



Renew, Refresh, Rejuvenate... Redesigning Your Ads

“I don’t know the rules of grammar... if you’re trying to persuade people to do something, or buy something, it seems to me you should use their language, the language they use every day, the language in which they think. We try to write in the vernacular.”

– David Ogilvy

When is it time to consider a redesign of your company’s advertising material? Some may answer, “when its effectiveness drops,” or “when the competition does,” or “when we hire a new marketing director.” We agree that these are good reasons, but we also would add that periodic redesign should be part of your regular advertising cycle. A good redesign will refresh your ads and renew them for your loyal customers and your prospects alike.

Signs That a Redesign May be Needed

Your company’s advertising material may need a redesign if any of these conditions exist:

- It has been more than five years since you first developed the advertising material.
- Your company today is much different than it was when the advertising material was developed.
- The target audience for your product or service has changed since the advertising material was developed.

Your advertising material may also show signs of aging in the selection of typeface, the layout, or the color palette.

Redesigning Ads and Flyers Using the Ogilvy Layout

Advertising legend David Ogilvy, founder of Ogilvy & Mather advertising agency and creator of well-known copy (“At 60 miles an hour, the loudest noise in this new Rolls Royce comes from this electric clock.”) and characters (the



man in the Hathaway Shirt; Schweppes, and Commander Whitehead), developed an ad layout formula so successful that it became known as the *Ogilvy*. The formula adheres to the order in which researchers say readers typically look at ads:

- Visual (photograph or graphic)
- Caption
- Headline
- Copy
- Signature (advertiser’s name and contact information)

The basic Ogilvy layout can be altered as follows: to include a coupon (set ad copy in a three-column grid and place the coupon in the third column); to move the headline above the visual (when the headline carries more weight than the visual); or to set copy in a two-column grid and to move the headline to the right of the visual.

Here is a basic Ogilvy layout:



Other Layout Options

The rules of good page layout apply to ads just as they apply to other types of documents. In addition, ads must provoke the reader to action. The layout of an ad can definitely help accomplish this goal. In addition to the Ogilvy layout, try these other options:

- *Z layout*: organize the elements of the ad in a “Z” pattern with the most important element in the upper left corner and the *call to action* and *signature* in the lower right corner.
- *Layout with illustrations*: photographs, drawings, or illustrations can be used to show how a product is used; show the benefits of using the product; or demonstrate difficult-to-understand instructions or concepts.
- *Simple visual layout*: a single strong visual, combined with a short, punchy headline over the ad copy, can be a very powerful layout.
- *Super-sized layout*: filling the top half or even two-thirds of the ad space with oversized text or graphics, including bleeding the image off the edges, draws the reader’s attention immediately. Readers associate size with importance, so reserve this treatment for the dominant part of the message.

Coupons are known to increase reader response. If you have room in your ad, do include a coupon. If your ad is small, put a heavy dashed border around the entire ad to create the feel and appearance of a coupon.

You can also direct the reader’s attention by placing the ad’s most important element in the visual center. The

visual center is located slightly to the right and above the actual center of the ad. The visual center acts as a natural focal point regardless of where the design focus is. Remember this when you are deciding where to place the individual ad elements.

Using Ad Templates for Redesign

Templates are pre-designed documents that contain placeholders (such as boxes, dummy text, and headlines) that can be overwritten with actual copy and photographs or graphics. Templates may be purchased, or you can create your own.

A template can be a great time-saver, can provide design inspiration, and can augment the design capabilities of an amateur designer. Using a template as a basis for your ad will also provide consistency among your ads.

If you choose to use an ad template, select one that is appropriate for the job at hand. Begin by selecting a template whose ad is the correct size and does not require extensive alterations. Other tips for customization include:

- *Use your own graphics*. Substitute your own graphics or clip art for what was included in the template. Since graphics also include rules and boxes, you can change the size or location to better fit your needs.
- *Alter the type*. Change the template’s typeface, change the leading (the space between lines), or type justification. When selecting a new typeface, be sure not to stray too far away from the original design. For example, substituting a casual typeface for a formal one will likely compromise the design.
- *Change the color*. Sometimes a dramatic change can occur when color is changed, even if the design is unaltered.
- *Change the background*. Create a reverse (white or light text on a dark background) to draw the reader’s eye. The reverse can be an entire headline or only the single capital letter that begins the headline. Do remember that not all typefaces and sizes are suitable for reverses. Fine serifs can disappear in a reverse.

