

Creating Fliers That Get Action

If you word your promotional flier correctly, prospects will flock to do business with you.

April 14, 2003

By Paul & Sarah Edwards

Q: Do you think it would be a good idea to write bid amounts on the fliers that I'm going to pass out for my lawn care business?

A: Yes, supplying a prospective customer with a specific dollars-and-cents price is much more important than just making a claim of "low prices"--it's the equivalent of a picture being worth a thousand words. By supplying this information, you're also personalizing your flier. Instead of passing out generic fliers door-to-door, you are taking the time to customize each flier with a quote just for their lawn.

Fliers can be an effective marketing tool for businesses whose services are performed outdoors, like lawn care, other gardening and landscaping services, window washing, pooper scooper services and so on, because without trespassing you can actually see the scope of the service you would provide and quote a tailored price. While most fliers get thrown away--often because of poor design and uninspiring copy--your flier can be effective simply by communicating what you are offering and that you do quality work for your low price. Here are five tips to help you convey a level of quality that will prompt phone calls when prospective customers find your flier on their doors:

1. To indicate that your price quote is specific to the property, include the prospect's address on the flier.
2. To suggest you do quality work, print your flier on thick paper.
3. Keep your flier specific to the service you want to sell. So even if you provide landscaping along with lawn mowing, devote the flier to lawn mowing. If your flier impresses, someone who needs a related service is apt to call you even without your listing all the things you do. A list of services clutters the limited amount of geography a flier provides and detracts from your ability to get your message across.
4. Include some form of endorsement or testimonial on your flier. You might include a quote from a customer. With your customer's consent, include the address and the customer's name. If you work with a number of customers in the local area, you can urge your prospect to "check our work" and list local addresses.
5. To tell more about what you do, provide a Web site where someone interested in what you do can learn more. Have a collection of photos and testimonials there.

In today's worrisome economy, people are less apt to part with their discretionary dollars. Taking the time to produce a flier that makes what you do look like a good deal is worth the effort.

Paul and Sarah Edwards are the authors of several homebased business books, including Working From Home. Their latest book is Why Aren't You Your Own Boss?

Part C

Reading Materials

“What Does Design Do”

The Design Manual
by David Whitebread
UNSW Press 2001

What does design do?

'...there is always tension in good design; a tension between opposing forces represented by the creative and the prosaic, for design must work as few other artistic endeavours must work. It must work at many levels, at a practical level and at an imaginary level, with subtlety and obviousness, with clarity and suggestiveness, and with simplicity and complexity all intertwined in time and space.'

Steve Bright in
Hail! Storm

Design is not an optional extra. If something has been presented in a visual form, it has been designed. Thus, everyone who presents information in a chosen form has made design decisions.

You can't say, 'Oh, we haven't got the time or money to design this—let's just get it out there!' because you will still put the material together in some visual form. Without consideration of the design decisions you're making or their effectiveness, you may as well forget the project. A project that doesn't meet its objectives, doesn't communicate to its potential audience and doesn't get seen, doesn't perform. It is a wasted opportunity, wasted time and wasted money. And you probably still have to communicate that message! So take the time now to consider design and its impact on every piece of communication you send and receive.

Good design

Whether design is used effectively (what might be called 'good' design) or ineffectively ('bad' design) is up to you. Effective design is described as the organisation of material which communicates information to a selected person (the 'audience' or 'receiver') using the visual language most appropriate to that person, the information itself, and the information source or author (the 'sender'). When you design, you are attempting to give your project its logical structure and, as a consequence of that, its logical form.

The term 'graphic design' was first used by an American designer, William Addison Dwiggins, in 1922, when he used it to describe his activities as 'bringing order and visual form to printed material'. It is still one of the best definitions, but we would probably be more broad in our media selection and embrace contemporary visual media—television, film and particularly electronic publishing—in addition to 'printed material'.

Design is used as a communication tool to:

- attract attention and arouse interest
- separate the particular message from the many other messages people receive daily
- make your message stronger, more effective and perhaps even memorable
- save money by achieving maximum communication value from whatever resources are available.

Design is not cosmetic. Design will not hide a poorly written text, an out-of-focus photograph, an ill-conceived chart or a jerky animation. The reader must be able to understand the text, the illustrations and the concept.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

Phillip B. Meggs, *Type and image: The language of graphic design*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1989, ISBN 0 442 25846 1.

Peter Bonnici, *Visual language: The hidden medium of communication*, RotoVision SA, Crans-Pres-Celigny, Switzerland, 1999, ISBN 2 88046 388 2.

Mark Oldach, *Creativity for graphic designers: A real-world guide to idea generation—from defining your message to selecting the best idea for your printed piece*, North Light Books, Cincinnati, 1995, ISBN 0 89134 583 3.

