

Do you need a Company Brochure

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Why have a Company Brochure?

Well-designed and quality printed material can be a useful marketing tool. Most businesses want to attract the attention of prospective customers and inform them about the products or services they offer.

Advertising is a popular way of attracting attention and passing on information, so the effective use of promotional material is very important. A wide range of materials is used for promotion, but a company brochure is one of the most common items of marketing collateral.

A range of distinctive and informative publications can:

- distinguish your company from the competition;
- provide existing and prospective customers with new or updated information on your company's products or services;
- act as an effective tool in a targeted sales campaign;
- communicate the value you place on quality and professionalism; and
- establish your company as a long term, financially committed company.

Brochures are a marketing tool, and as such, do not on their own sell your product or service, but inform and hopefully excite the reader's curiosity to further action. A well-produced brochure can also help to reassure a customer that they have made the right decision in buying from your business. They should not be used as a substitute for an aggressive sales effort but as part of a well planned marketing campaign.

Your business may have one or multiple reasons for needing a company brochure including product or service advertising, direct marketing, business reply or many other reasons. It is important to determine a company marketing strategy prior to creating a company brochure, to evaluate whether a single brochure will meet the needs of your strategy or whether multiple documents are required. Many companies print one general purpose company brochure. While this may work for very focused businesses, it may not be the best strategy for your company. A

broadly focused brochure may appeal to no one; it is better to target your audience and decide on the specific message you want to send. In a diversified company, this may mean that several brochures are required: in this case they should have a common design and layout, with subtle differentiation, perhaps by the use of different colours for different brochures.

A company brochure must communicate its message clearly and concisely and be designed to catch the attention of your targeted audience. In order for the brochure to be read and for it to have the desired effect on the reader, it must:

- incorporate good design - it must be unique and visually appealing to make the reader want to open the brochure and read the content. The design and paper stock should match the tone of the written content and the company image.
- be well written - so it intrigues and appeals to the reader and communicates a satisfying and specific message that identifies tangible benefits;
- be planned and targetted - so it hits a pre-defined target market of readers that match your customer profile at the right time for their business needs;
- project your business image - your marketing collateral is an integral element of building and projecting your image. Many FTSE 350 companies spend enormous amounts of money on developing their image. A high-quality brochure that displays a commitment to your business and attention to detail will reflect well on your business.

The cost of writing, designing and printing your brochure must also meet your budgetary constraints!

Planning your Brochure

Creating a brochure can be a time consuming task. Sufficient time spent at the planning stage will minimise the risk of problems further on in the process. Focusing on the following steps will help ensure a successful outcome.

Determine your market

Who are the potential customers for your company's product or service? These customers will have characteristics that identify them as prospective customers. If the



resulting market is too broad you may need to split the market further according to characteristics.

Determine your message

What do you want to say and what results do you require from your brochure? Different markets may require different messages. If you develop too broad a message, it may not attract any prospective customers.

Do your research

Evaluate your competitors' brochures to determine which have reader appeal. Try and identify what does and doesn't work and why and use this knowledge in designing your own brochure.

Determine your format

Your prospective customers need to feel confident in and excited by your product or service based on the content within the limited confines of your brochure. There is no standard format for brochures: although most are still printed on white paper stock, i-brochures and CD/DVD brochures are becoming more common.

Determine your budget

Your company brochure may be constrained by cost. You need to consider the costs of writing, designing, printing and distribution. Your printer should be able to advise you on cost-effective options.

Designing your Brochure

Good design works - research by the Design Council indicates that companies who place value on design have improved performance over those who do not. Poor design can send a negative message about your business.

Identify the design you are seeking by looking through competitors' brochures to determine what elements of design they use for the same target audience. But if you require a logo, and if image and design are important factors for customers in your sector, then it's worthwhile using a professional designer who can help give your company brochure maximum impact. If your business has a "brand" or a coordinated look, this should be carried through to the company brochure. If not, a designer will be able to work with you to determine an appropriate concept for your industry and

marketplace.

All visuals - including your paper stock, colours, graphics and typography should reinforce your image. Consider the market you are targeting, the products/services you are offering, the message you are sending and the tone you are projecting. All of these must compliment one another.

