

Before you read, in your notebook, define “graphics” and identify the purpose of graphics in publications.

As you read, take jot notes of the main points in the article.

“A picture is worth more than a thousand words.”

Creating a Visual Package

by MARCELLE LAPOW TOOR

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes

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“Visual language is already dominating verbal or at least written communication. If you think about it we’ve been growing up with a major change toward the visual, and computers have accelerated that change.”

—John Waters, *Print magazine*,
September/October 1993.

You have come up with a design for your newsletter. It looks deadly. It’s monotonous. It lacks colour and graphic interest. It needs some pizzazz. You are in a panic. Your budget is nonexistent. You can’t even afford to have the piece printed professionally. It will be reproduced on a copy machine. What kind of cosmetic changes can be made to dress it up, to make it look appealing and colourful even though you can only use one colour? How can you create visual interest on the cover and inside pages so the person who receives the newsletter doesn’t toss it into the trash

without giving it a second glance? You need to turn your newsletter, brochure, flyer, poster, or magazine into a visual package—a successful marriage of illustrations and text.

Communication does not take place with text alone. Words do not have the same impact as pictures. “A picture is worth more than a thousand words” is an expression familiar to all of us, and it has even more meaning in today’s world. The addition of good graphics will help enhance any printed piece. A good picture by itself will communicate. One that is well integrated with text can provoke an emotional response, make an impression, and help direct the reader through the layout of a page.

Visual images surround us in our daily lives. We see pictorial symbols in our homes on our microwave ovens, refrigerators, and answering machines. In our cars they inform and warn us when we are running low on gasoline or oil. Pictorial symbols are found on road signs. They speak a universal wordless language and make it easy for you to drive your car in a foreign country without knowing the language because they give you the information you need—deer crossings, sharp curves in the road. Graphic symbols are found in airports where



people from different countries convene. They identify telephones, restrooms, restaurants, smoking and non-smoking areas. Symbols in the form of simple graphics speak a visual language and help us find information quickly.

The graphic or graphics you select for your printed piece should be a vital element in your brochure, newsletter, or flyer. A brochure that lacks in illustration must have a very powerful verbal message in order to make an impression. Pictures or graphic images attract attention. They can add a sense of reality to a publication, establish a mood, involve our emotions, and may even entertain in the process. Some events are better described with a picture than with words.

The choice of a graphic image is directly related to the audience, the printed piece, and the kind of message to be communicated. The quality of the image has the same importance as its appropriateness. The illustration you use should be an integral element and one of the main pieces that fit into the overall layout.

Graphics in a publication should

- Clarify the text
- Lead the reader through the text
- Attract attention
- Add a sense of realism
- Add a sense of fantasy
- Establish a mood
- Involve the emotions
- Entertain or explain



The best advice for using graphics is: keep it simple. A graphic should be easy to read and should be helpful in conveying important information. Research shows that photographs and other graphic images are used by readers as entry points onto a printed page. If the graphic you have selected does not contain information related to the text in your publication, leave it out and find another way to enhance the pages visually.

Tip 1

It is best not to use an illustration if you cannot find one that is appropriate.



Tip 2

It is best not to use a picture that is misleading or confusing.

SELECTING ILLUSTRATIONS TO ENHANCE YOUR PAGE LAYOUT

Making decisions

Before making a decision about the kind of illustration you need for the printed piece you are designing, you may want to consider the following questions:



1) Who is your audience?

Identify your audience. What kind of person do you want to reach? Is this audience a specific age, gender, or income level?

2) What is the content of the message?

What do you want to say to this audience? What is the tone you want to set? Is it serious or do you want it to have humour?

3) Will an illustration enhance your page design?

Can you find an appropriate illustration that will make your newsletter or brochure look more interesting and easier to read?

4) What kind of art will attract your audience to help them absorb the textual information?

Do some research to find out what kind of art appeals to your intended audience—what kinds of images they identify with. A good place to start is your local news-stand. Look at current magazines that appeal to your audience. A cartoon-like drawing may be the best way to get the attention of kids because kids like cartoons and most of them

watch TV. However, if the audience for your publication is the young professional, the sophisticated twenty-something crowd, or the thirty-something crowd, a photograph will attract better than a drawing.

5) What type of illustration should you use?

