

BUSINESS LINE

To Your Success

SIX TIPS TO CREATE DESIGNS THAT SELL

By Kay Green, Green Graphic Design

Professional-looking marketing pieces do more than just “look good.” The most important function of any marketing piece is to get the reader to take action (buy something, call, go to your Web site, give to a charity, etc.). To make sure your customer takes the desired action, the marketing piece should direct the eye to the most important information, be easy to read, and look good. Here are six tips to help you create marketing pieces that sell.

1. PRIORITIZATION—Start by determining the priorities of your sales messages so you can see where to place emphasis. Do you want to feature a stunning photo or great headline? No photos, just type? Set priorities so you know which messages need to draw the eye and which ones need a smaller presence.

2. DOMINATION—One element needs to dominate the space. After you have established priorities, it is easy to decide which element that is. Here are several techniques to create domination in your design space.

- **Size.** The easiest way to have something dominate a page is to make it the biggest thing on the page.
- **Color.** Strategic use of color can create domination. If you have a mostly gray background and make your headline bright red, your eye will be drawn to the spot of color. When you use an eye-popping color, you don’t have to make the type large; the color alone is enough to call attention to your message.
- **Contrast.** Contrast is the difference between light and dark colors. The two colors with the highest contrast are black and white. You can’t get any darker than black or lighter than white. Examples of low-contrast colors would be two close versions of gray or light pink and light blue. Our eyes are naturally drawn to areas of high contrast. For instance, if you have a background photo with a soft, light feel, your eye would be drawn to a small headline with a strong dark color, such as dark blue.
- **Position.** Research has shown that our eye automatically scans a page in a Z pattern. Starting at the upper left corner, our eye travels horizontally to the right, then quickly scans diagonally down to the lower left corner. The eye finally moves horizontally again to the lower right, then scans diagonally down to the lower left corner. The two strongest places on a page are the upper

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left corner and the lower right corner. These two power spots are good areas for headlines, logos, and call-to-action statements (i.e., Call Now! Visit Our Web Site! Sign Up Today!).

3. WHITE SPACE—Any area that has nothing in it is considered white space (it doesn’t have to be white to be “white space”). White space can help direct the eye to important messages and make your piece inviting to read. The use of a lot of white space in a design can give the piece a sophisticated look.

4. FLOW—The placement of type, photos, and decorative art should all help the eye move around the page. Ideally, each element should direct the eye to the next element, making sure your call to action is easily found.

5. TYPE—Your type must be easy to read. Type that is too small or crowded will not be read. Too much type will not be read.

6. VISIBLE LOGO AND CALL TO ACTION—Make sure your logo and call to action are easily spotted. It is important to use high-quality copies of your logo.

Green Graphic Design (www.greengraphicdesign.com) works with business owners, sales and marketing executives, and communications executives to visually communicate the brand image of their company. Our clients are manufacturers, service companies, non-profits, retail and start-up companies, who recognize the value of marketing materials customized to their target market. They know that first impressions count when trying to influence a potential customer. Contact us at: kay@greengraphicdesign.com.

IN THIS ISSUE

Valuable Information for your business including:

- *Should you Upgrade your QuickBooks?*
- *Getting the Most out of a Business Accountant*
- *The 3 M's - Structuring a Partnership Agreement*
- *Tips for Effective Graphic Design*

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The contributors to this newsletter are independent professionals providing general information. Business owners should consult an experienced professional for assistance suited to their particular needs.

SHOULD YOU UPGRADE YOUR SOFTWARE TO THE LATEST VERSION?

By Annabel Pedemonti, Accounting Software Services

In this age of rapidly advancing technology we are bombarded with reminders and advertising to update our software and operating systems to the latest version. It is difficult to know whether it is in our best interests to upgrade, and hard to find out the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.

For those of you who use QuickBooks as your accounting program you know that Intuit brings out a new version each year, with a varied number of additional features. For the last few years Intuit has supported only the current year's and the previous two years' versions, and discontinues supporting any versions prior to this. This is referred to as "sunsetting". This year QuickBooks 2004 was sunsetted on May 31st.