Brochure layout

Keep in mind that your brochure will be competing against many others for your reader's attention. You'll want the design to be unique without distracting from the message. Prevent your brochure from going straight in the bin, or the reader from losing interest quickly by gaining their attention with an eye-catching design, interesting layout or thought-provoking statement.

Think carefully about content placement. If you are promoting or offering special pricing on a product, the pricing offers could be included in the content, on the cover and on the back of the brochure for maximum initial impact. Bearing in mind that many of your target market will not read the content, this maximises the chances that they will at least see the offer prices.

Take time to design your brochures, giving adequate thought not just to the content but also to the visual impact. Consider the following:

- Typeface;
- Your logo and letterhead design;
- Font and graphic colour or palette of colours;
- The text to be included - for example address, phone number, your business slogan;
- Paper stock - heavier paper is more expensive but can project a high-quality image;
- Consistency of image - your image should be consistent throughout your collateral; signage, stationery and brochures should all match to present a "branded" image.

Typeface

Choose a typeface that is consistent with the image you are projecting. For example, some typefaces project authority, others are friendly, others look expensive and others have a classy look. Typeface, typestyle and size, and the way they are configured on a page influence the appearance of your brochure more than any other visual element.



The typestyle you choose can either help or hinder your brochure's readability.

Many typefaces are available, but they generally fall into one of two categories - serif and sans serif:

- Serif typefaces have small strokes or feet at the ends of each letter and are most often used for body text. Besides adding character to the letters, they also enable the reader to see words and sentences rather than individual letters. Common serif typefaces include Times and New Century Schoolbook.
- Sans-serif typefaces have no feet on the letters and are most often used for display type - for example headlines, subheadings, captions etc. Common sans-serif typefaces include Helvetica and Arial.

Visual Images

Visual images add vibrancy to a brochure, can be informative, and give a more personal feel to a brochure. They may enhance the effectiveness of your message and the overall attractiveness of your brochure. The images may be photographs, illustrations or other graphical images such as charts and graphs.

- Photographs can add a sense of familiarity by letting readers see with accuracy and detail who or what the brochure is written about. A professional photographer should be considered for brochure quality photos.
- Illustrations can also convey accuracy and detail.
- Graphs combine the communication power of charts, diagrams and tables with the artistic appeal of illustrations.

White space is a necessary part of any brochure to avoid an over "busy" look that can be tiring and confusing on the eye. White space provides contrast, as well as a place of rest for the reader's eyes!

The size and quantity of images required should be determined early on as it may affect both the size of the brochure and the choice of production material.

Writing your Brochure

A company brochure should always be designed with the target audience in mind. It will not be read if it does not appeal to the reader. Identify the tone you are seeking and ensure it is compatible with your marketing image. The tone can give a warm feeling to a threatening topic or it can be helpful,

exciting, shocking, emotional or intellectual. The appropriateness of the tone varies according to the industry, customer profile and the message you are sending.

You may choose to write your own content or employ the services of a professional copywriter. Brochure content should be written after determining the intended market and purpose of the brochure. Regardless of the brochure format, most brochure content will generally comply with a standard model; one example of which is suggested below.

Front cover headline

The front cover headline is one of the most important parts of your brochure. It needs to be attention grabbing to stir the potential customer to read on. It must impart obvious "what's in it for me?" benefit to your target customers. If it's dreary, it won't be read further and you will have wasted your money.

Inside subheadings

The inside subheadings must maintain the prospects attention and reinforce your cover headline. Frequently, the subheadings will act as a navigational index describing the components of the body copy - your products/services, benefits, and competitive advantage.

Body of the brochure

Introductory paragraph / page

Your introductory paragraph should address the issue presented on the cover. Entice your prospects, but don't overwhelm them with thesis-length sentences. The introductory paragraph should establish the need that your product or service fulfils. If the reader identifies with the need at this stage, they will also be able to identify with the benefit your business can provide in servicing this need. If you don't engage your reader with this information up front they may not read on.

Identification of your product /service

Your body copy must include a description of your products and services, their features and major benefits and what sets you apart from your competition. Again, remember your target market and the message you are trying to get across. Only select the benefits that are relevant to the prospective customers you are trying to reach and that best example your competitive advantage. If you try to list all your perceived benefits you may weaken

the most important features of your deal winning benefits.

Use adjectives that best describe your business. Are your products one of a kind, exciting, innovative, high quality, cutting edge, results-orientated, creative, dynamic or distinguishable? Describe only your primary products and services that are likely to excite interest rather than providing an exhaustive list of all your services you provide. State what you do and why you do it best. Sell yourself and your business.

