site profiles, visitor hits and pages per week and the cost

of links, banner ads and so forth. Try to negotiate placement and advertising trades with other sites.

## 7. Trade Shows

Each year there are more than 10,000 trade shows held across the country. And although trade shows sometimes get a bad rap for being ineffective, they are actually quite valuable because there is a wealth of knowledge focused around a particular cause or industry assembled in one place. You can learn a lot in a short period of time.

**PROS:** Trade shows are an excellent way to get industry information, meet competitors, network, find resources, receive product feedback and explore new ways of marketing face-to-face with both exhibitors and attendees. The personal interaction represents selling at its best. If you can't close them here, you're at the wrong show or in the wrong business.

**CONS:** While booth space may be inexpensive, don't forget to factor in the costs of assembling and staffing the booth and producing all of the promotional materials you'll be giving away. You'll also have to figure in the time you and your staff will miss at the office.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Visit shows as an attendee before even considering booth space, then get the best booth location you can afford. Have an objective for attending and a goal for exhibiting. Don't spend too much time speaking with each passerby.

Instead, get a business card, and follow up with them later. Following up with prospects is the only way to make the show pay off. Can't make it? Consider buying a mailing list from either exhibitors or attendees.

## 8. Television

While the national networks like NBC, CBS and FOX are still reserved for big-time advertisers, like Coke and Reebok, one of the best media buys during the past 10 years has been cable television. If you're shooting for local demographics, cable can be focused to neighborhoods around your storefront with subscriber lists as small as 10,000 households.

Today's cable TV selection offers 50 or 60 channels, which is great for the viewer but much tougher for the advertiser. Great care must be taken to place ads where audience demographics of the show makes them work. The good news? Once you stumble onto the formula, you can run ads endlessly, and it will continue to pay off well for years.

**PROS:** Inexpensive testing. Local commercial video studios can shoot commercials for \$350 to \$500 for a 30-second spot. And you can be effective in a 30-second ad, since it's auditory and visual, and the demographics are targeted to your store or shop.

**CONS:** Multitude of channels makes selection of where to place an ad very difficult at best and a nightmare at worst. Reps sell ad time and may not know where your ad will work best — only where they have time available or shows or time slots they are asked to push by the station management.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Negotiate hard for ad time and extra free spots. Like in radio advertising, never take ROS because longer-running ad schedules and larger clients get the best spots. Track response closely.

### 9. Card Decks

Undoubtedly you have received these bulk-advertising vehicles in the mail. Card decks can contain up to 64 cards per pack and are mailed to specific prospect lists. Many card decks are sent by magazines to their subscriber lists. Mailings are usually

100,000; advertisers can often buy half the deck to test or split the run with two different promotional offers.

**PROS:** Card decks are so effective for some companies, they market solely through this medium. Like magazines, they are mailed on a regular basis but usually less frequently — on average four times per year.

**CONS:** Expensive to test. Your card can get lost in the pack. Since there are so many decks marketed, if the one you purchase arrives in the prospect's mailbox with two or three others on the same day, there's a good chance it will get tossed out.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Don't rush to purchase; study the deck you are interested in. Look for other similar offers that are run time after time and ask the rep how long and how frequently they've been running. Most decks have asking prices of \$2,400 to \$3,500 per card (for a full run). This price is not set in stone; most are actually sold at \$1,400 to \$1,700 per card or less. A few fetch

\$2,400 consistently. Some decks can be bought for \$700 to \$800 per card. The bottom line? Negotiate pricing with your salesperson.

Your card's position in the deck does matter, so you should also negotiate for the exact position you want. Don't settle for, "We'll give you a good position." Their idea of a good position (first half of deck) and your idea of a good position (in the first five cards) usually won't jibe. Use second side of card for sales copy — it's a waste of valuable ad space to use it as a name and address side. The headline accounts for 90 percent of your readership — write a great one.

### 10. Newspapers

One of the more immediate advertising venues. Lead time for a newspaper ad is just a day or two, so testing is easy and fast.

**PROS:** Selectivity in areas served: your hometown or across the country. Different sections draw different readership, so you can target your ad to your market. Newspapers work for a large variety of offers: sales, products, shops, retailers, service organizations.