John Newcomb, *The book of graphic problem-solving: How to get visual ideas when you need them*, RR Bowker Co., New York, 1984, ISBN 0 8352 1895 3.

Audiences

Anything that tries to communicate information should be able to be understood. The way material is written, with a logical order and appropriate language, and the way it looks will attract and hold the attention of the desired reader.

Know your reader. Awareness of your readership and all the previous experience a reader brings to the text must have a bearing on the way you design the text.

Since design is the organisation of material to communicate with a selected person, it follows that you should know all you can about that person. Consider the following when preparing a profile of your reader:

- age—and the implied cultural influences and education levels
- life experiences—and family background
- language—words, tone and usage
- visual literacy—comprehension level of symbols and metaphors.

Know *all*.

Massimo Vignelli of Vignelli Associates, speaking at the international design conference, *Sydney Design 99*, reminded his audience of semiotic theory when he indicated that design must be:

- semantically correct
- syntactically consistent
- pragmatically understood by the user

and

- visually powerful
- intellectually elegant
- timeless.

READ MAGAZINES ABOUT IT

Communication Arts

How

Desktop

Publish

Design Graphics

Australian Creative

ITgraphics

Print

Step-by-step Graphics

Computer Publishing

Cre@teOnline

Graphis

Dynamic Graphics

U&Lc Online: Upper and Lower Case

Applied Arts

Idea

IdN: International Designers Network

Digital Photography and Design

Australian MacWorld

Marketing and Ebusiness

Professional Marketing

3D World

Eye

AGenDA

Creative Review

Graphics International

Campaign Brief

B&T Weekly

Adbusters

AdNews

Baseline

Emigre

Form

Fuse

P4+

I.D.

Correct assumptions about what will attract and move the audience can ease many production decisions, not the least being finance. The job you conceive of as a full-colour, 'coffee-table' book may be quite wrong for your audience, who may simply need a single-colour pamphlet or a Web site address.

Other decisions such as the final approval of the manuscript or acceptance of a rough design should be made, not on your own aesthetic terms or your personal preferences, but rather by considering the profile of the expected readers.

There may be more audiences than you initially consider. For example, if children are the primary audience, there is usually the secondary audience of parents, teachers, peers and siblings, and perhaps even tertiary audiences of grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Use language your primary audience will understand, but ensure it is appropriate for your relationship to them. There can be an awkward moment when you realise you've used the wrong language even though the vernacular may have been chosen to make an audience feel more comfortable—the audience may feel that this is the wrong way for you to speak to them!

Choose images that will attract the primary audience and use visual language that they will understand. Then modify or allow the text and design to reflect what you know to be the requirements of your secondary and tertiary audiences.

By tailoring information to the user or receiver of that information, the final form the information takes might be different from what you like. But if your assumptions about the audience are accurate and you have an appropriate message and format for them, the material will be well designed.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

Henry Steiner and Ken Haas, *Cross-cultural design: Communicating in the global marketplace*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1995, ISBN 0 8230 0545 3.

Styling

Design is often mistaken for styling. Styling at its worst is a surface or cosmetic treatment—creating form for the sake of form. However, for a designer, an understanding of styling is essential if it is to be used effectively.

Styles and concepts rarely exist in a void—they have value in the associations they trigger:

- their original political context
- their original social context
- their nostalgia value.

To provide the correct triggers, you need to know the audience's life experiences and attitudes.

Styles can stimulate memories, even for those with a 'learned' response to the stimuli, thereby helping to accurately define the target audience. For example, audiences too young to 'remember' can recognise the fashion, music, and architectural and graphic styles of a historical period through exposure to museums, personal recollection by older relatives, print, film and video. But it is often more than just historical association; it can be emotional as well. Typefaces, imagery reproduction techniques and colour palettes all have associations—the response is often intuitive, not necessarily conscious.

Styling is a great tool in that it brings with it these associations which add great dimension to a piece. If you can harness the appropriate associations, you can create powerful designs. Advertisers and filmmakers use styling extensively to unlock an audience's past experiences, so there is a layer on which to build the story. It is a sort of visual shorthand where the viewer fills in detail, meeting the concept and enhancing it intellectually by connecting the combination of triggers that have been supplied.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