Benefits of your product / service

People buy a product or service because they either need it or want to. In order to create a need or a want, you must promote the benefits of using your product or service. Many companies advertise the features of their products or services but don't explain how that product or service will benefit the customer. Customers buy on the benefits they receive from using the product or service. Features simply enable the product or service to provide the benefit.

Your competitive advantage

Ensure your competitive advantage is obvious. Highlight what sets you apart from the competition, and what benefits your potential customers will accrue by choosing your offerings over your competitors. Only cite industry standards if they are a genuine competitive advantage. In most industries, customers will expect your business to conform to industry standards.

Optional – referenceable customers, awards and honours

Testimonials are an endorsement of your business and will have a positive influence on prospective customers, particularly where the reader's industry is similar to that of the customer providing the testimonial. If you want to include customer testimonials, make sure you have the customer's permission.

Back cover

The back cover should include all of your company contact information including your logo, company name, parent company or subsidiaries, contact details, opening hours, branch locations etc. as appropriate.

Proof reading

All drafts and the final version should be proofread by several people to ensure that all corrections are made (and no other errors have crept in) before the final version is

approved for printing. If the brochure has copy from multiple contributors, an "editor" should review the copy, headings, format and layout throughout the brochure to ensure a consistent style. In addition to checking what is there, it is also important to look for omissions especially contact details.

Copyright

If your brochure contains artwork that is not in the public domain, or reprints another writer's words, it may be in breach of copyright if permission has not been obtained. Most computer 'clip art' can be reproduced within the terms of the licence that comes with the software. However, such images may appear to be very hackneyed and it may be worthwhile purchasing professional stock photographs.

Producing your Brochure

You never get a second chance to make a first impression! Don't spoil fantastic design and creative copy with poor production. A quality finish will establish you as a quality company. A poor finish may lose you customers.

Brochure format

Once you have determined the size and the nature of the copy and images the size of the brochure required can be more accurately determined. Developing content before the format of the brochure is decided upon eliminates the problem of choosing a brochure format that is either too big or too small for the amount of content you have.

The most common brochure format is a printed brochure on white gloss or matte paper. This is a particularly suitable option if your business is on a budget. However, if you're trying to position your business as having a high quality image you may choose better quality paper stock.

Folders with customised inserts are a cost effective alternative to a standard brochure. They can hold a combination of product information sheets, offer leaflets, covering letters etc. They are cheaper to produce than brochures, and more flexible as the contents can be made up to suit the recipient. When information becomes out of date, only the relevant insert needs to be updated and replaced.

Brochures can also be provided on CDs, and as downloadable Portable Data Format (PDF) files. However, with the Internet revolution now a reality, it may prove effective to send your message electronically instead of the conventional way of distributing printed brochures. With the widespread use of email, your target audience may respond well to electronic brochures which can be visually impressive, are fast to update and less expensive than the printed variety because they avoid the necessity of incurring print and re-print costs.

Software

There are plenty of software packages around to help you. For example, with Microsoft Word you can achieve quite stunning designs. For more flexible and professional publications, we suggest software such as Adobe PageMaker, In-Design or Quark Xpress or Microsoft Publisher.

Paper stock

The look and feel of your paper should reinforce your image. Hundreds of paper colours are available to you as are different textures such as linen, laid, parchment, vellums etc. For the environmentally conscious, there is also a large selection of recycled papers from which to choose.

Print finishing

Modern printing techniques incorporate an impressive range of print finishing options including lamination, gold foiling and die cutting that can visually enhance a company brochure and make it stand out in your competitive field.

Colour

Studies have shown that colours invoke fairly universal emotions in people. There are three primary colours - yellow, red and blue. Yellow is associated with light and warmth, red is emotional and active and blue is passive and calming. When using colour, make sure there are distinct tonal contrasts, not just different colours. Your colour selection, along with your typestyle and visuals, should reinforce the image and the message you want to send.

Don't underestimate the impact of black and white! The stark combination can produce a very professional brochure and may be appropriate for a particular offering. Alternatively, black and white can be used with a paper colour and engaging visuals for dramatic effect.

