

Entireweb Newsletter * July 31, 2008 * ISSUE #462

To ensure that you receive all our newsletters to your inbox, please add newsletter@entireweb.com to your address book.

The Effectiveness of an Empty Space

There are so many facets of ad design that get hammered home in article after article. Everyone is telling you how to maximize your headline's impact and how to make your font stand out amid a sea of marketing.

So much time is spent on what should go into your ad that we sometimes neglect one of the most important and eye catching elements, the empty spaces.

This is really one of the simplest, but easiest to mess up, factors of your print design. Have you ever listened to a song like the Who's "Wont Get Fooled Again" or similar songs that build up to a crescendo then suddenly have a break in the music before kicking the guitars back into overdrive? That empty space in the music is powerful.

It can give you goose bumps and it can make a whole room feel electric. When the music starts again and breaks that moment of silence, the notes sound louder and more powerful as a result. This isn't a trick that is reserved only for musicians. The same principle applies to ad design (or any sort of design, for that matter).

What you should be shooting for is to draw attention to the important parts of your ad: the message, the offer or the image. People at times and it is an easy trap to fall into, make the mistake of simply enlarging the item they are trying to bring focus to. Granted, disproportionately large text can stand out, but it also has the effect of making an ad seem lop sided or amateur.

The eye needs to be drawn to your focus, though, and the most effective and most professional looking way to do this is through the use of space. Don't clutter your ad with unnecessary text and images, especially around the main areas, since they can detract from the central focus.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that if there's a big empty space in your ad that you have to fill it with something. Just include the pieces that are necessary to effectively convey your idea or message. If you just have too much information that has to be conveyed about your product, you should save it for a brochure or catalogue instead of jumbling it all together in your advertisement.

There are no hard and fast rules dictating how much or how little space you should have in your ad, but a good rule of thumb is to leave at least one fourth of ad space empty.

The same applies to the images you use in your ad. When taking photos keep it clean and free of distracting clutter. Use a background that will accentuate your product and make it stand out. For example, using an image of your product against the back drop of your office's out of date plaid wallpaper, is going to be distracting.

Space can make your ad design sleek and professional in appearance and that is what will make an impression on consumers. Sometimes, it is not what you do with the space you are given, it is what you do not do that counts.

Katie Marcus writes about print design technologies being used by businesses for their marketing and advertising campaigns.