



Developing Effective Marketing Materials: Promotional Posters and Flyer Design Considerations

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Introduction

Customer communication is a critical part of an effective marketing strategy. Posters and flyers can be useful tools to communicate with new or existing customers. They are printed sheets meant to be distributed in a public place. They are most often used to support a promotion such as a new product or service, special sale or an upcoming event. Their function is the same as many other marketing materials, as they should grab a reader's attention, make an offer which focuses on benefits affecting the reader and then motivate them to take action.

Posters tend to be fairly large and professionally printed and almost always feature an illustration. Flyers (also known as mini-posters) are usually 8 ½" x 11" and are typically photocopied or e-mailed. Flyers often rely more heavily on text, as opposed to graphics to get their point across. Posters and flyers can be displayed almost anywhere, however, places where you have a captive audience are best.

Use posters:

- As a hanging display to reach a large audience on the move
- When you need long term advertising
- To get attention of the general public

Use flyers:

- As a mailer
- As a hand out
- For short term advertising, right before the event
- As the final campaign before the event
- To reinforce poster advertising

Developing a Communication Strategy

Before designing a poster or flyer, consider the following to develop a communication strategy:

1. Primary Purpose
What is the primary purpose of your promotional piece?
2. Primary Benefit
What unique benefit can you offer customers? What primary customer value or need can your enterprise meet?
3. Secondary Benefit
What other key benefits will customers receive from your products or services?
4. Target Audience
At whom (what target market) are you aiming this promotion?

5. Audience Reaction
What response do you want from your audience (come to the operation, visit a website, call an information line)?
6. Company Personality
What image do you want to convey in your promotion?

Components of a Poster or Flyer

Because space is limited, a communication tool such as a poster or flyer generally consists of a few components such as a headline, copy and signature. Let's take a closer look at each component:

Headline

A headline is the most important element of a communication tool. If it fails to grab the reader's attention then the entire effort will likely go unnoticed. Headlines should be short containing only 5 to 15 words which promote consumer benefits and affect the reader emotionally.

Body Copy

Make your case for the communication objective in the copy. Build compelling arguments and state strong facts. It is better to have one or two very strong statements than to try to rattle off a long list and risk diluting the message. The copy should persuade the reader to take action.

The use of subheadings and numbered or bulleted lists can break up a sea of type, highlighting a number of ideas quickly. However, overuse of this technique will reduce contrast and balance therefore losing its effectiveness.

Grammar and spelling are important. Run the spelling and grammar check functions on your software. It is also advisable to have several other people read over your materials to find mistakes that might have been missed.

Signature

An effective communication should always include a signature. The signature is where the business name, logo and contact information such as an address, phone number and web site address are located in the advertisement. Placement of the signature is most often located at the bottom of the design or in the lower right hand corner.

Layout and Design Considerations

Before developing a poster or flyer consider the following design principles:

Follow the KISS principle

That is, keep the design sweet and simple with a headline, offer and call to action. Determine a single purpose for using a poster or flyer, and ensure that every element on the page supports that idea. These communication tools should convey a short motivating message that requires only minimum reading. It is best to have fewer than 50 words on the entire marketing piece.

Size Matters

While it's tempting to order the biggest poster you can afford, sometimes smaller posters are better. Consider where your audience will be relative to your poster. If they'll be in close quarters, an 11" x 17" poster can be more effective than an 18" x 24" poster.

Type

Use big, clear fonts that are easily read and simple to understand from up close and afar. Test your communications readability by hanging it up and taking 4-5 steps back. You should be able to comfortably read the headline from this distance. Additional rules for using type include:

1. The typeface or font used in a communication piece can make a big difference to the results you achieve. Limit designs to no more than three types of font.
2. Use no more than three different font sizes. Keep in mind heading text should be twice as large as copy text and the subheading text should be half-way between. For example a poster might set the headline font size to 48 points, subheadings at 36 points and copy text at 24 points. Remember, the size of poster or flyer will dictate the size of the font. However, the goal is to make the communication readable from a good distance away.
3. Upper and lower case typeface has been shown to make headlines more readable.
4. Do not mix too many type styles such as words in all capital letters, italics, bold-face, or underlined. Over use of these styles will deemphasize the message.

Grab Attention with Color

Your communication should be easy to read from a distance. Colors that can be easily read from a distance include white on red, black on yellow, dark blue on white, green on white and black on white.

Use a brightly colored paper. Neon colors will grab attention on its own, but can overpower the text or pictures. It is best to use a color that is bright but still soft enough to create contrast with dark ink. If you must use a neon color paper, then only use a dark color for the text and images.

Illustrations

Carefully chosen images can effectively communicate a message to readers, rather than using words. A single visual element can create a centerpiece which draws the eye into the communication. Graphic images are better suited for poster and flyer communications as they generally provide a high contrast and saturation which will pop off the page to quickly attract attention.

White Space

White space is the area on a page without words or that is left blank. This term applies even if the background has color. Crowding a communication piece with too many visual elements or information will make it look cluttered and difficult to read, therefore reducing its overall effectiveness.

Summary

Posters and flyers are useful communication tools to spread information quickly and build awareness. They are often a highly versatile and inexpensive form of advertising when compared to other marketing materials. While methods of distribution are relatively easy, consideration should be given to placement locations to ensure communication messages reach your target audience.

References:

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