

## TIP SHEET #4 -- BROCHURES

### **Make a Plan**

A great marketing brochure delivers a clear, focused message in a visually compelling way. Determine who will read the brochure and how you can convey a unique benefit to them.

### **The audience**

Your marketing plan will tell you who is your audience is and what benefits they look for from your services. Think in those terms about how your brochure will be read and you will have the first step in crafting the message. Begin by narrowing your audience to the customers who will best help you increase business. Your individual business situation will dictate who that is.

Sometimes it's best to target customers who already know and trust your business -- especially if you're introducing a new service. But often you'll have more success marketing to new prospects.

### **What makes you unique?**

Listen to your clients—or survey them—for feedback. You might be surprised by what draws people to your business and distinguishes you from the competition. It could be as simple as being able to always find a parking spot near your office, but more likely it is that they trust you and value your services. Look for tangible and intangible benefits.

Prioritize these thoughts and ideas based on the business objectives the brochure is helping you meet. But keep your message focused; emphasize just one or two of your objectives.

### **Understand what the reader sees**

Mock up a brochure on a piece of paper and decide in advance where the photos and text will go. Years of testing has found that readers see elements on your page in a certain order almost every time:

1. Pictures or illustrations
2. Headlines
3. Charts or graphs
4. Captions
5. Body copy

Many readers, even if they have a vested interest in the brochure, will only skim the body copy. Knowing that, spend your time and energy appropriately. Make sure your headlines, illustrations, and photos tell most of your story. Body copy is important, but don't bury your most important points there.

### **Plan your message**

Using the information you've gathered and your marketing plan, begin to write. Write clearly and plainly, avoid jargon and buzzwords, and always aim to explain your point in a unique and interesting way—but be concise and brief. Remember to make your headlines tell your story so that even if someone simply skims your brochure, they will still receive the main points.

### **Present a call to action**

An often-overlooked step in planning and writing brochures is the "call to action." What do you want the reader to do? Call? Email? Fill out a form? Give clear direction—as an invitation.

### **Say it with pictures**

Pictures and illustrations are almost always the first thing readers look at in brochures. Think about it: No amount of text description, however well written, is going to convey the beauty of a real estate property to a potential buyer.

It doesn't take a professional photographer to capture the products, quality, and spirit of your business. Digital cameras make it easy for anyone to capture professional-quality pictures that can be

downloaded for use in a brochure. Smiling faces that represent the profile of the people in your market will draw their attention. Think demographics: age, sex, race, professional, business. Use settings and people like the ones for whom your services are meant.

### **Artwork that works**

Bearing in mind what your main message is, find artwork that complements it. Be very discriminating; remove any artwork that doesn't fit with the message. If you don't have many pictures or illustrations on hand, you might consider free clip art. HP offers free art you can download, or you can look through the free Microsoft Clip Art Library. You can explore it by opening Microsoft Word, then selecting Insert > Picture > Clip Art.

Experts also suggest staying with one style, so choose either photos or illustrations.

### **Perfecting the results**

Edit your draft three or four times, then give it to at least one other person who is detail oriented and can read your content critically. Pass the brochure draft to friends and ask them to read it. Ask them to describe your services and the benefits of using them. Did the brochure make them feel interested in trying your services and was it inviting them to do so? Ask about their reactions to the brochure: was it friendly or cold, did they understand the contents or feel confused or condescended to. Consider all feedback and suggestions from the point of view of a potential client and make appropriate changes.

Finally, the test: Your brochure should take the reader—your potential client—from awareness to interest to desire-to-action.