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EYE ON YOUR BUSINESS ■ *articles*

The Sum of the Whole: Part III

Integrating Professional Design Elements into Your Brand Identity

In the last two articles of this series, we covered key concepts to consider when planning your marketing pieces—hierarchy, WIIFM (What’s in it for me?), voice, intrigue, and action. In part two, we discussed five design concepts that you can use to “dress-up” your marketing materials—white space, good clear graphics and pictures, KISS (Keep it Somewhat Simple), grouping items, and typography. To wrap up this series, we will be talking about typography—the art and technique of arranging type—in more depth, because as architect and designer Charles Eames once said, “The details are not the details. They make the design.” Here’s how to make your typography choices showcase your marketing!

Tip #1: One space after a period. I realize that this concept is probably new to many readers, but it’s true! One space is the standard for the end of sentences. The two spaces came about because of mono-spaced fonts on a typewriter, which made it difficult to see where a new sentence began. However with the computer and word processing software programs, most fonts are proportional and use “optical” spacing, which automatically adjusts. This also applies to other punctuation as well—question marks, exclamation points, and colons.

Tip #2: No “widows” or “orphans.” In typography terms a “widow” is a very short line—usually one word—at the end of a paragraph or column. An “orphan” is similar to a widow, also a single word or very short line, but it appears at the top of a column or page. These are speed bumps on a smooth page of text. They interrupt the reader’s eye and decrease the readability. Think of it this way... the orphan or widow is lonely and you need to always give it a friend or two!

The “fix” is to reformat your paragraph to return the word before a widow down to join the line, or find a word up a few lines in the paragraph and return it to the next line, causing the whole paragraph to re-wrap and solve your problem. Note: This rule doesn’t always apply to the web because of how text free-flows on most sites and differences in how browsers display text.

Tip #3: Use appropriate dashes. A hyphen is the shortest and is commonly used to combine words and numbers such as a phone number. The “em” dash (—) is the longest of the three and is used to create a strong break in a sentence; they can also be used in pair like parentheses to enclose a word or a phrase. The “en” dash (–) is slightly longer than the hyphen but not as long as the em dash. En dashes denote a period of time or are used in place of the word “through,” September–December, or pages 4–8, for example. In most instances, all of these dashes don’t need a space either before or after them. Look for these dashes in the special characters or symbol menu of your software program.

Tip #4: Use typographer’s quotation marks. These marks—also called “smart quotes”—are the slanted or “curly” quotation marks. The straight up and down quotes are symbols used to indicate minutes, seconds, and inches—and should only be used in those contexts. You may have to use the symbol menu to switch back and forth between the “curly” quotes and the straight marks to be sure you are using the correct ones.

Tip #5: Use a drop-cap buffer. If you decide that you are going to use an introductory “drop-cap”—when the initial letter is made larger, sometimes extending down into the second or third line of the paragraph—you need a buffer between that large letter and the rest of the text. In other words you need a connector or lead-in. For example after the drop-cap you could take the first line of the paragraph and make it bold; another option is to take the first few words and make them all caps. Your goal is to achieve a smooth transition instead of a large, jarring jump for the reader’s eye.

In this article, we’ve looked at some ways to improve your typography in your marketing pieces. Remember that it’s only been about 500 years since moveable type was invented, first as letters carved on wood blocks and later as metal castings! Times have certainly changed and today, our computers offer us an almost unlimited number of digital typography choices—your informed use of these options will truly enhance your marketing efforts!

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