- Philip B. Meggs, *A history of graphic design*, 3rd edn, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1998, ISBN 0 471 29198 6.
- Richard Hollis, *Graphic design: A concise history*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1994, ISBN 0 500 20270 2.
- Laurel Harper, *Graphic radicals/Radical graphics*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1999, ISBN 0 8118 1680 X.
- Alan Livingston and Isabella Livingston, *The Thames and Hudson encyclopaedia of graphic design and designers*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1992, ISBN 0 500 20259 1.
- Steven Heller and Seymour Chwast, *Graphic style: From Victorian to post-modern*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1988, ISBN 0 500 23525 2.
- James Craig and Bruce Barton, *Thirty centuries of graphic design: An illustrated survey*, Watson-Guption Publications, New York, 1987, ISBN 0 8230 5355 5.
- Edward M. Gottschall, *Typographic communications today*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1989, ISBN 0 262 07114 2.
- Ronald Labuz, *Contemporary graphic design*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1991, ISBN 0 442 31887 1.
- Donald Albrecht, Ellen Lupton and Steven Skov Holt, *Design culture now*, Laurence King, London, 2000, ISBN 1 85669 210 8.

Part D

Reading Materials

“Real Communication”

The Design Manual
by David Whitebread
UNSW Press 2001

Real communication

In *Visual Information for Everyday Use*, Harm Zwaga, Theo Boersema and Henriëtte Hoanhout define information as 'data organized in such a way that it can be used by people to serve their goals. The actual organization of the data evokes in the user a meaning. This organization can come into being because the user generates the interrelation between the perceived data, i.e., attaches a meaning to a set of data. The organization can also come into being because somebody else has processed and presented the data in such a way that it evokes in everybody else (ideally) the intended meaning...'

'Communication' is a buzzword, but how much is really being communicated?

Communication happens on different levels: the emotive and the intellectual. Experiences and moods modify it. As a designer and communicator you must try to satisfy all these levels. Will the gut reaction meet the intellectual rigour the reader brings to the message?

In many cases, a client or boss simply wants a design to communicate clearly through a visual medium. Why all the fuss?

The first priority of all graphic design is to get attention. To do that, you must break free of all the competing imagery in the marketplace and target the people most likely to respond to the message with images and design that appeal to them.

Texture, colour, imagery and text are used to intrigue, astound, seduce or provoke that second glance that brings the subject to a reader's attention. The second glance stops the reader from going past your material. Some designers do it with complexity, some with simplicity, some with boldness, some with subtlety—however you do it, do it you must.

In any market there are usually multiple voices, each vying for the attention of prospective purchasers or users of the message. To stand out from the crowd, your 'voice' must be distinct. Against a children's choir, a bass voice will stand out. In a pet shop window's display of white rabbits, a black rabbit will stand out. In a stand of black-and-white brochures, a colour brochure will stand out. This is separation.

To break free of competing imagery, you need to assess the visual form of the competition, i.e. material that surrounds yours or that your reader will be aware of. Then you need to distinguish yours dramatically. If the competition's is multicolour, yours should be black and white. If theirs is illustrative or photographic, yours should be flat

colour. If theirs is highly patterned or textured, yours should be flat. If theirs is glossy, yours should be matt. If theirs is homey, yours should be high-tech. This involves research and an understanding of the marketplace into which your communication is going.

So you separate your material, but what else gets attention? Pictures get attention. But not every picture gets equal attention, and in a world with vast numbers of pictures, the impact of 'just a picture' is lessened. In a world where digital manipulation distorts the supposed 'truth' of a photograph, the impact of a picture is lessened even further.

But the impact of a *good* picture is not lessened. If you can find a picture that tells your story with drama, surprise and relevance, you're on a winner. Many pictures do not have these three attributes—so build them in.

Multidimensionality is attractive; layering imagery and text achieves this with implied foreground and background interaction. The juxtaposition of imagery, too, can be surprising or ironic. The incorporation of type into the imagery can mean that both the verbal and visual messages are simultaneously read—and in the era of the sound bite, that's an advantage.

The design of multipicture images has gone beyond the ordinary collage that might have been used previously. You could design a hybrid image that in itself would stop a viewer because of its clever distortion of reality. But is that enough? Not when everyone is doing it. One way to compete with the plethora of hybrid images is to 'separate'. Simplicity and understatement can be attractive in a sea of dynamic imagery; a quiet, plain, minimal statement can succeed.

Some magazines have found that one way of getting attention on the newsstand is to use 'novelty' inks and finishes—fluorescent colours, holograms in laser-etched foils, and metallic inks.

A small, well-chosen area of colour can be very powerful in a layout. Just look at some Chinese *sumi-e*, black ink paintings, where the signature block of the artist is printed in red. That little red block is very powerful as a layout element, even though it takes up a tiny area in relation to the surrounding illustration.

As a layout technique, a favourite for impact is accentuated scale relationships. If all around you is big, be small.

DOING IT SMARTER

When not to design

Making the choice not to design is sometimes as important as knowing how to use design effectively. For example, mass market fiction publishers use cover design to attract attention to a book and to communicate its content by coding it with genre imagery and typography that alerts the appropriate audience. However, graphics can be unwelcome intrusions between the covers.