**CONS:** Too many papers dilute the market. Bigger ads can overshadow your small ad. Your ad can get lost in the clutter in larger papers. Big-run papers can be expensive for small advertisers (large advertisers get huge discounts for running volume lineage). Your ad may be grouped with competitors.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Testing is the way to go. Some of my clients have had good success with the TV Listings section, some with the business section. Negotiate good

placement in the paper and good placement on the page. Sundays are not as good as weekdays for smaller ads because they can get lost. Wednesday is coupon day, which has high female readership. Don't forget local weeklies and classifieds. Local papers are much cheaper than larger metropolitan papers with better demographics for single-retail stores. Don't forget to send press releases.

### 11. Alternative Media Options

In addition to the traditional advertising media, there are many new alternatives. Here is a sampling:

Promotional items imprinted with your company name and logo.

Free-standing inserts, or FSIs, which usually consist of four-color coupons found in the Sunday papers.

Coupon mailers such as Val-Pak or Ad Art.

Outdoor billboards.

Movie and theater advertising. → Playbills for local school plays. Shows support for community & people

School newspapers and yearbooks.

Outdoor aerial advertising (skywriting, hot air balloons and blimps). Read playbills during intermission & before show starts.

Airplane billboards.

Inflatable figures.

Bus bench and bus shelter.

Mobile advertising (trucks, taxis).

Truckstop advertising.

Telephone kiosks.

Transit advertising.

Airport advertising.

High school/college campus advertising.

Hotel advertising.

In-store displays.

Supermarket-entrance advertising (community bulletin boards).

Supermarket register-tape programs.

Shopping malls.

Sports/fitness/leisure facilities.

Stadium/arena/sports-team advertising.

College-sports programs.

Event marketing.

Entertainment coupon books.

Package-insert programs from almost every type of merchandiser and direct mailer.

Orchestra program books.

Professional and local theater program books.

Motor-racing events programs.

Town-festival programs.

Messages on hold.

ATM messages.

Religious bulletins.

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Don't waste \$ on repeating ineffective ads or using ineffective ads in ineffective mediums.

Whatever you do, don't forget to track response. When working with any print medium, always send press releases and negotiate price and position.



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COMMUNICATIONS-Written

**The Sales Tool That's Good to the Last Dot**

by Judith Pettigrew

***There are business letters and notes and absolutely hundreds of opportunities to send them. Your written communication with others especially customers, prospects and centers of influence can set you apart from your competition and keep your name in their mind.***

In this age of voice mail, FAX, and e-mail, why in the world would there be any need to hone our written communications skills? Because, actually, there is more writing in business today and, because so much of it is *brief* writing, it is imperative to do so clearly and succinctly.

You've heard the saying that the pen is mightier than the sword. Is this true? It can be. Good writing will assist you in achieving many goals. Obviously, the spoken word has a distinct disadvantage once it is out of your mouth, you can't take it back. In writing, you are allowed to communicate conversationally, convincingly, and clearly. But, we also have to say it concisely because people don't read more than they have to.

As a professional writer, one of my greatest challenges is writing for billboards. I have no more than nine words and ten seconds to get the message across. Unfortunately, most readers give about the same amount of attention to written communications!

For instance, when including a cover sheet on a FAX transmission, you need to keep it less than 50 words; not only because the cover sheet will become too cluttered, but the receiver may simply glaze over the copy and go directly to the content. When using e-mail, keep it less than one screen's worth of copy. In addition, when writing interoffice memos, keep it to less than one page.

However, FAX, e-mail and memos are only three writing examples. There are business letters and notes and absolutely hundreds of opportunities to send them. Your written communication with others especially customers, prospects and centers of influence can set you apart from your competition and keep your name in their mind. Writing is one of your most powerful sales tools.

And yet for every business person who has "call reluctance" I have met four people with writing reluctance. In both cases, the reason is the same we don't want to appear foolish or ignorant. At least when we make mistakes on the phone, we can say that the listener misinterpreted what was said. The problem with writing is that the errors are indelible in ink-jumping right out at the reader.

