

DEVELOPING YOUR BROCHURE

THE RIGHT WAY

How to create a brochure that speaks to your market, boosts sales and gets you noticed for all the right reasons.

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About the Author

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He's written for multinational corporations like Royal Bank of Canada, EF Education First, EXFO and Widex as well as successful start-ups like B2B Connex, InfoSpi, EmailDeals and Lifestyle Hearing.

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The Brochure: Your Company's Introduction

A brochure is a booklet that introduces either your company or a particular product or service to a prospective client. It can come in many shapes and sizes and can range from one page in length to multiple pages.

A brochure is also one of the simplest marketing pieces to produce. It doesn't take the highly specialized skills of a web developer and if you're a bit adventurous, you won't even have to hire a graphic designer (though I would recommend you do!). Software is available to help you design your own brochure in the format of your choice. For example, Microsoft Word will help you set up and manage your own brochure design with relative ease.

Now that you can buy high quality paper online easily, you can design and print your own brochure for a minimal cost.

I would however recommend you hire a good graphic designer to create your brochure because it's easier and at the end of the day, you'll end up with a marketing document that will look highly professional, last years and won't cost you an arm and a leg either.

A brochure will often introduce someone to your company in an in-depth manner for the first time, so it's very important that it contains all the elements that will cause:

- a) Interest in your particular product or service
- b) Desire to work with your company
- c) Action on the part of the reader

A brochure can be glossy, have multiple panels, high-resolution pictures and all the bells and whistles a good graphic designer can offer, but what your brochure SAYS is ultimately more important than the visual features.

If a brochure is well written, it will often lead to a new high-quality lead or customer, if it's poorly written, there's a good chance you'll miss your one opportunity to connect with a prospect who might have bought something from you.

Brochure Formats: Do What You Feel

A traditional brochure is usually organized in the following order:

- 1) *An introduction to your company. Similar to an About Us page on a website.*
- 2) *A list of products and/or services your company offers to consumers.*
- 3) *In certain cases, a biographical snippet about the company owner.*
- 4) *Customer testimonials.*
- 5) *Calls-to-action.*
- 6) *Contact information.*

In addition, when I write a brochure I include the following elements and I can't stress enough how much more quickly you'll move through the sales process if you do as well. Adding these two components can mean the difference between someone taking action or throwing your brochure in the trash.

i) An overview of the problem a prospect is facing.

ii) Specific benefits a reader gets by choosing your company.

These are obviously not 'sections' in and of themselves but should always be used to guide the tone and content of each section within your brochure.

If you successfully include this information in your marketing brochure, you'll end up attracting many more customers than you would have if you took the traditional approach or, in my opinion the lazy or uniformed approach.

The Lead: Getting Readers To Say YES!

What's the first thing you see when you open a brochure? It's usually a description of, or introduction to the company.

This is wrong, wrong, wrong.

With any piece of marketing, whether it's a webpage, a brochure or a sales letter, you're facing the same problem.

That problem is the reader's limited attention span.

By starting out with a factual description of your company you run the risk of losing the reader before you can make your 'pitch'. The fact is, people aren't interested in learning about your company (yet), they want to see that you understand why they're looking at a product or service in your field to begin with.

Some reasons prospects might have picked up your brochure:

- 1) They have a problem, issue or concern that a company like yours can resolve
- 2) They have a hope, desire or want that a company like yours can fulfill
- 3) They have a goal, long- or short-term, that a company like yours can help them achieve
- 4) They are in a decision-making phase and are comparing similar companies
- 5) They are already sitting in your location, waiting to talk with a staff-member
- 6) They already know a bit about you but want to learn more before making a decision

So what do you talk about initially?

Discuss the common issues, problems, wants, needs or goals faced by your target market right in your lead paragraph. When you take this approach, you're speaking directly to the most important thing on your prospect's mind at that particular moment.

As an example, I'm going to discuss the process you should go through when dealing with prospects that have a certain set of problems. As you'll see, this approach can be easily adapted to 'positive' issues like wants or life goals.

Now for the example:

Let's say you own an electrical services company called ACME that works with construction project managers.

Sit down and think about what problems project managers often face when dealing with companies like yours. You should be conducting real research into these problems, don't base them on gut feelings or guesses.

If you want to find out what problems your market faces, ask them! People will be quite happy to help more often than not.

Write down the overall problem faced by your prospect:

1) Project managers have a tough time finding an electrical services company they can rely on.

Now write down some reasons why this larger problem exists:

a) Sub-contractors don't show up on time.

b) Sub-contractors do sloppy work if they aren't supervised.

c) Sub-contractors charge too much.