At what other times do readers resent the imposition of design on communication? In Web sites, slow-loading images are resented when a reference page or an online form is needed. Readers don't want to play with or admire the information, they just want to give or get it and get out. Compulsory forms or paperwork, either on screen or in print, need to be designed for accuracy and speed.

This is not really 'not designing', but knowing when to pull back and let the communication between author and reader happen naturally. When interest is piqued, design. When interest has peaked, don't.

If you have an image of something big like an elephant, reduce it to be the full stop in your enormous headline. Blow up a fingerprint to full-page size to create an interesting graphic, then run tiny type through the spaces.

Another way of looking at this is an old stand-by technique used by photographers and art directors—conceal something that is easily recognised (usually a zoom-in on a detail or texture) or reveal something that is not easily recognised (have you seen those stop-motion photos of a bullet going through an apple or a sugar cube dropped in a cup of coffee?).

Intrigue your audience. Hit them in the eyes with a graphic that is impossible to ignore—and leave your competition back at the starting gate.

But avoid over-design. Actually, 'over-design' is a misnomer—'over-styled' is normally a more accurate description—but 'over-design' is convenient because we recognise the implication that there is too much design intervention between content and audience. What defines 'too much'? When the design begins to be noticed as 'the design' and the content is ignored or hidden, effectively camouflaged, the product has been over-designed. This veneer of 'being designed' is the problem—what should enhance actually detracts or disguises.

So ask yourself if your message will be sought out by your target audience? This is where most design effort goes, and many designs stop there! Once the reader is attracted, is the designer's job done? What about the communication part? Whether the product is entertainment, information or education, designers must spend as much time formatting the text and pictures to keep the reader involved as they did in attracting the reader's attention in the first place. The mass audience is not likely to spend time trying to find the headline, the beginning of the article, the price, the coupon, the caption, the phone number, the dates...

Many of the most effective designs are so simple you hardly notice that they have been designed. The design fits the subject so comfortably, so perfectly, that you would never believe someone laboured over it—and in many cases, you don't even notice the occasional flaw.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

Beryl McAlhone and David Stuart, *A smile in the mind: Witty thinking in graphic design*, Phaidon, London, 1996, ISBN 0 7148 3812 8.

Bob Gill, *Forget all the rules you ever learned about graphic design: Including the ones in this book*, Watson-Guptill Publications, New York, 1981, ISBN 0 8230 1863 6.

Steven Heller and Gail Anderson, *Graphic wit: The art of humor in design*, Watson-Guptill Publications, New York, 1991, ISBN 0 8230 2161 0.

Robin Landa, *Graphic design solutions*, Delmar Publishers, New York, 1996, ISBN 0 8273 6352 4.

Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, *Design, writing, research: Writing on graphic design*, Kiosk, New York, 1996, ISBN 1 56898 047 7.

Karen D. Fishler, *On edge: Breaking the boundaries of graphic design*, Rockport Publishers, Gloucester, Mass., 1998, ISBN 1 56496 454 X.

Clarity

You've probably read articles and other books on design and typography that encourage clear, legible and readable communication—and you've probably worked on developing a number of techniques that will produce those objectives. But then you see quite the opposite being widely produced, shown to you in design makeover pages and other before-and-after articles, and winning awards. Why? Where does clarity fit, given that the design and typographic 'fashion' appear to be concerned with all but clarity?

To bring the message home effectively, clarity of ideas, logical sequence, relevant visual supporting images and appropriate use of language are essential. But even assuming these have been achieved, a publication can still be ignored.

Clarity of expression and presentation do not necessarily have the power to attract attention. If the message doesn't get attention, the time spent preparing it clearly has been wasted. Clear communication will give people more information in a shorter period of time once you have their attention.

Having attracted a reader's attention, the material should then be presented in such a way that it communicates clearly and maintains the reader's interest. But you must assess when clarity—the unambiguous, fast and accurate communication of ideas—takes over from attention-getting.

The techniques of information architecture are user-focused and based on questions such as: What current knowledge or interest or awareness do readers bring to the text? How are readers likely to want the information?

'The aim of an information design project, and in fact of every design project, is to develop a viable product: a product that compares well with competing products, or serves a specific unique purpose.

This means that a new product should satisfy at reasonable costs not only the needs of the user, but also those of the client/producer, and, when applicable, those of the distributor and retailer. Also the consequences of the introduction of the product for the environment may play a role in the development process. From the point of view of the user this relates to appropriate pricing, easy availability, convenience of use, aesthetic appeal, and safety in disposal.'