Writing is nothing more than a conversation on paper. Just as we verbally have formal presentations, informal conversations, intimate chats, and our own unique way of communicating, so can we in writing. There are four basic rules to writing well:

**1. Know what you want to say.**

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## 2. Sound like yourself.

## 3. Keep it simple.

## 4. Get your grammar and spelling right.

Seize every opportunity to correspond with others. Writing shows you have manners and class. Many believe that a true epidemic plaguing our society is rudeness and inconsiderateness. If you don't succumb to it, you will be remembered. Most people do not RSVP invitations at all. While using the phone to confirm your attendance is the norm, take that extra step and respond in writing. That will make lasting impression.

You never know when an opportunity will present itself. For example, I read an article about the shortage of trained physical therapists for long-term care. One of our clients heads a rehabilitation company and shared with me that there was erroneous information. She promptly wrote a letter to the editor, it was published and not only enhanced her credibility, it placed her company name in a favorable light, while reaching several hundred thousand readers without paying one cent for exposure.

The more you practice writing, the more comfortable you will be doing it. Letters to the editor can grow into guest columns or even a contributing writer opportunity. So how do you know when to write? You must read religiously. Not just local papers, but newsletters, trade journals, and national papers and publications. Don't limit your writing to one geographical area.

The media on which you write makes a difference as well. I believe everyone should utilize three kinds of paper for writing standard letterhead, executive letter-size note paper and fold-over cards. More often than not, you should enclose a business card.

You must first tell the reader why you are writing. This point is too often forgotten. Put the important points in the letter first, or they may be overlooked. Support the purpose with specific points and don't ramble. This is where your outline or note cards are so handy. Each sentence should relate to a point in the outline or on the note card. And close with a call to action, whether the writing is formal or informal.

Here's a good tip when writing a sales letter: When most people read a sales letter, they often scan the salutation then skip to the bottom to see who it is from. The most important part of the letter is the P.S. because that's where their eyes are.

Above all, be sure to sound like yourself. Most of us do not use polysyllabic words when speaking, so we should refrain from using them when writing. I'll use an example from William Shakespeare: which would you rather read: "Should I act upon the urgings that I feel, or remain passive and thus cease to exist?" Instead he wrote, "To be or not to be?"

Stay away from buzzwords, acronyms or slogans that are unique to your industry or profession. This will only serve to confuse your reader.

Your writing will be much easier to read if you keep your paragraphs short, using between two and six sentences. A well-crafted, single sentence paragraph will give special emphasis, but be sure your document warrants this variation from the norm. Incidentally, the average sentence contains approximately 17 words in it another measuring stick for effective writing. However remember the power of the sword is in the sharpness of the point, not



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the length of the blade.

Read what you have written out loud; does it make sense to you? Make an effort to eliminate extraneous words. Follow the style of *Readers Digest* condense!

Once you have written something, read it through completely. When making edits, simply make check marks in the margins, then go back and change the structure. Also, give the manuscript to someone else for comments. Be tough-skinned and don't take offense if they suggest changes. William Faulkner once said, "In writing, you must kill your darlings."

A good suggestion is to put it aside for 24 hours at this point and reread it once more before sending it. While that is not always possible, it can save you some embarrassment had you made a mistake that you didn't catch the first time.

**A few more hints:**

- 1) 90% of all writing consists of 1,000 basic words.
- 2) Use your spell check feature religiously.
- 3) Don't be afraid to use a dictionary or thesaurus.

**Bottom line.** Your written communications can have a direct impact on your selling success. IBM conducted a study a few years ago and found that those salespeople who backed up their sales calls with written communication reduced their selling time 86 percent--from 9.3 hours to 1.3 hours. Without written communications there were only 8 orders per 100 calls and with their were 38.

*Judith Pettigrew is the founder and CEO of Creative Consortium, Inc.*

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Appendix S

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COMMUNICATIONS - Written

## Writing Convincing Copy the Right Way Builds Confidence

by David R. Young

***We are often encouraged to write just like we speak. But written English and spoken English are not the same-and the differences are important when writing for your business.***

**Spoken English is less formal than written English.** When we speak, we compose sentences "on the fly" so we often make mistakes. Often we'll use a wrong word or get halfway into a sentence and suddenly realize that that was not what we really wanted to say-so we pause, and change our direction or topic. If you've ever tape recorded someone speaking, then played the tape back and typed what was said word for word (a process called transcribing) you'll know what I mean. Spoken English, transcribed literally, is gibberish.

