FOOD TECHNOLOGY FACT SHEET

FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER

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Helpful Tips for Improving the Visual Appeal of Marketing Materials

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Introduction

Do you have a wonderful product that needs an exterior makeover? Often, marketing materials are a major component in forming a consumer's awareness of a product. Following simple design guidelines will improve the impact of any marketing program. For companies who wish to outsource the design of their marketing materials, these tips can serve as an evaluation tool for prospective service providers' portfolios or work examples.

Fonts

1. Use no more than two fonts to make designs clear, sharp and attractive. Pages with multiple fonts are distracting to viewers. The message of the material is lost and readers are less likely to spend time deciphering the message.
2. Writing in all caps is like shouting at the reader. It is hard to read and disrupting. It is much more natural for viewers to read text not in all capitals. There are very few special occasions when using all capital letters is acceptable.
3. Use fonts appropriate for your target audience. Romantic script letters work well on gourmet products. Western style letters can be appealing on meats and sauces. Although many fonts are attractive, the font chosen needs to match the product and target audience.
4. Understand when to use serif fonts and sans serif fonts. In Latin, *serif* means "with feet" and *sans serif* means "without feet." Readers feel comfortable reading body copy in serif fonts. Fonts such as Times New Roman and Bookman Old Style work best. The bottoms of the letters have little lines resembling feet. In contrast, *sans serif* fonts like Arial and Century Gothic do not have feet. Consequently, they are easier to read from a distance and work best in headlines, as well as in signage and in-store displays.
5. Be careful when mixing fonts that may be visually distracting. Using two highly contrasting fonts can be visually disturbing. For example, a font that looks like a child's scrawling would not work well with old-fashioned cursive. Similar fonts also can prove ineffective. If the fonts are nearly identical, pick one and use it. The viewer is likely to think it is a mistake when the fonts used are almost the same. The slight difference does not improve the design.

Graphics

1. Remember the importance of the dominant element. Each page needs one graphic element that is significantly larger. It improves the visual flow of the design. The viewer wants to see the big picture first and then continue looking at the item.
2. Understand the difference between line art and gray-scale art. Line art is made up of only black and white lines. It is the best to use in materials that will be reproduced using a photocopier. Gray-scale art has varying shades of gray. It is generally more detailed. Mixing the two types of art is a sure sign of an amateur designer.
3. Use appropriate art. Just because a graphic is cute is not a good enough reason to use it. If the art does not significantly add to the design, do not use it. Space should be used to convey your message. Needless graphics only distract the viewer.
4. Do not use graphics merely to fill space. If you do not have enough to say to fill the page, maybe you do not need to send out the material. Sometimes it is better to effectively use white space. Overcrowded designs are too complicated for the typical viewer.
5. When picking a graphic, photographs are better than illustrations. Viewers identify better with photographs because they can relate to the subject better. They are less likely to respond to illustrations that generally elicit less viewer interest.

Color and black and white advertisements are included as examples of properly used graphics.

Most Compelling Words to Use

You	Easy	Results
Benefits	Free	Sale
Money	Startling	Proven
Why	Save	Secrets
Discovery	Fast	Safety
Health	Guarantee	New
Love	Revealed	Yes

Text

1. Flooding a page with excessive amounts of information will not help you reach your target audience. A brochure or pamphlet does not need to tell the viewer about every single aspect of your business. Less is sometimes more when it comes to reaching the viewer. Remember the purpose of the material. Give the reader just enough facts to get them interested.
2. Rushing to put together materials can be dangerous. One spelling mistake or grammatical error can undermine your credibility. Check and double-check your text. This is often the first impression the viewer will have of your business. Don't get off on the wrong foot with a careless mistake. It is also important to have at least one other person edit the text and look for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.
3. Remember your audience when writing text. Target everything you write to your audience. Do not write at a college level when you are targeting grade school children. Remember, it is important to fully understand your audience before you start writing.
4. Determine your purpose before you start writing. Designing without a concrete purpose is meaningless. How is your viewer supposed to understand your materials if you do not even know what you are trying to prove? Decide before you sit down at your computer whether you are trying to inform, persuade or entertain your audience.
5. Research your medium before beginning the design. If you are designing a t-shirt, you will need different text than if you are writing an eight-page newsletter or three-fold brochure. If you do not have much to say, do not tackle a big project. You will not be able to baffle your audience with bologna. Your audience will not appreciate having their time wasted.

Colors

1. Remember colors have meaning. Spend time researching shades of colors and testing their effectiveness before using them. Orange and hot pink are bright, powerful colors that can illicit strong emotions. If you are marketing cleaning products, brown may not be the best color to use in your promotional materials.
2. Study your audience before making color decisions. Senior citizens are not likely to buy neon green products. Certain demographics have basic tastes. Put aside your personal feelings and work at understanding your audience.
3. Mixing colors that are visually disturbing may have a negative affect on your marketing materials. The color combinations easiest to read are green on white, red on white, black on white, or navy blue on white. Time spent with a color wheel evaluating color schemes can benefit the effectiveness of your design.
4. Using more than three-color tones in a design can be distracting. Do not use every color in the rainbow. Too many

Courtesy of the Cowboy Journal. Designed by Jeremy Porter.

colors hurt the viewers' eyes. This makes even the best designs tacky and shoddy in appearance.

5. Be aware of the added cost of printing in color. Do not design in color if you are going to print in black and white. It is better to plan designs with the exact colors used for print. Designs that look amazing in blue and red may not be aesthetically pleasing in varying shades of gray.

Key terms to remember

Consistency

All the promotional materials you produce should feel like it belongs to a set. Do not change your fonts, colors and graphics every time you put together a new design. Viewers want to be able to associate your business' brochure with its Web site. Do not reinvent your company's image every time you go to the printer.

Image

Your product is only as good as its image. Having a positive, trustworthy appearance is imperative. Depending on your audience and purpose, you must form your image accordingly. If your target audience is college students, do not make the mistake of designing your image to attract baby boomers.

Purpose

You must have a concrete purpose. Viewers do not have time to work at figuring out the message. Decide upon a goal and stick with it. The audience will not tolerate a company that appears to lack consistency in their message.

Courtesy of the Cowboy Journal. Designed by Amanda Jones.

Courtesy of the Cowboy Journal. Designed by Amanda Jones.

Audience

Know your audience. You cannot sell products, persuade consumers or entertain buyers until you know them. The viewer is not likely to trust a company that does not understand its target audience. Soccer moms are not going to buy from a company that does not understand the challenges they face each day.

Medium

Decide how you are going to spread your message before making your design. A logo that looks appealing on a piece of paper may look out of place on a billboard sign. Make sure you consider a wide variety of mediums before making decisions.

Message

The message is always more important than the medium. The customer should be able to recall the message you are trying to convey, not just the fanciful logo or design.

Reasons to Design

Inform

Materials that are to be strictly informational should be very professional looking. The public needs to feel like the materials being distributed are from a reputable business.

Entertain

Entertaining materials come in various forms. Remember your target audience's tastes when looking to design products. Find out what your audience prefers, and then cater to those needs. You cannot attempt to decide what is entertaining to your target audience without thoroughly researching their interests.

Persuade

The fine line in persuasion is finding out who your target audience is and who influences them when they make decisions. Professional sports players commonly influence little boys. Therefore, a designer may use a sports theme when targeting younger audiences.

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The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Bringing the University to You!

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; home economics; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state, and local governments cooperatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and based on factual information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

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