Harm Zwaga, Theo Boersema and Henriëtte Hoonhout in their introduction to *Visual Information for Everyday Use*

According to Richard Saul Wurman in *Information Architecture*, there are five ways to organise information, which can be remembered by the acronym LATCH:

- L by location
- A by alphabet
- T by time (many museum shows are organised by timeline)
- C by category (the way department stores are organised)
- H by hierarchy, from the largest to the smallest of something, from the reddest to the lightest red, from the densest to the least dense, and so on.

The main way you organise something is by deciding how you want it to be found.

How are readers likely to search for it? Once they have it, what will they do with it?

The interesting aspect of these questions is that our standard information organisation systems, based on chronology or alphabetical or numerical listings, rarely provide the appropriate 'way in' to the information from a user's perspective. Information analysts try to find the best way to access information for a majority of people. Rather than assuming the knowledge of the educated specialist in that sort of information, information designers use associations or recognised forms and sequences of information retrieval based on their broader audience's experiences.

They also use visual literacy extensively—diagrams, abbreviations, summaries, coding and symbol systems, quick references and cross-referencing systems. Incredibly complex material can often be presented more clearly in a diagram, flow chart or graph or, in many cases, a combination of these.

Flow charts, for example, allow you to ask questions along the way to identify in finer detail the sort of information or way through the information the reader needs. These are used to identify problems and potential solutions in the trouble-shooting sections of manuals for electrical products, for example.

Knowing when and how to use diagrams and other information-organising systems can open the door to real communication.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

Richard Saul Wurman, *Information anxiety: What to do when information doesn't tell you what you need to know*, Pan Books, London, 1989. ISBN 0 330 31097 6.

Richard Saul Wurman, *Follow the yellow brick road: Learning to give, take, and use instructions*, Bantam Books, New York, 1992, ISBN 0 553 07425 3.

Richard Saul Wurman, *Information architecture*, Graphis Press Corporation, Zurich, 1996, ISBN 3 85709 458 3.

Rick Poyner, *Typography now: The next wave*, Interiors Books, London, 1991, 'Introduction', ISBN 0 904 866 904.

Words

1.2 seconds. According to some recent sources, **that's all** the time you have to seduce potential customers with a **piece of printed matter**. At **1.3 seconds**, they've turned the page, zoomed past your billboard, passed **the bus**, or their attention has been drawn to a **competing message**.

Let's say we are **happy** with our **ability** to grab people's attention with an arresting graphic image, a vibrant colour scheme or a **stand-out graphic pattern**. That's used a **glance**. How do we get them to land **within the rest of our allotted 1.2 seconds** and perhaps choose to stay a while?

Presumably, the attraction has worked because **the graphic** accurately isolated the audience that is most likely to be interested in our message. We then have to generate interest—and we most often do it with words. But this is still the seduction phase—despite its brevity—and we usually need to use **more words** to say what readers need to know **than it's possible** to read in the remaining time.

But think about the mode of attention **those potential readers** are using. They are still skimming and dipping, like a hummingbird, hovering over our message. They are skimming words, too. The words **they need to find** are signposts to the greater ideas contained. We use headings as signposts in text. But our readers are not into the text yet—they're still hovering. Marketers understand that words like 'you' and 'new' are good attractors. But for determining ultimate interest (and therefore **landing rights**), there are certain words in a headline that work harder than others. Our readers **should be able to find these** and find them fast.

We can use type variation to allow certain words in a headline to be found quickly. They can be:

- larger
- a different colour
- a different typeface
- positioned more prominently
- have more space around them.

Finding words that jump out **means** we are encouraging cross-reading, i.e. reading out of sequence. Most writers care about **their words** being presented in **the correct order** and do not appreciate cross-readings, but cross-reading can communicate faster. If successful, it can encourage more readers to read **further into** the author's text. The graphic techniques listed above enable readers to keep reading continuously, as is most often desired by authors, but also allow 'attractive' words to jump out and trap them.

Since our language is cluttered with words of less importance, how do we analyse a piece of text in terms of each individual word's ability to attract a person? Let's look at the positioning statement for the Loud festival:

Loud: Australia's first national media festival of youth culture and the arts

The most important word, for advertising recognition purposes, is the name of the festival, *Loud*. The three least important words are *of*, *and* and *the*. We almost have a tautology with the words *Australia's* and *national*. Why would we want to keep both? What do they each bring to the message? *Australia's* is definitive; *national* implies that the festival is big and encompassing, not just a localised festival that occurs somewhere in Australia. But the fact that posters and advertising are most likely to be placed pretty much exclusively in Australia seems to indicate that both words are less important in the scheme of things. Now, who cares that it's the first festival? It could communicate that it's an exciting development and 'new', so it's okay but not clear. Numerical labelling from second onwards usually reminds people of past success.