When we have conversations with our friends, spoken errors are politely overlooked or, if someone gets caught saying something really silly, we have a laugh over it. Years ago the Reverend Spooner made so many spoken errors that the term "Spoonerism" came into being. He'd often transpose sounds so that the words came out funny. For instance, he might order a "chilled grease sandwich" instead of a "grilled cheese."

**Spoken English is sloppy.** Sometimes we say things incorrectly because it's the "in" thing to do. "Ask me about that" should be "Ask me about that." "Fine out about my important products" really means "Find out about my important products." If you write the way you speak, you are likely to put things like this into print. (I've received flyers containing all of these errors.) And if you do that, people will think you're an illiterate fool.

In spoken English, your listeners can interrupt to ask you to clarify something they've misunderstood. In print, you don't have that luxury. You must write clearly and in a way that is understood by all of your readers.

**Written English requires more care than spoken English.** Contrary to popular teaching, you shouldn't write as you speak... unless you speak well. You see, when you prepare written copy for your ads, flyers, business letters, magazine articles, and so on, you have more time to organize your thoughts than you do when you're talking. Consequently, your readers expect you to use that time to review what you've written, clean up the language, and clarify the sentences that may be confusing.

If you write for your business (and everyone does) you must learn to use "Standard English." That's the English that professional news announcers use. Listen to the national evening news, or tune in CNN. Listen to the way they use our language.

**Avoid regional dialects and expressions** in your business writing. They may work fine for a local audience, but in business, your words may be read by potential customers all over the United States and maybe all over the world.

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While visiting some relatives in Southern Ohio a store clerk asked me: "You want a sack for that?" Here in Rochester, New York we would have said, "Would you like a bag for that?" I knew what she meant, but it sounded peculiar to my ears. Become sensitive to regionalisms and use them appropriately.

**Use complete sentences.** Your sentences needn't be long, but they should be complete. Not like this one, I know incomplete sentences are used by large advertising agencies, but it's a fad that's too cute to last. Besides, people may misunderstand and think you're unable to write well. Complete sentences will always be in style

**Spell correctly.** I cannot tell you how many times I've received sales literature from people promoting "Stationary and Printing." Unfortunately (for them) that should be Stationery. (To help you remember, the E in stationery stands for "envelopes" and the A in stationary stands for "anchors." Things that are Stationary are set firmly in place.) My response to ads like this is "If you can't even spell it, why should I buy it?"

**Use proper punctuation.** Punctuation is not visible in spoken English so we must actually learn how to punctuate. Most people put commas in the wrong places and don't know when to use an apostrophe for making plurals, plural possessives, and so on. One cure for this kind of ignorance is to get a decent book and look things up just as you'd use a dictionary to look up spelling. Most book stores stock "The Chicago Manual of Style" which has more good advice on punctuation than you ever believed existed. Another cure is to hire an editor.

**One exclamation point will do!** Using two or three highlights your punctuation ignorance level. And don't overdo your use of all caps. On the internet, all caps is the equivalent of shouting. In print, it is much harder to read than mixed capitals and lower case letters.

**Don't abbreviate** when it is unnecessary to do so. Spell out words so that there is no misunderstanding. Save abbreviations for use in forms with tight columns. Does "\$3.99/min." mean minimum or per minute?

**State prices correctly.** I can always tell when someone slept through math class when they make a sign for their shop window that says "SALE! Widgets **FIFTY CENT SIGN** each!" You see, that means each widget costs one-half cent each. Placing the decimal point to the left of the five changes the five's value to five tenths (of a cent). But you already knew that.

**Writing well makes your business look good** and helps build customer confidence. After all, your mail order customers only know you through your ads and flyers-your words in print. If those words are not believable, well written, and persuasive, you haven't got a chance.

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