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GUIDE 9

PRODUCING A LEAFLET

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Why produce a leaflet?

Leaflets are very useful for promoting a particular place. They can tell people where to go and what to see in order to get the most from a visit. They are particularly helpful in providing background information. They can also help guide visitors round a particular route, providing information at particular points.

Think about what you want to do before you start writing

Producing an attractive informative leaflet is not just a matter of chance. From the outset you need to be clear about what you expect the end product to do. If you define your objectives clearly at the beginning it will help you to make effective decisions during the planning process. This is necessary to get the best results from your leaflet.

Make sure all interested parties are involved in the process and that a common consensus has been reached. People within your organisation with experience of writing, graphics or design may help you to decide what is feasible within your budget. Some of the questions which you might want to think about include:

 What is the function of the leaflet? Is it intended solely for interpretation? Or will there be elements of fundraising or membership enrolment? For the interpretative elements of the leaflet, decide what you want to feature. It may not be possible to include everything. Remember: information gives you the facts, interpretation can bring them to life.

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27/02/2009

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- Who is the leaflet aimed at? Is it for adults or for children? Is it for specialists or non-specialists? Factors like these can affect such issues as the extent of the vocabulary used, the reading age of the piece and the size of the font which you use. Picture yourself as that audience. What questions will they want answered? What will they find interesting?
- How will the leaflets be distributed? This can affect the layout of your leaflet. An advertising leaflet which you hope will be displayed in local shops will need to have all its information on one side. If you are hoping to circulate material through a Local Tourist Information Office you will probably be able to use both sides but the leaflet will need to be folded in such a way as to fit into one of their display racks. If this is the case, what will people see to make them want to pick one up?
- Will the leaflet be in full colour? It goes without saying that full-colour printing costs more than, for example, two-colour printing on coloured paper. What you decide on will naturally depend on the budget you have at your disposal. Local printers will be able to advise you on this, but it is always wise to get a quote from more that one company as prices charged may vary considerably. The format you choose will also affect the illustrations you use. Full colour illustrations do not always look so good when rendered in black and white. The key objective is to make your leaflet look as attractive and interesting as possible to your target audience, so they will want to pick it up and look at it.

Doing your research

It is probable that you already know a lot about the place or object you want to write about. You already know that it's special: that's why you want to tell other people about it. You should check your facts to make sure that you are not misremembering dates or names of people involved with the site. As you do this, bear your prospective audience in mind and gather together the

appropriate facts. A general readership might not be interested in the details of trusses and purlins in an historic building, but members of a vernacular architecture group might be. Children are always interested in the gruesome bits of history, but if the leaflet is intended to support the National Curriculum study of Tudor Houses, domestic arrangements might be more appropriate.

Writing your text

Writing leaflets is not a difficult task, but it does need careful consideration to make sure that the end product is easy to read and puts your point over clearly. Here are a few things to think about.

- What exactly are you going to write about? This is not as easy as it sounds. It's generally the case that people have more information about their favourite site than can be crammed into a leaflet. It doesn't stop people from trying though. The result is a cluttered piece of paper in very small print. It looks unappealing and it's not what you want. Make ruthless decisions about what to leave out from the very beginning and stick to them. It will save much heart-searching later.
- Keep it simple. You will not have the space for long complicated discussions about different interpretations of a site or building. Avoid jargon and technical terms: you are writing a leaflet, not a thesis. There will be no space for a glossary at the back.
- Readability. The text of most national newspapers only requires a reading age of perhaps 9-12. It's not that they expect their readers to be that age; it's just that they know that this makes their articles accessible to all. A person who is having difficulty following the text will quit halfway through. This won't help you to get your message across. There are a few simple rules which can help you with this:
 - Try not to use long words when a short one will suffice.

- Keep your sentences short. Long sentences with lots of sub-clauses are difficult to follow. Try to use only one idea in each sentence.
- Avoid the use of passive verbs. Overuse of the passive is a fault common to many academics. For example archaeologists (me included) tend to write sentences that begin A trench was excavated by WYAAS... It's much easier for the reader if you turn this around: WYAAS excavated a trench...
- Be consistent about spellings. Take
 words ending in ize or ise, for example.
 Many people have strong feelings
 about which it should be. Perhaps you
 do, but whatever your choice stick to it
 throughout. Chopping and changing is
 only likely to annoy the reader.
- Be careful about the tone in which you address people. This is especially important if you are encouraging them to do something such as attend an inaugural meeting or make a donation. The Society would like people to.... might be a suitable opener for something formal. In other circumstances you might want to use something more immediate such as We would like you to... Whichever you choose, stick with it throughout. Formal and informal styles should not be mixed.
- Make route directions, instructions and warnings clear. Perhaps use a different typeface or colour, so as not to bury them within the text.