But really, those first three words in the placement line are not giving people information they need to decide their potential involvement in the festival.

So *media festival* ends up being important: *media* because it defines where the festival is taking place (in media events); *festival* because it defines the product. *Youth culture* is equally important because it defines the audience for participation and involvement. *Arts* is less important because it can be considered a subset of *culture*.

So, in briefly analysing an eleven-word positioning line, we find only four words that are necessary for identification in the skimming process.

An easy way to isolate them is to use well-chosen line-breaks that place these words to dominate:

Loud: Australia's first national
media festival of
youth culture and the arts

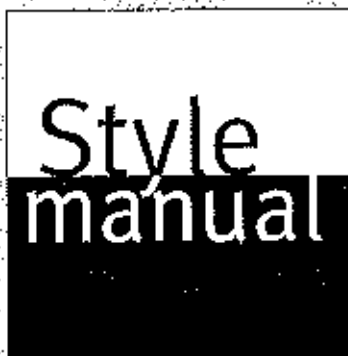
There are many other more interesting graphic techniques for allowing those words to dominate. But for those people who have chosen to stop hovering and land on our message, the whole sequence should be able to be reread in context to get the full intent and nuance of the message as the author had intended.

Design dynamics

It helps to have an understanding of the dynamics of design and the language that describes them in order to use them effectively—to attract interest in the first place, to support the content, and to sustain interest throughout a publication.

Contrast

Contrast is arguably the most powerful tool for creating great designs. Images, typefaces, colours and textures can all be contrasted, or used in any combination.



Scale

Scale describes the size relationships between elements on a page. At its simplest, it is the contrast of big with small. Extreme scale relationships—very big with very small—create dynamic, attractive layouts.



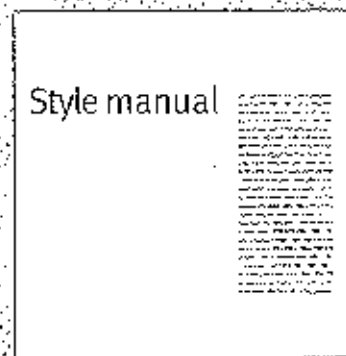
Colour and tone

Within a layout, colour and tone should interact playfully. Dark versus light, multicoloured versus monochromatic, intense versus subtle—these are the contrasts of colour and tone that are possible. If you squint at a layout, you can see the pattern of tonal and colourful patches.



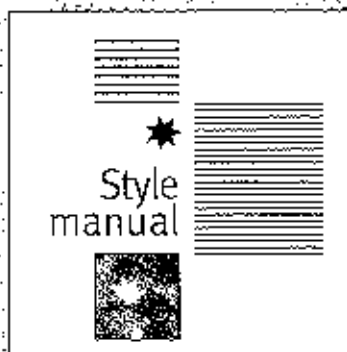
Direction

Direction is implied by a line. Readers' eyes will follow a line to the next element so long as the line's direction reflects the standard pattern of reading flow, which is to the right or down rather than to the left or up.



Implied lines

Implied lines are created by grouping elements along an invisible line (often a grid line). They can simplify and strengthen a layout.



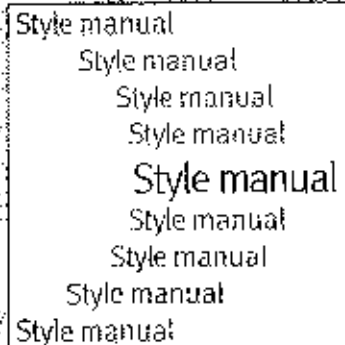
Shape

Images, colours and textures can be cropped into particular shapes, and areas of type can be placed in particular shapes. The geometrically 'pure' shapes of the square, the circle and the equilateral triangle are the strongest shapes in a layout.



Implied shape

Shape is implied in two ways: elements can be arranged either to fit a shape or to surround a shape (creating a shape in negative). Any elements that are grouped create a group 'area', or shape.



Repetition

Repetition is used to emphasise or to decorate. Anything can be repeated: image or type.



Pattern

Repetition in a predictable sequence creates pattern.



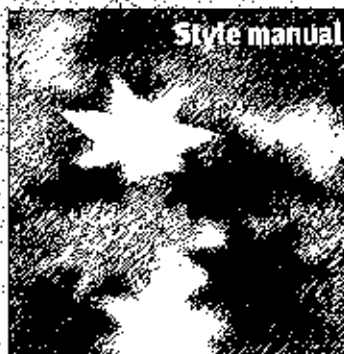
Texture

Texture is created by repetition in a random sequence. More than this, it can suggest a tactile quality in two dimensions.