Need help? Ask us!

If you suspect your advertising material needs a makeover but are unsure how to proceed, please give us a call at 513.248.2121. We will be happy to evaluate your existing ads and make suggestions for updating them to conform to current trends in graphic design and advertising.

a vocabulary of the graphic arts

Active voice: a sentence construction in which the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the sentence.

Call to action: a marketing and sales device that tells the customer how to take the next step toward a purchase or execute an activity; often uses an imperative verb.

Copywrite, copywriting: the art and science of writing words to promote a product, a business, a person, or an idea.

Copywriter: a person who engages in copywriting.

Fair Use: a doctrine that defines when copyrighted material can be used without permission or paying royalties.

Focal point: the area of an ad that attracts the viewer's attention first. Contrast, location, isolation, convergence, and the unusual can be used to create focal points.

Leading: (pronounced *led'-ing*) the distance between lines of type, measured in points. 1 point=1/72 inch.

Market segment: an identifiable group of prospects who share one or more characteristics or needs. Market segments generally respond in a predictable manner to a marketing or promotional offer.

Ogilvy layout: ad layout formula developed by advertising expert David Ogilvy (1911-1999).

Passive voice: a sentence construction that uses the object of an action as the subject of the sentence. In other words, whoever or whatever is performing the action is not the grammatical subject of the sentence.

Reverse: the technique of printing white or light-colored text on a black or dark background for emphasis. A reverse greatly reduces legibility, especially with small type.

Signature: in an Ogilvy layout, the advertiser's name and contact information.

Template: a predesigned document for a particular purpose. For example, an ad template enables a person to generate an advertisement with formatting already complete.

Swipe file: a collection of sales, marketing, and advertising material known to be effective or of interest. Used by writers to generate ideas.

Target audience: A specified audience or demographic group for which an advertising message is designed.

Visual center: the area of an advertisement located slightly above and to the right of the mathematical center. Serves as a focal point of the ad.

T H E I D E A

How to Make Your Ad Stand Out

When designing an ad, keep in mind where it will be used and how many other ads it will compete with. If your ad will have lots of competition (such as in the advertising section of a program), consider these ways to make your ad stand out from all the rest:

Use lots of white space. A large buffer of white space surrounding the text or graphics in your ad will draw the eye first, among other ads that are full of type and graphics.

Be dramatic. Use an oversized graphic to catch the eye of the reader.

Use contrast. Contrasting type, size, color, or other visual effects will create interest and draw the reader's eye.

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TRICKS & tips

Steps for Easy Ad Makeup

You will find it easier to produce a successful ad if you follow a standard approach to gathering the ad's elements. Here are the steps we suggest for easy ad makeup:

Step 1: Read through a few publications and pick out ads that appeal to you. Analyze what you have selected to determine if there are any commonalities – perhaps the use of white space or typography. Note these features for use later when you are designing your ad.

Step 2: Write the headline for your ad. The headline should be succinct and express the main idea of your ad. By keeping the headline short, you will be able to use a large point size to draw attention to your ad.

Step 3: Select the visual. Your visual may be a photo, a drawing, an illustration, or even an oversized alphabet letter or number. Just be sure it is distinctive and that it enhances or explains the message you are conveying. The headline and visual should naturally go together.

Step 4: Write the copy. A good way to generate copy is to pretend you are talking to someone about the product or service you are featuring in your ad. Remember to emphasize the benefits to the customer or prospect, rather than the features of your product or service. Do be careful not to write too much copy so that your ad becomes crowded or busy.

Step 5: Organize the ad's signature. The signature is the name of your company and the contact information. It may also include the ad's call to action.

Since you have gathered all the elements, you are ready to begin layout of your ad. Now that you know the size and shape each will take, you should find it much easier to place the elements.



If the publication ad representative tells me that my ad will be designed for free, is there any reason why I should pay someone to design my ad or do it myself?



That is an interesting question. The answer is – it depends. If you have no experience in display ad design, then you may want to take advantage of the free offer, especially if the ad is very small. But be sure he or she understands the central concept you wish to get across in your ad. You may even want to give the representative the headline, body copy, visual, and signature for use in your ad layout.

Alternatively, we will be happy to design your ad. Yes, there is a charge for this service. But we will take you through a series of steps designed to determine the focus of your ad, and we will suggest visuals to help get this point across. You will also be able to see and modify proofs until the ad is perfect in your eyes.

questions and answers