

How does your company letterhead shape up?

"Letterheads fascinate me"... for all the wrong reasons, of course!

Time and time again clients contact me and almost before they complete their second sentence, I know exactly what their problem is.

And 99 times out of a hundred, there is no easy solution to it.

The problem is their company letterhead - flawlessly designed, impeccably sculptured with such an exquisite - almost ethereal - taste in colour combinations...

And oddly enough, I usually find that the bigger the designer's cheque is ... the bigger the problem that I'm being asked to solve over the telephone.

The problem is one of space.

And it's a problem which is becoming more and more costly as the direct marketing boom in Ireland is gathering momentum. Because nowadays, more and more companies are using direct mail to promote their products and services.

But when they go to write even a reasonably sized sales message on their letterhead they find that they simply don't have enough space to do it.

Here's ten+1 money-saving pointers that you might like to keep in mind next time you decide to take a fresh look at your letterhead.

- 1.** Try not to put your logo on the top left hand side of your note paper - because this is what I call an ESP area. ESP stands for 'Economical Space Position'. This is the very area which I would far prefer to leave reserved for space wasters like the recipient's name and address.
- 2.** Another ESP is - yes you've got it! - the bottom left hand position on your note paper. That's where the all-time 'space waster' the signature lines appear.
- 3.** See if you can talk your designer into giving you half inch margins. One inch margins are disgustingly wasteful on valuable copy space. And avoid - avoid like the plague - any letterhead design that requires a typist spending ten minutes on a calculator trying to work out what exactly is the margin width.
- 4.** And don't forget the bottom margin! Ideally it should be a half an inch. If you absolutely have to list all your hard won agencies on your letterhead, talk your designer into positioning them neatly on the bottom right hand side of the page. Here they won't be intrusive because, if you remember, the bottom left hand side is an ESP area.
- 5.** Colour? Well that's up to you. But just remember that if you go for an expensive full colour logo, you are going to pay above the odds for it every time you do a large mailing. Some companies overcome this problem very effectively by designing logos which look well

both in black and white and in colour. And they simply use the black and white version for direct mail purposes.

6. But be careful, this can be a false economy. Remember, all good direct mail letters should carry a blue-ink signature. If you have blue in your logo you'll save on blue-ink signature overprinting costs ... and visa versa.

7. Be careful also about how 'photocopy friendly' your logo is. Some logos end up looking absolutely frightful when they are photocopied. Always run the artwork through the photocopier before you give it your final clearance.

8. While you are at it - check it on the fax machine too. And don't just check it for appearance on the fax machine. Make sure that the paper is of a quality that can run smoothly through your fax.

9. And while we are on the subject of paper quality, take care to ensure that the paper you propose to use is laser printer friendly. Because if you plan to do volume mailings, odds are you'll end up doing them on a laser printer.

10. Don't forget the envelopes! Large mailings require machine filled envelopes - which are slightly larger than normal size. There are a number of standard machine-fill envelopes which come with standard 'window positions' etc. You could save yourself a considerable amount of money by checking and making absolutely certain that your proposed new letterhead can be used with a standard envelope ... because the cost and the amount of time involved in making up special machine-fill envelopes can be very sizeable indeed.

The real acid test, however, is to insist that you are not just presented with a pretty logo design on a beautiful clean sheet of paper. Tell your designer that you want to see what a letter looks like on it before you make your final decision.

After all, that's what a letterhead is all about - letters!

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... the Apian Way, Rome – From the underfoot series
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