Surface texture

Surface texture can add richness to a layout by lending interesting detail while still maintaining the colour or tonal relationships.



Review

There is one more general guiding principle of Design (and of Life):

Don't be a wimp.

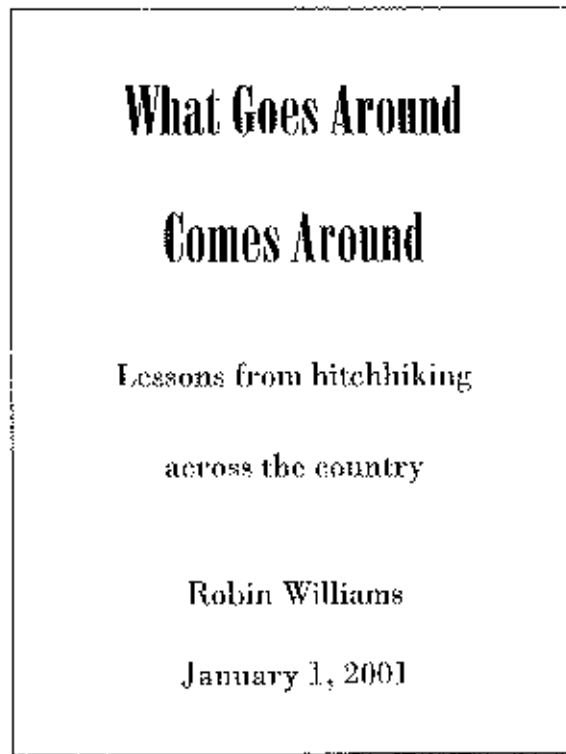
Don't be afraid to create your Design (or your Life) with plenty of blank space—it's rest for the eyes and the soul.

Don't be afraid to be asymmetrical, to uncenter your format—it often makes the effect stronger. It's okay to do the unexpected.

Don't be afraid to make words very large or very small; don't be afraid to speak loudly or to speak in a whisper. Both can be effective in the right place.

Don't be afraid to make your graphics very bold or very minimal, as long as the result complements or reinforces your design or your attitude.

The following pages sum up the four principles outlined in the first half of this book. Let's take this rather dull report cover and apply each principle to it in turn.



◀ A rather dull but typical report cover: centered, evenly spaced to fill the page. If you didn't read English, you might think there are six separate topics on this page. Each line seems an element unto itself.

Proximity

If items are related to each other, group them into closer proximity. Separate items that are *not* directly related to each other. Vary the space between to indicate the closeness or the importance of the relationship.

What Goes Around Comes Around

Lessons from hitchhiking
across the country

Robin Williams
January 1, 2001

◀ By putting the title and subtitle close to each other, we now have one well-defined unit rather than six apparently unrelated units. It is now clear that those two topics are closely related to each other.

By moving the by-line and date farther away, it becomes instantly clear that although this is related information and possibly important, it is not part of the title.

Alignment

Be conscious about every element you place on the page. To keep the entire page unified, align every object with an edge of some other object. If your alignments are strong, *then* you can *choose* to break an alignment occasionally and it won't look like a mistake.

▶ Even though the author's name is far from the title, there is a visual connection between the two elements because of their alignment.

The example on the previous page is also aligned—a centered alignment. As you can see, though, a flush left or right alignment (as shown in the example on this page) gives a stronger edge, a stronger line for your eye to follow.

A flush left or flush right alignment also tends to impart a more sophisticated look than does a centered alignment.

What Goes Around Comes Around

Lessons from hitchhiking
across the country

Robin Williams
January 1, 2001

Repetition

Repetition is a stronger form of being consistent. Look at the elements you already repeat (bullets, typefaces, lines, colors, etc.); see if it might be appropriate to make one of these elements stronger and use it as a repetitive element.

What Goes Around Comes Around ▽

Lessons from hitchhiking
across the country

▲

Robin Williams



The distinctive typeface in the title is repeated in the author's name, which strengthens their connection even though they are physically far apart on the page.

The small triangles were added specifically to create a repetition. Although they each point in a different direction, the triangular shape is distinct enough to be recognized each time.

The "color" of the triangles is also a repeated element. Repetition helps tie separate parts of a design together.

