

How to design a simple brochure

A brochure will increase the awareness and visibility of your organization and will help to build its credibility in the community. You can write, design, and print one at a reasonable cost. It will also serve as a resource and ready reference for board members or other volunteers in preparing presentations or responding to questions. Included in mailings, passed out at meetings, or left with potential donors, businesses or nonprofit organizations, a brochure is an effective way to get your message out.

If your organization is a community foundation and a member of the Council on Foundations you already have a tremendous resource available to you. An excellent marketing brochure, “You Can Make a Difference,” is available to Council members free of charge. For a copy of this brochure, and for permission to use the slogan developed for community foundations, “For good, For ever,” contact John Libby at (202) 467-0469 or email LibbJ@cof.org.

Ideas for your brochure. Gather some examples of brochures from similar organizations. Ask your staff and board to bring some examples of effective brochures from other organizations so that you can glean ideas. Ask for staff and board input. Provide the best of these to your task force. Meet with your task force and define your goal for the brochure. Some questions to consider include:

- How will you use it?
- How will you distribute it? Is the brochure for the general public? Is it for a targeted audience, such as professional advisors?
- Why should the reader be interested in your organization?
- What benefits does your organization provide?
- Is there a special emphasis for your community that is important to include?
- What resources are available for its production?
- What resources are available for its distribution?
- What is your budget for production and distribution?

Local resources. Identify human resources, such as high school or community college classes or teachers, or a printing or marketing professional that may be willing to assist you with ideas and design. If you plan professional production and printing, you can seek a sponsor for your brochure, such as a local bank or business, and acknowledge them on the brochure. Some print shops offer a special pricing for nonprofit organizations. If yours does not, *request a reduction in cost.*

Size. Most brochures are folded and printed double-sided so that you have multiple text panels. You will likely want to start with three panels on each side, made by folding an 8½ x 11 piece of paper twice. This style fits in a standard-sized envelope and is convenient

to read and to mail. A slightly larger brochure, which can be folded accordion-style and mailed in a standard-sized envelope, can be made by folding legal-sized paper in fours, then printing double-sided.

Paper stock. While you don't want to spend money on really expensive paper stock, *do* choose one that is sturdy enough to last and looks substantial enough to convey an impression of good quality. Look at the examples from other organizations that you have gathered for ideas. Ask for help from board members or volunteers with experience in this area and from your local print shop professionals, who can give you quotes as to cost.

Content. After you have made decisions about the audience, size, and paper stock, start by outlining the brochure's contents. Look at how you want it to flow and how it looks as a whole before writing individual sections. Make a mock-up of the actual brochure on paper or on your computer as you write individual sections. You can ask board members or a professional resource for ideas, as well as requesting that they review your work.

Writing the copy. "*Bad writers plagiarize, good writers steal,*" is an old adage. In the community foundation field you will find that you *can* "steal" liberally from the brochures of other community foundations—with their good wishes! Many larger foundations may have used professionals for all their marketing materials. While full-color printing and expensive paper may be out of your price range, their ideas, language, layout and content can still be very helpful.

When you find an especially well written piece or idea in a brochure that you could easily adapt for your own circumstances, *use it!* Of course, *do ask* if you can use design elements, specific language or ideas you find from other organizations. You will usually receive immediate permission.

As you write, using the mock-up on your computer will help you see how the copy will fit and whether the design will help meet your goals.

Design and layout. This is an area where professional design advice is very important. Give your design advisor credit, if this is appropriate. There is so much good information we want to share, that often organizations are tempted to cram too much information into too small a space. A professional eye will help enormously!

Some general tips for writing, design and layout

- Be concise and write short, clear sentences
- Avoid jargon
- Consider a question-and-answer format
- Use a clear font that is large enough for older eyes to read

- Use headlines to break up blocks of print
- Leave lots of white space
- Use boxes for quotes or graphs
- Use your logo (you may have a special logo for some programs)
- Use your slogan
- Include a tear-off or separate card for people to request information
- Be sure to include contact information
- Write captions for any photos

Color. One color of ink in addition to black, on white paper, can make your brochure stand out and does not add a great deal to the cost. Alternatively, use colored paper stock. If your organization has a “signature” color, be sure to use it in some way. Ask for professional advice about how and where to use color.

Integrate with other marketing materials. Make sure the logo, color and the design used in any other marketing materials are used in your brochure. *All* your materials should convey a similar design and feeling, so that your organization becomes more easily identifiable.

Proofread it. Proofreading your brochure goes beyond simply looking for typos, though you will want to proof it *scrupulously* for typos and for accuracy, especially in names and numbers, dates and contact information. Proof it also for good grammar! Ask a couple of people who have not been involved with your foundation or fund to read it and give you a frank opinion about its clarity and impact. Can they easily understand your explanations and definitions?