If you are designing a magazine spread for a short story, for example, a drawing or painting (oil or watercolour) may have a better "feel" than a photograph, since a story is based on fiction. On the other hand, if you are designing a brochure for a human services organization, photographs of actual people would be more effective. If you have to explain complex statistical information, a chart, table, graph, or bulleted list would be a better choice. If you are unable to find a picture that seems just right, you can always do some interesting things with type and typographic devices.

6) Will the graphic attract attention?

Find a graphic that will be appropriate to your printed piece and appeal to your audience using an image that is both familiar and pleasant. The picture you choose should attract attention but not detract from the editorial content of your printed piece. It should enhance the text and act as a guide to help move the reader through the information on the page.

7) What kind of graphic image will reproduce well, given the printing process you will be using?

If you are producing the entire publication on the computer for reproduction on a photocopy machine, you are limited in the kinds of illustrations you can use. Photographs reproduced on a copy machine, even one equipped to copy photographs, will not appear as sharp as when a professional printer creates a screened halftone. Simple

line drawings and clip art, however, will reproduce quite well when photocopied from a laser printout. Your budget will influence the choice you make.

8) Who will create the graphic?

If you cannot draw and have a decent budget, you may want to hire an illustrator or photographer. If you are on a tight budget, stock art or clip art that comes on disk, CD-ROM, or in books might be the best solution.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHOICES?

All illustrations fit into two categories—line art and continuous tone art.

1) Type and Typographic Devices

When you are on a tight budget, type and typographic devices can be used very effectively as a means of illuminating text in a printed piece. Typographic devices include: dingbats, bullets, lines or rules, symbols, typographic ornaments, geometric shapes, large initial capital letters, patterned boxes, dots, and flags.

2) Drawings

Drawings fit into the category of line art. When we refer to drawings, we are talking about pictures rendered with pen and ink, paint, or pencil. If you can't draw, don't. A poorly executed drawing will make a potentially good publication scream, "amateur." Hire an illustrator if your budget will permit, or use clip art instead. Seasoned graphic designers use clip art when they need instant art. Clip art is available in many drawing styles, some quite sophisticated, and can be found on disks, CD-ROM, and in books.

3) Photographs

A photograph is made up of many grey tones, all the tones going from black to



white, and falls into the category of continuous tone art. Photographs are appropriate images to use when you want to document a real event or show actual people.

4) Information Graphics

Information graphics include: charts, graphs, diagrams, maps, and tables. An information graphic is a good way to present statistical information visually so that it is understandable. There are a number of software programs on the market that make it easy for you to create your own charts and graphs.

5) Computer Generated Graphics

The computer is replacing traditional drawing and painting tools for some illustrators. Many illustrators are using various painting and drawing programs to render complex illustrations.

Tip 1

It is better to use no art than art that is weak or poorly executed.

Tip 2

Allow plenty of time for the creation of your illustration whether you do it yourself or hire an illustrator.

Tip 3

Stick with a consistent art style throughout your publication.

Tip 4

Use your illustrations as a means of guiding the reader through the text.

Tip 5

Use graphics that relate to your printed piece, your message, and use ones that have some familiarity for your audience.



QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SELECTING A GRAPHIC

- Is this the right type of illustration for my publication?
- Is this illustration appropriate for my audience and the message?
- Does the illustration tell a visual story related to the text?
- Will this graphic enhance the page layout and lead the reader through the textual information on the page?
- Will the size of the graphic help create a dramatic effect, or will it get lost on the page?
- Is the image unambiguous so that my readers will understand it immediately?
- Does the graphic have a credit line or caption as a means of identifying what it is and who created it?

Hints

- Keep a swipe file (examples of images from magazines and other publications) with illustrations that appeal to you. These samples can help with ideas when you are working with an illustrator or creating your own drawings.
- A good slogan to remember when using graphics is, "keep it simple."

ILLUSTRATIONS WILL

1) Attract attention

Readers will stop to read an illustration.

2) Provide a place for the reader's eyes to rest

Illustrations will provide relief from a page full of text.

3) Help an audience remember your printed piece

Strong images make a lasting impression.

4) Establish an ambiance for your publication

An illustration will help to reinforce the setting—the look and feel of your newsletter or brochure.

5) Help the reader comprehend complex information

Illustrations can lead the reader through the written text and explain information in a visual way.