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Graphic Design

Design is always a contentious issue as we all have differing tastes, and whilst people often point-out examples of bad taste, nobody is of the opinion that their taste is bad. For this reason using your own sense of taste is fraught with danger, not to say that your taste is bad, but it may not match your target audience's taste.

A design professional takes a different point of view; the professional is detached and calls upon years of experience as well as having thousands of tricks up the sleeve. Whereas, your next design is probably only one of a handful of designs that you have been involved in the design of, compared to the professional who has designed that many this week. So where do you start?

- **The Design Brief**

The designer is not expecting you to provide a layout of how the design will look, although it can be helpful in demonstrating your thought processes. Rather, the designer would like to know:

- **What Do You Want To Achieve With This Design?**

Do you want to reinforce an existing marketing position or are you planning to move up or down market. Your advertising leaflets or web-site needs to be appropriate to your business, it's no good looking like a five star hotel if your market is budget minded backpackers and vice versa. Should your company image appear feminine or blokey, hygienic, friendly, clinical, traditional or modern?

- **What Are The Budget Constraints?**

We can work to almost any budget, but as we love design our natural inclination is towards the more elaborate.

Colours

It doesn't really matter to us how many colours you use, the cost is much the same, but be guided by our designer there are occasions when a riot of colour is just what's called for and other times restraint is needed. Don't get hung up on colour theories, Dr Max Lusher, a German Professor of Psychology widely recognized for his colour theories, advises things like light blue for creative businesses, yet the ANZ Bank seems to be doing OK with light blue, as does Oral-B. These theories only paint the broadest picture, and colours are culturally based, Black is the European colour for death where as White is the colour for death in Chinese culture.

Image

Build an image in the mind of your customer; create the feeling of whatever your business should be to that customer. Consider your company image carefully as from your customer's perspective it will become your business identity, avoid designs that visually shout at people, when people shout we tend to hear just the shouting and miss the content.

A café with warm, friendly and interesting ambience will look like a nicer place to stop and eat; a snooker hall with flashing neon signs will seem a more exciting place to visit.



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Business Stationery

Business Cards

Most people have business card holders of one kind or another, make sure your business card fits the normal holders, as there is nothing more annoying than a card that won't fit into a standard holder; next thing you know it's been discarded because it didn't fit.

Should a business card be printed one side or two sides? You can mount arguments for both, which generally run along the lines of: why waste the other side it won't cost much more to print, if anything. The back of the card give you space to list all your services and products and is a selling space not to be wasted. On the other hand, once the card is put into a card holder you can't read the back. Worst, if there's valuable information on the back it becomes very annoying to have to remove it from the holder to read. Further all that extra information can be viewed as clutter, distracting from the main message, keep it simple stupid applies to business cards too. People sometimes like to write notes, quotes, or appointment times on the back of cards, hard to do if the back is full of type. No, my vote goes to one sided business cards or at least a minimal amount on the back.

These are the basics of business design:

1. Use your logo as the basis. Make it the largest element on the card.
2. Keep it clean and simple. Do not cram too much information on the card.
3. Include the essentials — your name, title, company name, address, phone and fax numbers, and email and website addresses.
4. You are not required to have your ACN or ABN on the card and PO box addresses are generally to be avoided on business cards
5. Make sure the typeface is easily readable.
6. Stick to one or two colours and just one typeface apart from the logotype.

Letterheads

Letterheads are often designed with watermark images (faint images) in their centres, which looks really great. Except when the letter has been typed onto the letterhead the watermark becomes invisible, if it's really faint, or if it's bolder you can't read the letter properly, and isn't that the main purpose of this document. So, when viewing a proposed layout for a letterhead always ask for a sample with a letter typed onto it, and I'll bet you go for the plainer design. You are required to have your ACN or ABN and his is the place for your PO box address.

Leaflets

Flyers and other advertising leaflets need to be kept simple and have visual impact and a call to action. Where as a product specification leaflet needs to contain all the information a buyer may need to complete the sale. But, get to the point immediately after the heading, break up long text with sub-headings, most people will not read your leaflet sequentially so don't be afraid to repeat important information under different sub-headings.



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Logo Design

The actual design of a logo is dictated by your marketing plan. Generally speaking, simplicity will serve you better than complex. But to arrive at simplicity the design process will go through multiple complex ornate designs that are then whittled down to a clean simple design. Very rarely does a designer come directly to a simple design. So, sometimes it's hard for the layman to see the value in the final finished simple design. Believe me the time, agony and frustration will definitely have happened.

The design of a logo like most advertising material needs to have visual impact and reflect the positioning, nature and style of your business. A logo device doesn't have to represent a business' activity for example a restaurant's logo doesn't have to be food. The Ferrari logo isn't a car, nor is the Qantas logo an aircraft. A logo design should reflect your business, but it doesn't have to be literally, often it is far better to display the spirit or attitude of your company. Or at least how you would like to be perceived by your clients. Of course it must be appropriate. Fun designs are not for solicitors just as the corporate look is not for the local kindergarten. Remember, many companies are very successful without a logo device, just using a logo type, for example Microsoft. or Time Magazine.

But the uses that it will be put to are crucial; what can be achieved on the internet is completely different to what can be achieved in screen printing on a garment or reproduced in a newspaper in black and white. The logo design has to be available in various digital formats, Adobe Acrobat being one of the most important, and most printers will want a vectorised version.

