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The Sum of the Whole: Part II

Integrating Professional Design Elements into Your Brand Identity

In part one of this series we discussed the “big picture” of the overall effect of successful marketing collateral, including hierarchy, WIIFM (What’s in it for me?), voice, intrigue, and action. This is the forest, if you will, of your marketing piece. In Part 2, we will be discussing some of the “trees” in the forest. A future Part 3 article will talk about some of the “leaves” you might find on the trees. And that’s as far as I’m going to extend that metaphor!

On with the good stuff...

Tip # 1: White space is our friend. I realize that you want to fit as much information as possible onto one page, but please take a firm line and truly assess what you’re including. You want your marketing piece to be inviting to your reader, not overwhelming or confusing. Give yourself healthy margins—3/4-inch to 1-inch is a good place to start. Also, open up the space between your paragraph lines—called leading. This, too, makes it easier to read, and allows your marketing piece to breathe.

Tip #2: Clear graphics and pictures. I cannot stress the importance of clear graphics enough. Fuzzy, pixilated, stretched, or squished photographs or graphics automatically drops the level of professionalism in your marketing piece a few notches. Use high quality files for your images. As for re-sizing, understand that for many file types, you won’t be able to make them bigger without making them pixilated. The other important part of re-sizing is to make sure that you keep the “aspect ratio” in proportion, which means that the x-axis sizes changes proportionally at the same rate as the y-axis. You can check this in your image-editing menu.

Tip #3: KISS. I’ve changed this acronym from its usual Keep It Simple Stupid to something more appropriate for graphic design—Keep It Somewhat Simple. You don’t want your marketing piece to be so simple that it lacks visual interest, but you also don’t want to have so much going on that your reader gets lost in the mayhem. This can be a fine line, but one way to do this is try using only one or two fonts in your document but use the different versions of the fonts—bold, italic, etc. This will give you some interest but because the variations come from the same font, you will still have a unifying theme.

Tip #4: Group items visually. Here’s an example. You’re working in a document that includes client testimonials and sub-heads to break up the text. Make all the sub-headings in your document the same, let’s say Helvetica, bold, size 15pt, small caps—and in the color red! You also want your client testimonials to stand out, but since they’re a different type of information, you want them to appear visually different. Make the testimonials Helvetica, bold italic, size 12pt in the color white on an orange rectangle. This simple technique allows you to group information together visually and allows the reader to easily find different types of information. But don’t forget about Hierarchy—Tip #1 from Sum of the Whole: Part 1.

Tip #5: Use professional typography. Typography is the art and science of typesetting and type design—I can feel your excitement exploding as you read this! But even though it may sound “boring,” using professional typography pulls a design together; without it, something just seems off. Your font selection, line

Sum of the Whole: Part 2 (continued)

spacing (leading), letter spacing, punctuation, and text alignment are all important elements that contribute to a professional design look and feel.

In this article, we drilled down to some specifics of utilizing specific design elements to create good brand identity marketing. In Part 3 of this series, The Sum of the Whole, you'll get even more detail on how to best use professional typography. So whether you're producing your own marketing or evaluating those of a graphic design professional, let this series help you to enhance your material and give them star quality!

About the Author

As the creative director and owner of Eye 2 Eye Graphics, Nancy creates designs that capture your passion—the true essence of your business—in a visual manner, and moves your branding and marketing materials from “obsolete” to “outstanding”. Nancy connects with you, eye-2-eye, and transforms your ideas into stunning, original representations of your business identity. To view Nancy's extensive portfolio visit, www.Eye2EyeGraphics.com