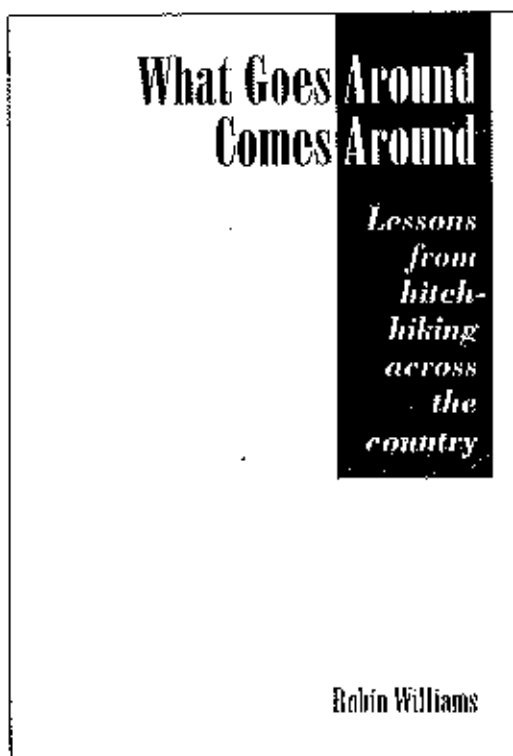
Contrast

Would you agree that the example on this page attracts your eye more than the example on the previous page? It's the contrast here, the strong black versus white, that does it. You can add contrast in many ways—rules (lines), typefaces, colors, spatial relationships, directions, etc. The second half of this book discusses the specific topic of contrasting type.

▶ Adding contrast to this was simply a matter of adding the black box.

I added a bit of contrast in the type by making the subtitle italic vs. the roman of the title and by-line. (The title is Bodoni Poster Compressed; the subtitle is Bodoni Italic.)

Can you describe where the principles of proximity, alignment, and repetition are also being used in this example?



Little Quiz #1: design principles

Find at least seven differences between the two sample résumés below. Circle each difference and name the design principle it offends. State in words what the changes are.

Résumé: Dorothy
Rural Farm #73
The Plains, Kansas

Education

- Plains Grammar School
- Plains High School, graduated with highest honors
- School of Hard Knocks

Work Experience

1956 Down on the Farm
1954 Up on the Farm
1955 Around the Farm

References

- Glinda the Good Witch
- The Great and Powerful Oz

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

Résumé

- Dorothy
Rural Farm #73
The Plains, Kansas

Education

- Plains Grammar School
- Plains High School, graduated with highest honors
- School of Hard Knocks

Work Experience

- 1956 Down on the Farm
- 1954 Up on the Farm
- 1955 Around the Farm

References

- Glinda the Good Witch
- The Great and Powerful Oz

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

Little Quiz #2: redesign this ad

What are the problems with this phone book ad? Make a list of the problems and solutions.

Clues: How many different typefaces are in this ad? How many different alignments? What could you use as a strong line against which to align everything else? WHY IS SO MUCH OF THE TEXT IN ALL CAPS? Are the logical elements grouped together into close proximity? Is there a focal point? Why not, and how could you create one? What could you use as repetitive elements? Do you need the heavy border and the inner box?

Take a piece of tracing paper and trace the outline of the ad. Then move that shape around and trace the individual elements, rearranging them into a more professional, clean, direct advertisement. Work your way through each principle: proximity, alignment, repetition, and contrast.

Ancient City

Tile & Interiors

**"CONTRACTORS' PRICES
TO THE PUBLIC"**

TILE • LINOLEUM

INSTALLATION AVAILABLE

- TALavera
- SALTILLO
- MONTERREY
- DALLAS CERAMICS
- AZTEC
- MIDSTATE
- QUALITY MARBLE

- LARGE SELECTION
OF TILES ON
DISPLAY

HOURS:
0:30 - 5 MON. - FRI.
9:00 - 1:00 SAT.

1776 CUPERTINO RD.
(ACROSS FROM HIGH SCHOOL NEXT TO EASY PRINT)

982-7219

**SANTA ANA'S
INTERIOR
HEADQUARTERS**






PARKING IN REAR

Summary

This concludes the design portion of our presentation. You probably want more examples. Examples are all around you—what I most hope to have painlessly instilled in you is an increased visual awareness. I thought about providing “cookie cutter” designs, but, as it is said so truly, it is better to give you a fishing pole than a fish.

Keep in mind that professional designers are always “stealing” other ideas; they are constantly looking around for inspiration. If you’re doing a flyer, find a flyer you really like and use the layout. Simply by using your own text and graphics, “their” flyer turns into your own unique flyer. Find a business card you like and adapt it to your own. Find a newsletter masthead you like and adapt it to your own. It changes in the adaptation and becomes yours. We all do it.

If you haven’t already, I strongly recommend you read *The Mac is not a typewriter* or *The PC is not a typewriter*. If you are still typing two spaces after periods, if you are underlining text, if you are not using true apostrophes and quotation marks (“ and ”, not "), then you *seriously* need to read one of those books.

But have fun. Lighten up. Don’t take all this design stuff too seriously. I guarantee that if you simply follow those four principles, you will be creating dynamic, interesting, organized pages you will be proud of.