When Intuit sunsets a version you cannot do any of the following things:

- Do-It-Yourself and Assisted payroll
- Online banking and Online bill paying
- Download credit card information
- Use Intuit merchant services for credit cards
- Email invoices and statements using QuickBooks free email service
- Receive technical support from Intuit
- Use the Intuit data recovery service

If you are using QuickBooks 2004 or older and you use any of the above services you will need to upgrade your file to QuickBooks 2007. If you use none of these services or features then you will have no problem continuing to use QuickBooks 2004 or earlier. However, you should be aware, and this is important, that, in the unlikely event that your QuickBooks file becomes

so damaged that you cannot open or use it, Intuit cannot perform the disaster data recovery service on QuickBooks 2004 or earlier.

If you do decide that you should upgrade to QuickBooks 2007, you need to check the system requirements first. You will notice that QuickBooks 2007 is significantly larger than previous versions, and the program will run much more slowly on an older computer.

There are also a couple of Windows and Internet changes that currently affect QuickBooks.

- Windows Vista

QuickBooks 2007 is the only version that runs on Vista

- Internet Explorer 7

All QuickBooks versions work with Internet Explorer 6

To use Internet Explorer 7 you need to update your QuickBooks to the following releases – NOT to a new version

QuickBooks 2007 - Release 4

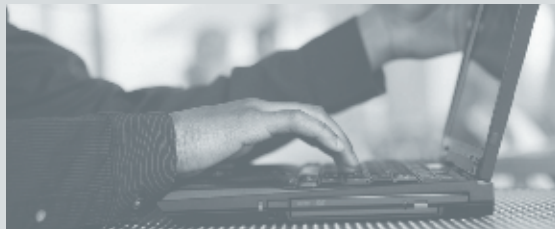
QuickBooks 2006 - Release 7 required, 9 recommended

QuickBooks 2005 - Release 9

QuickBooks 2004 - Will not run with Internet Explorer 7

As technology continues to progress, it is important to stay abreast of the advantages and drawbacks of upgrading, so that your business runs with maximum efficiency.

HERE IS A SUMMARY OF A FEW OF THE CHANGES AND ENHANCEMENTS ADDED TO QUICKBOOKS SINCE THE 2004 VERSION:



	2005	2006	2007
Print shipping labels	X	X	X
Create invoices in Word	X	X	X
Sales Order backorders		X	X
Multiple Ship to addresses		X	X
Multiple customer email addresses		X	X
Home page combines all navigators		X	X
Online timesheets from Time Tracker			X
Multi user function improved			X
Print preview in invoice customization screen			X
3 user pack available			X

THE VALUE OF A GOOD ACCOUNTANT

By Yvonne Bruno, CPA

I very rarely watch television during tax season. However, this year a particular TV commercial stuck in my memory. It featured a couple who was being audited for something on their previous year's tax return. They wanted to talk to their tax preparer about the audit. The wife indicated that they should "ask the box." She was referring to the fact that they had used purchased tax software to prepare their tax return, rather than hiring a professional. Unfortunately, they had no one to talk to.

Since the advent of small business accounting software, skeptics, including the accounting industry, have talked about the vanishing small business accountant. On the contrary, because of the changing technology, accountants have become even more important. They just don't perform the bookkeeping function any longer, because software can do it for them. By utilizing your accounting professional as a resource, a complex decision can many times be made easier. Although by no means inclusive, in addition to annual tax preparation, I often assist clients in the following areas: acquiring business loans, leasing vs. buying decisions, retirement planning and tax planning.

BUSINESS LOANS. Businesses acquire debt for different reasons. Depending on why funds are needed, the amount required, and a company's overall credit rating, the process can be quick at very little cost, or require an extensive financing package taking several weeks to be approved. Lenders, while very helpful, are sales oriented, since they profit from closing a loan. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the type of debt, interest rate, payment terms and ongoing requirements is appropriate for the amount being financed. Many loans, especially if the Small Business Administration (SBA) is involved require annual reporting to the lender, as well as impose limits on the amount of additional debt or capital expenditures a company can make. A business owner should review loans with their financial advisor before signing the documents, to avoid surprises later.

LEASE OR BUY. Another area where clients need the assistance of an advisor is determining whether to lease or buy an asset. These transactions often involve business autos, but it also applies to machinery or a building where the company operates. Many leasing options, because of the low monthly payments sound very attractive. This is especially true after test driving the car at the dealership or viewing an especially attractive office space. However, leasing terms vary widely in terms of the total payments required, and the deductibility of the payments. It is essential that the business owner review the terms with their accountant to make sure the investment is appropriate for the client's needs.

