



EFFECTIVE PRINT ADS: TOOLS TO INCREASE SALES

bines photography with whimsical design: on the left page, the popular handheld is shown as an owl sitting in a tree. To the right, the headline reads, “Berry well informed” and the body copy, which is easy-to-read, uses few words to explain the benefits of wireless e-mail.

KEEP BODY COPY LEGIBLE

In his book, “Type & Layout: How typography and design can get your message across – or get in the way,” Colin Wheildon uses statistical research to show how illegible typography significantly lowers reader comprehension – and sales. When designing your ads, steer away from the following common errors:

- **Using large blocks of intimidating print.** Direct mail experts figured this out a long time ago, that’s why direct mail letters have short blocks of copy, bulleted lists, and frequent indentations. These things make the copy easy-to-read, and copy that gets read is copy that increases sales.
- **Placing copy over a “busy” image.** I once saw an ad that had white copy placed over a picture of white daisies. I have no clue what the copy said because I couldn’t read it. The white letters were lost in the flowers.
- **Using a sans serif versus serif font.** According to Whieldon’s research, more than five times as many readers are likely to show better comprehension when a serif font is used versus a sans serif font. (You are reading a serif font.)

DESIGN ADS WITH OPTIMAL “FLOW”

We read from top to bottom and left to right. In fact, according to typographer Edmund Arnold, the eyes fall naturally to the top left corner of a page and then move across and down. Ads that make the reader fight this natural tendency lower comprehension – by almost 50%. Plus, they are annoying.

ANSWER THE QUESTION: “WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?”

According to a study Roper Starch conducted in 2000, many ads simply do not answer the basic question, “What’s in it for me?” When writing ad copy, be specific. Explain how your product or service will benefit your reader. Eliminate technical jargon – even if you think your reader understands it – and down play hype such as “industry leader,” “leading edge,” “the best,” etc.

Designing and writing print ads that get read isn’t difficult if you know the basic rules for grabbing and holding your reader’s attention. Proper design elements that aid reader comprehension, and benefit-driven copy will help you get your message across clearly – and increase sales in the process. ●

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According to the great ad man David Ogilvy, the average print ad is read by only four percent of its targeted readership. Small wonder. Just pick up any business-to-business (B-to-B) trade or industry association magazine to see hundreds of ads vying for your attention with a multitude of colors, fancy graphics, and bold headlines.

Obviously, print advertising works, and it should be part of your marketing mix, but how do you ensure your ads are being read when they are competing with hundreds of others – plus the publication’s editorial copy?

No matter how technical your product or service, you can attract readers, get your message across, and increase sales by keeping in mind the following four rules when creating print ads:

USE SIMPLE LAYOUTS

The most effective ads tend to be relatively simple. Headlines are short, powerful, and to the point, and the image tells the story quickly. A company that uses a simple layout effectively is RIM, the maker of the BlackBerry™ wireless e-mail device.

The current double page ad com-