All the different versions of the logo/logos design should be made available on disk or via e-mail, complete with colour specifications appropriate to the intended user: a commercial offset printer needs PMS colours (Pantone Matching System™), the painter needs commonly available paint chart colours (not British Standards they haven't heard of in Bringabitchalong), the signwriter needs vinyl colours, the web designer needs web-safe colours.

A complexity best handled by a formal Corporate Identification Manual. Ad image has developed several of these over the years, complete with stationery, signage and general logo usage specifications including fonts.



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Logo Design (contd.)

Colour

Beware that every media you use will reproduce your colours differently. Pantone PMS colour specifications are great for spot colours in the printing world, but can't always be matched in CMYK the main gamut of commercial offset printing. Also digital printing may also produce another variation, some digital printers use RGB rather than CMYK. Screen printing inks while made up to PMS specifications are often more intense in colour than offset printing. If your signwriter wants to use signwriting vinyl or paint there will be another mis-match. Plus on Television and the internet your colours will be different on every screen.

Relax

At the end of the day perfect colour matches are not that important, try to match but be prepared to settle for the spirit of your colour scheme.

Have Multiple Versions

Have wide and narrow versions of your logo created, for both portrait and landscape use. Have full colour, animated, simple colour and black & white versions created. Have the simple colour and Black & white versions simplified for reproduction by the coarser methods, such as newspapers and some screen printing.

Update

Your logo will need updating every five years or so, nothing too radical but a tweaking to keep it up-to-date

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This article written by Eddy Odden was first published in the Hinterland Times. Eddy has enjoyed a long and successful career in marketing and advertising here and overseas. As managing director of the Leo Burnett advertising agency in the 1990s and early 2000s he worked with some of Australia's largest and best known retail brand names.

Advertising that helps turn Consumers into Customers

To effectively engage consumers you have to understand their needs and wants.

Understanding consumer behaviour takes time and you need to be patient. It involves a few crucial stages:

1. Defining your target audience and how to talk to them effectively
2. Correctly positioning and presenting your business offer to them.
3. Commit to an ongoing strategy of advertising and promotion to communicate with your target audience through your chosen medium. There is no secret here except to rely on consistency and repetition.
4. Actively develop and constructively use your customer data base

With this in mind here are 10 basic strategies that are important for any consumer advertisement, brochure or flyer. These strategies will help grow your customer base and hence your business.

1. Keep your ad **SIMPLE** and **EASY** to read.

Less is always more

- A headline should dominate the top of an ad
- It should be quick and easy to read
- Customers are exposed to hundreds of messages each day so your ad may only have their attention for a matter of seconds.
- The quicker and easier you get your message across, the more chance you have of engaging them.

2. Your headline should contain a real single **BENEFIT**

- e.g. 'Buy one... get one free' ... rather than 'Buy one and save'
- Give them a tangible message that they can understand ... quickly.
- Do not play with words... your credibility is on the line
- Remember trust is hard to earn... easy to break.

3. Include a **RELEVANT VISUAL**

- To complement your offer
- E.g. Whatever you are selling or promoting, show it in its best light.
- It is worth spending money up front on quality photography or illustration.

Remember it's a one-off cost and can be amortised over the life of the advertisement.



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4. Keep body copy SUCCINCT.

Bullet point the product/service benefits unless you have a large ad with the luxury of space

5. Use of colour

Some products are more eye-catching when presented in colour ...

e.g. food, fashion or toys

This achieves maximum impact for the appropriate category

Remember we largely buy with our eyes.

6. Mono colour ads also have their place

Retail ads can also be very effectively presented in mono or single colours.

Tried and tested retail colours of red, yellow or black and white can be powerful if correctly used.

7. Size does not always count

Having a big ad does not ensure it will automatically be better, or engage the consumer more effectively, than a smaller ad

Always remember it is the content and tone of the message that counts.

8. Innovative use of space and design

Experiment with ad space and design

Discuss options with your media representative

An innovative approach can add interest not only for your customer but also for the medium you are using

9. Consistency and repetition

Getting your message across takes persistence

Repetition and consistency give your communication a greater chance of cut through.

It sometimes takes courage and commitment to walk this path.

10. Deliver the brand promise

Always under promise and over deliver.

Make sure the customers shopping experience with you is a positive one in every respect

What your ad promises must be followed through in-store and with the after sales service.

Do not underestimate the importance of your staff and staff training in meeting your business goals.

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In summary:

- Aim for a strategic position in the market place.
- Create a brand name/logo to reflect this position.
- Get to understand your customer base.
- Keep your communication simple and understandable
- Deliver your brand promise with each consumer shopping experience.
- Try to be innovative in your use of media.
- Consistency and repetition wins out in the end.
- Develop and work your data base.

About Eddy Odden



Eddy Odden has enjoyed a long and successful career in marketing and advertising here and overseas. As managing director of the Leo Burnett advertising agency in the 1990's and early 2000's he worked with some of Australia's largest and best known retail brand names. In Sydney he managed the retail division of M&C Saatchi and held senior management roles on the client side before returning to Queensland. He now runs a retail marketing communications consultancy based in Caloundra. Contact: odden@idx.com.au