EDUCATING THE PUBLIC: THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY APPROACH

Roger Humble*

INTRODUCTION

My assignment was to contact Contra Costa County and to learn how they developed and maintained their agency brochures. Lynn Yaney, public information officer, was my contact person for this assignment. Contra Costa County has created a public information office in an effort to better strengthen their relationship and visibility in the community. My primary interest was how the public was made aware of their counties various programs and activities. Contra Costa Social Services has developed a professional Press Kit, packed with multi colored informational brochures utilizing actual photographs of people. Napa County on the other hand has no public information officer. Nor do we have a glossy multi-colored press kit. The public information function is handled by Terry Longoria, Director of Health and Human Services or Jim Featherstone, the Assistant Director. Napa County Health and Human Services have few brochures reflecting our current services.. The brochures that we do have, while informative, utilize stick figures and or basic clip art. While these brochures clearly exemplify our department's homey nature, and funding priorities, a more consistent format could go further in promoting our identity in the community.

KEY FINDINGS

The need for effective brochures has become increasingly important as the role of our departments change. Social service departments have become more responsive and decentralized in their delivery system as they develop new collaboratives with the community.

Brochures can be an effective tool in informing the public of the various programs that our departments currently administer. This has become particularly important with the proliferation of new Medi-Cal programs and the dismantling of the AFDC program.

The public enjoys informational presentations and appreciates being able to walk away with an informative brochure for later reference With informational brochures readily available, the department stands to promote its visibility and enhance its public image.

Brochures also provide a method of distributing information that is both inexpensive and easily updated. They have the advantage of being easily produced in house at a minimum cost.

New employee orientations could also benefit by having a spectrum of brochures representing the various programs that our agency administers. This information could assist in orientating a new employee to all the programs and their requirements for which our agency is responsible.

CAVEATS

Designing brochures can bring out the graphic artist in just about anyone. It is best to avoid con-

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tests for logo ideas and or layout concepts, as they tend to create more resentment than good will. Some design concepts are best left with the professionals, while the development of "text" should remain in house.

of the unit providing the service.

A budget should be developed

GETTING STARTED

Designate one person to collect all existing brochures and review them for current relevancy and possible revision. A current organizational chart could assist in this task.

Contact the Director for her input regarding possible gaps and overlaps in our existing brochures.

Conduct a survey to see who currently utilizes our brochures. Many outside organizations, non-profits, and community based organizations could benefit by displaying our agencies brochures.

Attend a class on how to design attention grabbing brochures.

Do a comprehensive search for funding. Hospitals are just one of the many possible funding sources.

Do a cost analysis to see if it would be less expensive to hire a professional instead of in-house talent.

RECOMMENDATION

Napa County should develop a uniform boilerplate for all agency brochures. Brochures should have similar fonts and colors. Before production, all brochures should be reviewed for accuracy and consistency. An outside graphic designer should be employed to help with development of a uniform design and look. Text should be the responsibility

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THIS BROCHURE

You'll probably want to customize all your templates when you discover how editing and re-saving your templates would make creating future documents easier. To customize this brochure, select File New to reopen this template as a document.

1. Insert your company information in place of the sample text.

2. Choose Save As from the File menu. Choose Document Template in the Save as Type box (the filename extensions should change from *doc* to *dot*). Save the file under a new name to protect the original, or use the same name to replace the existing version.

3. To create a document, choose File New to re-open your template as a document. Your information should appear in place.

ABOUT THE "PICTURES"

The "pictures" in this brochure are Wingdings typeface symbols. To insert a new symbol, highlight the symbol character and choose Symbol from the Insert menu—select a new symbol from the map, click Insert, and Close.

HOW TO WORK WITH BREAKS

Breaks in a Word document appear as labeled, dotted lines on the screen. Using the Break command, you can insert manual page breaks, column breaks, and section breaks.

To insert a break, choose Break from the Insert menu. Select one option. Click on OK to accept your choice.

HOW TO WORK WITH SPACING

To reduce the spacing between, for example, body text paragraphs, click your cursor in *this* paragraph, and choose Paragraph from the Format menu. Reduce the Spacing After to 6 points, making additional adjustments as needed.

To save your style changes, (assuming your cursor is blinking in the changed paragraph), click on the Style in the drop-down Style list at the top-left of your screen. Press Enter to save the changes, and update all similar Styles.

To adjust character spacing, select the text to be modified, and choose Font from the Format menu. Click Character Spacing and enter a new value.

OTHER BROCHURE TIPS

To change a font size, choose Font from the Format menu. Adjust the size as needed, and click OK or Cancel to exit.

To change the shading of shaded paragraphs, choose Borders and Shading from the Format menu. Select a new shade or pattern, and choose OK. Experiment to achieve the best shade for your printer.

To remove a character style, select the text and press Ctrl-Spacebar. You can also choose Default Paragraph Font from the Style drop-down.

BROCHURE IDEAS

"Picture" fonts, like Wingdings, are gaining popularity. Consider using other symbol fonts to create highly customized "icons."

Consider printing your brochure on colorful, preprinted brochure paper—available from many paper suppliers.

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To print (and preserve) these brochure instructions, choose Print from the File menu. Press Enter to print the brochure.
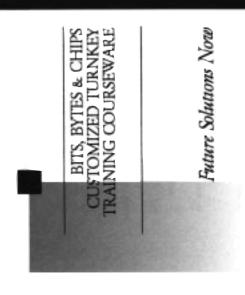
HOW TO CREATE A BROCHURE

Using this template, you can create a professional brochure. Here's how:

1. Insert your words in place of these words, using and/or re-arranging the preset paragraph Styles.

2. Print pages 1 and 2 back-to-back onto sturdy, letter size paper.

3. Fold the paper like a letter to create a three-fold brochure (positioning the panel with the large picture on the front).

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

To change the Style of any paragraph, select the text by positioning your cursor anywhere in the paragraph. With your cursor blinking in the paragraph, select a Style from the drop-down Style list at the top-left of your screen. Press Enter to accept your choice.

To change the picture click on the picture and choose Picture from the Insert menu. Choose a new picture, and click Open.