Now that you've come up with several common issues facing your potential customer, write down how your company addresses them:

1) We show up right when we say we will

2) Our work is high-quality and guaranteed whether someone is watching or not

3) Our fees are right around the industry average, in other words, they're reasonable

First, address the large problem faced by your prospect in the first line or two. Then work the specific problems and then the solutions you offer directly into the first paragraph of your brochure copy:

“At ACME Electrical, we understand how hard it can be for project managers to find the right electrical sub-contractor. If you've ever hired an electrician who doesn't show up on time, does poor work, and overcharges your company, you should give us a call today. At ACME, we arrive at the job site when we say we will, guarantee our work on every single job and we always stay within the agreed-upon budget.”

If you're able to address vital prospect concerns in your copy effectively, your prospect will be nodding their head as they read your first paragraph. Now you've got them saying YES, which is exactly what you want from a reader!

Even if they aren't saying yes to your pitch yet they're in a positive frame of mind. And that's where you want someone to be when you're attempting to sell them a product or service.

See, what you're doing is talking to the consumer's issues rather than talking about yourself. No one wants to listen to how great your company is, they want to see that you can help them!

I know you're passionate about your company and its products or services. People write about their company in the lead with the best of intentions, hoping their description of the company will help transmit passion to the reader.

But it won't.

People won't choose your company because you've been in business for 30 years or because your company is family-run, these elements might help convince readers down the line, but the fact is - *people will choose you because you 'get' their particular issue and can help.*

After all, prospects are self-interested. If you're showing how you can solve their problems, they will be much more likely to choose you rather than a company that's droning on about how wonderful they are.

I hope this makes sense to you because if you follow this unorthodox format, you'll be well on your way to developing a brochure that will provide real and substantial ROI on your marketing investment.

The brochure is a long-standing marketing mainstay and they're so familiar, people believe they know exactly how to put one together. They are also wrong.

Write your brochure lead in the way I've suggested for real results.

Features AND Benefits: The Magic Formula that Drives Sales

Now that you've got the prospect interested, you have to keep them reading. Legendary copywriter Joseph Sugarman would describe this type of writing as a 'slippery slide'. He meant that once you have a prospect reading, each line should act as a momentum builder, as if the reader is on a slippery slide heading irresistibly toward the destination YOU want them to reach: a powerful sales environment.

So once again, it's time to appeal to self-interest. We do this by adding to the traditional approach of listing the features of your product or service with some direct benefits the consumer will get by choosing your company.

Many companies will list their features as if the benefit should be obvious to the reader.

This is often because company employees are so familiar with their product, it's difficult for them to understand that others might not know what they're talking about, with either their particular product or the specific benefits it offers.

Teasing the reader's imagination is a powerful weapon in your marketing arsenal, but much of your target market will have very limited imaginations or are just plain unfamiliar with what you're talking about.

Let me illustrate my point by going back to the electrician example for a minute.

Okay, so after our market research we discovered that one problem project managers face when they hire an electrician is that these sub-contractors don't show up on time. Well let's turn that into a positive feature for ACME and then explain the benefit to the project manager we're trying to persuade.

FEATURE: Acme shows up on time

BENEFIT: Project manager can focus on their core responsibilities

Let's add them together and see what we get.

"ACME Electrical shows up on time so you can get on with managing your project instead of worrying about where one sub-contractor is"

Knowing that a sub-contractor will show up on time is a massive benefit to a project manager who has to keep track of dozens of tasks every day, and showing the prospect exactly how this benefit will play out will go a long way toward convincing the reader to hire your company.

Once you've set down both the features of your product or service and the benefits it will provide in each case you'll end up with five or six powerful arguments that will go a long way in convincing a prospect to hire your company or buy your offering.

Basically we've created a strong lead outlining general issues faced by the prospect and then used detailed features and benefits to strengthen our claims.

If you've followed this approach, you've already built a great deal of credibility in the mind of your prospect.

Now you can continue to lower buyer resistance by ramping up credibility in your brochure.

Describing Your Company A.K.A. Adding Credibility

Now that we've covered the most important points, at least from the perspective of your prospect, we can start talking about ourselves a bit. But still, this is only to add credibility to what's come before and to further convince the reader that he or she should choose your company.

How should you approach the company description? I suggest you try and create the impression that you're both professional and approachable. People want to deal with real human beings that will be easy to work with. Speak in a friendly tone, but talk to your company's strong points.

Let's continue using ACME Electrical as an example...

“For nearly 30 years, ACME Electrical has offered good-quality work at reasonable prices to construction companies across Canada. We're a family-owned business and handle every sort of job you'd expect from certified electricians including wiring, lighting... (and so on). We've been around for so long because we understand what our clients need from an electrician: reliability, experience and reasonable prices. We guarantee our work and personally train all of our employees so you know the electrician working on your project knows the job inside and out.”

It's friendly in tone and gives ACME some personality, but it's also professional in that it speaks to credibility and specific services as well. It's not really about ACME as much as it's another opportunity to connect with the reader's needs and wants.