RETIREMENT PLANNING. Planning for retirement is essential for everyone. Since the small business owner has no employer to rely on for a pension, this is especially critical. During the past five years, numerous changes have been made in the retirement plan area for small businesses. In addition to more choices, it is now



The small business accountant assists clients in acquiring business loans, leasing vs. buying decisions, retirement planning and tax planning.

easier to put larger amounts of money away on a tax deferred basis. Both the company accountant as well as a financial planner should be involved in selecting the appropriate plan for their business. This will ensure that the business owner will have adequate funds when they retire.

TAX PLANNING. It is not uncommon for a business owner's earnings to fluctuate widely from one year to the next. For this reason, periodic tax planning is essential. Depending on the entity structure of the business, quarterly Federal and State estimated payments are often required. Proper determination of these amounts will ensure that all taxes are paid timely without severely overpaying. This will also allow for a smoother cash flow for both the business owner as well as the company, since it is the ultimate source of the funds.

In addition to the above, small business accountants often assist with accounting software issues, acquisitions or disposal of a business, succession planning, and serve as an external advisor on various other business issues. It is actually an advantage that accountants are no longer needed for most of the bookkeeping work. This allows them to concentrate on helping their clients make their businesses more successful.

DO YOU REALLY WANT YOUR PARTNER'S SPOUSE TO TELL YOU HOW TO RUN YOUR BUSINESS?

(AND OTHER EQUALLY UNPLEASANT SCENARIOS!)

By Attorney Judy Gedge

I don't trust this guy, Jack, that I'm going into business with so, Judy, I need you to draft a really air-tight agreement that will keep Jack in line."

Thus began a phone conversation with a client many years ago. I had to explain to this client that no legal document, no matter how well-drafted, can protect him against a dishonest partner. So, if a contract can't make the other person honest or ethical, what can it do? A well-drafted governing agreement can create a business that all partners believe is structured fairly and it can create a solid foundation for a successful business. So, what goes into a well-structured partnership agreement? When partners go into business together, I recommend that they deal with the 3 M's.

MONEY. You'll need to clearly identify the financial obligations of each partner. How much will you be required to contribute to the business? How about your partners - are they putting in the same money as you? What will you do if the business needs more money than anticipated? Are your cash reserves adequate? How does the money come 'out' of the business? If there are four owners in this business, will each owner get the exact same money out of the business? What if one owner is actively involved in the business and the other owners are more passive investors? You can, no doubt, see why it's essential to nail these issues down before launching the business. Nothing sours a business deal quicker than a partner who feels that the profits aren't being split fairly.

MANAGEMENT. When a business has only one owner, it's very easy to determine who gets to make all the decisions... the sole owner! But when a business has two or more owners, you'll need to nail down each owner's authority. Let's assume one of your partners wants to lease a new Lexus sedan through the business. Is it okay for him to enter into that business transaction without your approval? That may well be an

expenditure that should require the consent of all the owners. Other major transactions, that are defined in the governing agreement, will also require consent of the other owners.

'MOVING ON'. Let's assume you've opened a restaurant with two colleagues. All three of you are actively involved in the business. It's a popular eatery and after two years in business, it's finally turning a nice profit. One of your partners, Bill, informs you that he's ready for a change and will be taking a job out of state as a golf pro. When you recover from the initial shock, you ask yourself what impact Bill's departure will have on the business. Is Bill still entitled to an equal share of the profits? Does Bill still have a vote on business decisions? The answer is.....it all depends! A well-structured business partnership will address this type of situation with buy-sell provisions. It might give the remaining owners the right to buy out Bill's interest, possibly at a discount.

An option to buy out a departing owner is also important if a partner dies or becomes disabled. Would you really choose to be in business with your partner's spouse if your partner were to die? If this is not a pretty scenario, then you need to address this up-front in your governing document.

Operating a business with partners can provide tremendous advantages. We can't be expert in everything related to our businesses. Things can work great when owners join together who have complementary skills, a similar business style and similar business ethics. But remember, it's essential that you work through the important structuring issues of your partnership right at the outset. That way, you can help avoid misunderstandings or business disputes later on. A business break-up can be as difficult as a divorce. Agreeing on a method up front to deal with business eventualities can make for a more successful business and much more relaxed business owners!

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