Professional printing

All but the simplest of company brochures will be professionally printed. Should you decide to get your brochures designed and printed professionally, there are a number of issues you will need to consider before deciding upon a company to work with.

Choosing a Printer

Make sure you consider the following before deciding between a shortlist of Printers you're considering using:

- Have you seen examples of previous brochures they've printed?
- Is the printing of a high standard?
- Can they provide the paper stock you require?
- Can they commit to the volumes and delivery times you require?
- Are the prices they quote competitive?
- Will they commit now to prices for reprint orders you may require later?
- Are they located close by in case you need to visit to discuss your plans or view artwork for approval.

You can search for a registered member in your area on the **British Printing Industries Federation** website at www.britishprint.com.

Creating a production specification

A production specification ensures that both you and your printer understand exactly what is required in terms of production. It specifies the quality, quantity, paper type and weight, colours, packaging, delivery and so on, and any deadlines required and will reduce the risk of costly printing errors. The specification can also double as an internal document to inform relevant internal managers of the details of the production of the brochure for marketing and budgetary purposes.

Print costs

Printing costs vary depending on a number of factors, including:

- the quantity of brochures you require;
- the number of colours used;
- the quality of paper or card being used;
- the finishing, i.e. collating, packing and delivering;
- whether it's your first print run or reprints of work the printer has done before.

Obtain quotes from a shortlist of print firms. You can then compare prices and contact the ones you are most interested in pursuing.

When comparing quotes, it is important to check that the suppliers are offering the right level of service and that incidentals (delivery and packing charges, correction charges, charges for changes to schedules and cost of additional proofs) are also taken into consideration. An initial agreement should be reached as to what constitutes incidentals. Enquire about costing for repeat orders. If the brochures will be required repeatedly, then you may be eligible for a discount. You should also check what the cost will be for any coordinating stationery or other collateral you may require.

The majority of money will be spent on set up costs, so that a large print run will often be more cost effective than a short one. However, don't order more copies than you need. You do not want to be left with thousands of useless brochures, if your address, products or services change.

Remember that choosing the lowest price you're offered won't necessarily be the most cost-effective option in the long run. If the printing quality is poor you may find yourself having to reprint your brochures before this should really be necessary.

Rather than having every item of stationery professionally designed and printed, you can also ask your printer to provide you with your logo graphic file to incorporate in your basic letterhead so it serves as an invoice, a receipt or other document you need, and can be printed on your office printer.

In-house printing

If you are a small business and only require low volumes of simple one page or collated brochures, you may be able to design and print the brochure in-house, particularly if you have a colour printer. For small quantities this may be a cost-effective option, as simple printers can now be purchased for less than £100 and can produce stationery of high quality when good quality paper is used. However, the price of ink cartridges can make high-volume printing with these machines expensive.

Recommended Reading

- The Best of Brochure Design 8, by Ann Willoughby, published by Rockport Publishers, ISBN: 1592531210
- The Best of Brochure Design 7, by Wilson Harvey, published by Rockport Publishers, ISBN: 1592530850
- The Best of the Best of Brochure Design (Best of the Best of Brochure Design), by Susan Raymond, published by Rockport Publishers, ISBN: 1592530508
- Brochure Design That Works: Secrets for Successful Brochure Design, by Lisa Cyr, published by Rockport Publishers, ISBN: 1564969126
- The Best of Brochure Design 6, by Cheryl Dangel Cullen, published by Rockport Publishers, ISBN: 156496969X
- Layout Index: Brochure, Web Design, Poster, Flyer, Advertising, Page Layout, Newsletter, Stationery Index, by Jim Krause, published by North Light Books; ISBN: 1581801467
- Fresh Ideas in Brochure Design (Fresh Ideas), by Terri Alekzander (Editor), published by North Light Books; ISBN: 0891347550



Useful Links

[Chartered Institute of Marketing](#)
The Chartered Institute of Marketing provides useful information on creating marketing communications. They also run a course: *How to Write the Perfect Brochure and Leaflet*: Details are at: www.cim.co.uk/tandq/training/courses/1200.aspx

[Publishing Grants](#)

Some county councils provide grants for new businesses towards the cost of business stationery including company brochures and marketing literature.

[Business Link](#)

Business Link maintains a Grants and Support Directory (GSD) that allows you to search for potential sources of help with starting up or developing your business. For details, please visit: www.improve.businesslink.gov.uk/resources

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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