At this point, you're talking about your company, but only in the context of what interests the prospect, or what will add further credibility to the arguments we've made previously.

Breaking it down...

- **ACME talks about good quality at reasonable prices – poor work and high prices are a pain point for project managers.**
- **ACME explains they offer a number of services – project managers know there won't be any surprises no matter what job needs doing.**
- **ACME writes that they guarantee their work – project managers don't have to worry about wasted investment.**
- **ACME highlights reliability and reasonable prices – again touching on pain points.**

On and on it goes, building upon what came before and reinforcing the benefits project managers will gain if they hire ACME.

When you write your company description, look over the list of audience challenges you've already assembled and make sure you are addressing these challenges in the copy. You'll be creating a true connection with the reader and multiplying your chances for a successful sale.

Mission Statements and Value Propositions – Why Bother!

I believe the creation of a mission statement or sets of value propositions are usually driven from the inside of a company rather than by any external pressure. Well meaning executives feel that these things are necessary to truly clarify what the company is all about or what direction they are heading.

I'm quite skeptical about the worth of mission statements or value propositions. In all honesty, I think they are unnecessary and generally unconvincing to prospects, those that bother to read them in the first place.

The particular reason I dislike these philosophical ramblings is because they usually add up to a whole lot of pleasant-sounding words without any real meaning. Most of the people in companies that have mission statements and value propositions know they're B.S. and the average reader can tell they're B.S.

The best that can be said is that they probably don't do any real harm unless of course your audience decides you're a bunch of phonies. At best, I think mission statements get a big eye roll.

For example, have you ever read something like this?

“We are passionate about electrical services and dedicated to providing a superior level of customer service. Our passion is satisfied when we see our clients smile at a job well done. We know our customers are much more than clients, they're our friends as well!”

Unfortunately, this type of writing can be found in many brochures (and websites and lunch room walls). It's very easy to write something like that because it's all fluff without any real meaning.

If you already have a mission statement or a set of value propositions, please don't include them in the fantastic brochure you are currently developing.

To Biography or Not To Biography?

A brochure will often contain a biographical snippet of the owner or important company stakeholders. In my opinion, not every brochure needs to contain this information.

I would only add a biography if you have to further convince a prospect you possess a special expertise not available from competitors.

For example, if you're a healthcare professional, a dentist or a doctor, credentials and experience might be the final tipping point that drives a new patient to book an appointment. Perhaps you focus on treating children and have taken special courses on child psychology that will help put your patients at ease.

Other cases where a biography might be important are for highly technical jobs such as an electrician or web designer where credibility can mean the difference between a new lead and a lost customer.

In my case, the people I work directly with tend to be marketing executives at large companies. I explain that my familiarity with their particular challenges comes from having worked in large corporations in the past. This helps them realize that I 'get' how their workplace operates and I'll be ready to step in and contribute quickly.

To give you an example of where a biography might not be important: A toy company president... no one cares that he went to Yale or Harvard or happened to play with more toys than the average kid.

There is an exception. If your story is unique or inspirational and (most importantly) appropriate to the context, then go ahead. Another case where a bio will help is if the executive is well known in the community, for example, Steve Jobs at Apple or Donald Trump.

Be careful that you aren't writing an ego-piece because once again... prospects don't care about you, only how you can help them.

Testimonials and The Importance of Praise

Adding testimonials is a great way to connect with readers and add credibility. After all, if Joe Average is praising your service, then surely your prospect, Jane Average, might like your service as well.

The truth of the matter is people tend to trust people who are just like them. It's one thing for the company President to talk about the great service his company provides, it's something else when you hear it from a happy customer.

A single testimonial can help greatly and can often be placed on a prominent area on the page. Or, if you have more than one testimonial sprinkle them in between sections or in call-out boxes if there's room.

Having a testimonial that speaks forcefully about a particular aspect about your product or service will be even stronger than a general testimonial when used in the right context.

For example, if you are talking about how fast your service is, a testimonial from a customer talking about how fast your service is will really boost your claim.

I recommend you always solicit testimonials from your customers so you have them handy no matter what marketing piece you need them for. Over time, you'll build a file of juicy references appropriate for any situation.

Calls-to-Action: Action is the Whole Point

I recommend you add calls-to-action liberally throughout your brochure. Feel free to include one call-to-action after each section.

You never know when a CTA will work, and I'm definitely of the school of thought that, within reason, the more calls-to-action the better.

What should you include in your CTA?

- 1) A sense of urgency. Call today, email us right away etc.**
- 2) Reiterate benefits. For the fastest delivery service...**
- 3) Any offers or deals. To get 20% off your dry cleaning, email DC Cleaners....**

Without asking for action, prospects won't take any.

This whole brochure creation process is about causing readers to DO SOMETHING.