Illustrations

27/02/2009

You will probably want to use some illustrations in your leaflet. They are much more immediate than long sections of descriptive text. They are not however free of problems. Here are some things to bear in mind:

 Size and quality of images. Remember that space on your leaflet will be limited. Individual images will be relatively small. You should therefore choose artwork

- or photographs of sufficient quality and clarity to be legible on a small scale. If possible concentrate on the detail which you are explaining rather than giving a wide angle view.
- Positioning of images. Consider carefully where the images should fit into the text. This is not always straightforward with a leaflet which has been folded down from a larger sheet of paper. Images should be placed on the same fold as the text to which they relate. Make sure that your best image is on the front fold of your leaflet along with its title. This will encourage people to pick it up.
- Appropriateness of the image. Consider your target audience. You have already pitched the text at a particular group of people. Your images need to be consistent with this. There would be little to be gained from putting complex engineering drawings in a leaflet aimed at the under-fives.
- Photograph permissions. If you are using images of people make sure that they have no objection to you doing so and ask them to sign a statement to that effect. This is doubly important if you are using images of children. Parents have been known to bring legal actions against organisations using photographs of their children without permission. If this were to happen, you would be compelled to withdraw any publicity material using the image.
- Copyright permission. If you are using images that are not your own, make sure that you have permission in writing from the copyright holder or legal consequences could result. This applies equally to images downloaded from the internet. They may be easy to obtain, but it doesn't mean that they are free of copyright.

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 Colour or black and white? You have already decided whether to go for a fullcolour leaflet or for something in two colours or black and white. Bear this in mind when you are choosing your illustrations. Something that looks eyecatching in full colour may lose its impact in black and white.

Editing

Never assume that you've got it right the first time. Read and re-read the text. Make sure that it flows properly and that you have covered all the points you want to make. Once you are satisfied, pass it to other members of the group to look at. They will soon be able to tell you if something is not right. It's better to have glaring errors exposed at this stage than after you've gone to print.

Proof-reading

Proof-reading is really a specialist skill. It takes competence to check through a document for grammatical errors and to ensure that all the details are correct. Imagine the chaos which could be caused if your village walk leaflet read *turn right* when it should have read *turn left*.

If you do not feel competent enough to do this for yourself some commercial companies will proof-read material for you before laying out your leaflet for the printer but this will add to the cost of the project.

Laying out your leaflet

Once the text and images are assembled, work can begin on the layout. You will probably already have a fairly good idea of what you want the final product to look like but there may still be adjustments to make to ensure that the final product has a pleasing look. You may for instance have too much text to allow for an easily readable font size (this is written in size 12). This is

another point where you need to be ruthless. Perhaps part of the text will have to go. Don't try to 'fit a quart into a pint pot'. It will look unattractive and it is less likely that it will be read.

Think about the typeface. Most people find a sans serif typeface (like this one) easier to read. This is in *Arial* typeface.

Think about the way that you handle titles and paragraph headings. Having them a different size or colour will make them stand out from the body of the text. This makes it easier to follow.

If you have someone in your group who has the computer design skills and artistic flair required, this is clearly a job for him/her. If not, there are professional companies who will lay out your leaflet for you, but clearly this will add to the cost of the leaflet.

Don't forget that once you are happy with the design of your leaflet you should proofread it again. You'd be surprised at the errors which can creep in while a leaflet is in the design stage. Problems like the wrong caption to an illustration are not uncommon and, if not detected at this stage, will spoil the quality of your work.

Printing your leaflet

A small number of unfolded leaflets can easily be printed at home, however, it will need a professional printer to deal with folded leaflets and large print runs. You do not want to be folding leaflets by hand and a print run of a couple of thousand would take a considerable amount of time on a household or office computer. This will undoubtedly be the largest expense of the whole process but it's worth it just to be able to hand a disc to the printer and have him do the work for you.

Remember also, a larger print run is usually significantly cheaper per leaflet. It is probably best to print only as many leaflets as you think you will need in one or two years. You

will want to refresh the leaflet in future and add or change things. Often just a different coloured paper or a new cover image will generate interest in the new edition.

Spreading the message

Once the leaflet has returned from the printer, you can distribute it as planned, but that's not the only use for the information which you've taken so much time to put together. You can use the same material on your webpage or turn it into a PDF file and e-mail it as an attachment to people. Remember your leaflet has to be seen to be effective. You will naturally try to get the paper copies of your leaflet on display in as many places as possible. Using the electronic media in this way is just an extension of the same principle. Visibility is what counts. In the end it may not matter how well designed and full of facts your leaflet is: if nobody sees it, it's only wasted paper.