

How to effectively use promotional print materials to market your business



Think of print materials as your paper sales force. You can stick them in the mail, leave them in brochure racks, hand them out at trade shows. And the best part? They can be busy selling your products and services when you aren't around.

Because they're so versatile, make them as complete as possible. (After all, you want them to be able to do their job.) Put your full contact information on each piece, a complete description of the products and/or services and means to answer any questions.

A few words about the writing for your print materials (I know, I'm a designer, but words are important too): Explain benefits, not features. In other words, don't make the mistake of assuming your customers will think your product is cool because it has the whizbang 6000 engine (this is also known as a feature), when what the customer thinks is cool is that he can cut the lawn in half the time (this is also known as a benefit). If you don't address the customer's needs, then you lose the sale (in other words, write benefits not features). For more information about features and benefits and writing for your target market, check out the Web site of copywriter friend/cohort Michele Pariza Wacek (she showcases articles about writing) www.writingusa.com.

If you have lots of products, or lots to say about one product (and lots of photos to go along with it) then you might want to consider sell sheets or product brochures. Or maybe you have a complicated system to explain, at which point you might need a larger piece to sell it. All of these can accompany a more general company brochure. Talk to your graphic designer if you need an analysis of your particular situation.

When planning your print material campaign, consider both the life of your promotion and how you're going to use the print pieces. Do you need an inexpensive flyer with a coupon to get an immediate response, or would a glossy, full-color folder the customer can save be more fitting? Are you mailing brochures, leaving them in rack cards, handing them out at trade shows or something else? All of these decisions will affect the design of your piece.

Above all, remember your graphic designer is a resource who can help you make the most of your print materials. Don't be afraid to ask questions or gather information about your specific situation.

Karin Wilson owns Wild Woman Design, LLC, a graphic design firm. She can be reached via her Web site, www.wildwomandesign.com, where you can also sign up for her monthly "Graphically Speaking" column – full of tips to help make your graphic design a success. Copyright 2004 Wild Woman Design.