

Five essentials of good design

by **David Potter**

Creative Director, Going Public Design

Whether you're communicating through design yourself, or you're commissioning a designer to produce publicity for your organisation, it's vital you know how to get it right, and if you follow the guidelines below, you'll be off to a great start.

1. Know your audience

This is the most important factor of any design. You **MUST** understand who you are communicating to if you want them to connect with your message and your organisation.

Here are some key questions to consider:

- What are the demographics of your audience?
- What concerns them, what issues do they face?
- What visual language are they most familiar with?

One helpful way to get your head around this is to imagine which national newspaper your audience would most likely read. For example you need to communicate a message very differently to a Guardian reader compared to a reader of the Sun.

2. Feed your design

Designers need good food to produce good work. That doesn't mean you need to provide your designer with an endless supply of cream cakes (though it helps) but rather designers can only work with the words and images you have sent to them. So if you or your designer can source stunning photographs and well written text then you're already half way to a great design.

3. Keep it simple

Often the most effective designs are those that say the least. If your designs are complex and there's a lot on the page then people are not going to look for and read the message you want them to respond to.

Also remember hierarchy, you want your audience to know what part of your message is the most important. Often it's helpful to consider how your eye flows across the page – does it go where you want it to go?

4. Enhance your brand

If you're taking the time to communicate a message then it's important to you that people recognise and build trust in your organisation. To do this you need to be consistent and effective in how you communicate visually.

Be careful to make all your designs recognisable as being from your organisation, (use consistent colours, logos and fonts) this will help you build awareness of your work, your goals, and enhance your reputation.

5. Publish properly

It's vital to not just get your message right, and your design right, but to deliver it using the correct media. Before you do anything you will need to decide on how you are delivering your message (remember point 1, know your audience!). If you're printing publicity get it done professionally or if you're publishing your work online make sure your website is clearly laid out and simple to navigate. Failure to do this well will make you look unprofessional and your message will be lost.