

Brochures: 10 Blunders You Should Avoid

Lin Gensing
Content provided by The Edward Lowe Foundation

A popular clothing catalog once ran a headline that said, "Regularly \$15, on sale for \$9.99." Nothing wrong with this. But, later in the copy it read, "When you buy two, you pay \$12.99 each." What kind of deal is that? Not a very good one, but unfortunately a common one when businesses fall prey to some of the common "brochure blunders."

Many businesses develop brochures to help promote their wares. These brochures can be an excellent way to market your products and services — if they're done well. Not all brochures are done well, however. These mistakes can be embarrassing — worse, they can be costly. Following are 10 blunders that you should avoid when developing a brochure to promote your products or services.

1. Designing for awards — not response.

Aside from, perhaps, your friends and colleagues, nobody really cares what your brochure looks like or how clever it is — and neither should you. What you should care about is response.

G. Todd Hunt, director of creative services at ACI Marketing Services, Inc., in Chicago, talks about what he calls "the case of an art director gone wild." Too often, we become enamored of brochures that are flashy or unique in some stylistic way. Your customers are far, far less concerned with the "look" of your brochure than they are with its content.

2. Forgetting the "obvious."

As the opening example illustrates, sometimes it's the "small things" that trip you up. Forgetting your phone number, your address, a position for the respondent's name on the order form, etc. The solution? Proof, proof — and re-proof!

3. Focusing on you, instead of the customer.

As difficult as it may be to comprehend, your customers don't really care about you. They care about what you can do for them. Avoid self-aggrandizing copy. Focus on the customer and their needs.

4. Giving short shrift to your order form.

One company sent out a double postcard and was horrified when responses started coming in. The portion with the respondent's name and address hadn't been printed on the back of the return mailing piece, so they had no idea who was responding, or what they wanted to order!

Your order form should be the first part of the brochure you prepare, not the last. Make it easy to use and make sure that you capture all of the information you'll need to process the order.

5. Writing to the masses.

Hunt cautions against writing to the masses, "I think one thing that people really need to keep in mind when they put together a brochure is that it's one person that's going to be reading this and it really has to be written from the point of view of one person talking to another person. So you don't want to say things like, 'For all of you out there who are involved in such and so.' This isn't directed to all of you."

6. Trying to tell it all.

There is, no doubt, a lot you'd like to say about your products and services — a lot you could say. But, if you try to say too much you risk overwhelming the customer. The more complicated your message, the less likely the customer will be to wade through it to get at the meat of your offer.

7. Not telling enough.

The opposite problem of trying to tell too much in your brochure, is not telling enough about the right things. It's a delicate balance, but it can be achieved.

8. Becoming overly concerned with style — at the expense of content.

Concern yourself with what is said — or not said; not so much with how it's said. While clarity is important, haggling over the use of one word versus another, choice of font, color, etc., are not major points that will affect response.

9. Being "stingy" with your brochures.

A publisher developed an attractive four-color catalog to promote the company's business books. But, once developed, he was hesitant to distribute it too widely. "Only give these out to our best customers. They cost \$2.50 each!" The point of developing a brochure is to use it to increase sales. You won't do that by hoarding them in a box and distributing them only to "good"

customers. As the old saying goes, "It takes money to make money."

10. **Not measuring the effectiveness of your brochure.**

Don't just develop a brochure and decide that you've created the ultimate piece. Set up a process for determining the effectiveness of the piece and make revisions to improve response. Never become complacent about any of your product literature. Continue to revise and perfect it throughout the course of your business' life. Complacency leads to mediocrity. Don't fall into that trap.

11. **Not building in a follow-up mechanism.**

In sales, leads are gold. When a customer requests one of your brochures, what do you do after you send it to them? If you're like far too many businesspeople, the answer may be, "Wait for them to call" or "Nothing."

It's appalling how many businesses allow hot leads to turn cold through inattention. Don't let yourself fall into this trap.

Writer: Lin Gensing

All rights reserved. The text of this publication, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher.

About This Item

Category: Marketing

Subcategory: Advertising

Keywords: Advertising, Copywriting, Design

Content provided by:



The Edward Lowe Foundation was created by Ed and Darlene Lowe in 1985 to "champion the entrepreneurial spirit." Headquartered near Cassopolis, Michigan, the foundation works with entrepreneur support organizations nationwide to encourage peer learning among second-stage business owners. Before his death in 1995, Ed Lowe, the creator of Kitty Litter, had become an advocate for entrepreneurship as the key to the success of the free-enterprise system.

Contact: 800-232-LOWE(5693) or edwardlowe.org

© 2006 Biz Info Library. All Rights Reserved.