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INFORMER

Inside

CPM

Community Papers of Michigan

The topic of this month's "Talk" has to do with the visual. An understanding of how we perceive and process that type of optical information relies on…

Readability

Ad Talk
✳ with Ellen Hanrahan

The Basics… forming an essential foundation. Understanding the fundamental principles of a skill, in this case, design.

This will be a bit "wordy," but since our world is very visual, we need to learn how to develop skills to maintain unity, comprehension and perception.

Readability and Legibility

Readability and legibility are type attributes that are always a part of any design consideration. They will eventually be an integral part of your design process.

Readability is the "comfort level" that we achieve—the ease in reading text.

Legibility refers to the clarity of the individual characters and relies on the specific and inherent characteristics of any given typeface.

As designers, we have total control over both the readability and legibility of the information that we present. The correct typeface and its use can make a huge difference in creating clear and effective advertising. Since this is something that we can control, we should be aware of its impact. The following are key components in regarding the readability and legibility of visual information.

When we read, we read in groupings of words, rather than concentrating on every single word in the sentence. Readability takes into account a number of factors, but our primary concern is the use of type in our advertising and other communications. Because the designer can control the readability of the information presented, it is a choice that every designer needs to make so information is easy to understand.

The following factors can make an impact on the readability of our printed information, therefore it is wise to become familiar with the following attributes:

Readability:
Uppercase & Lowercase

Uppercase letters, or "caps" don't really have a distinctive look—most of the letters have a square shape to them—making it more difficult to recognize their individual characteristics. Check out the following:

DIFFICULTY IN READING THIS TEXT COMES FROM THE FACT THAT ALL THE CHARACTERS HAVE A "SAMENESS."

WE ARE TRYING TO RECOGNIZE WORDS WITH OTHER LETTERS THAT HAVE THE SAME BASIC SHAPE.

IN A SANS SERIF TYPEFACE, WE MAY HAVE EVEN MORE PROBLEMS IN TRYING TO DISTINGUISH INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT USUALLY ALLOWS US TO "SKIM" THROUGH THE INFORMATION.

All-cap samples at the bottom of the first column can be tiring for readers and can also limit their reading speed.

Lowercase letters are much easier to recognize because their shape is more distinctive, and it's the responsibility of the designer to choose type wisely.

Letterspace and Wordspace

Letterspace simply refers to the amount of space between each letter. There should be enough space to allow for individual letter, or character recognition. *Letterspacing* should be neither too tight nor too loose. For example, the text you are reading now is composed of letters that are spaced too close together. It again becomes harder to recognize the individual characteristics of each letter.

On the other hand, you can also have *letterspacing* that is too loose, again making it difficult to determine where the words themselves end. Too much space between the letters is just as difficult to read as letters that are too close together.

There will be times when you want to change the space between letters. Most often this will occur when you run into words where optical spacing is better. Take a look…

AWAY VACATION Truck Vacuum Water

AWAY VACATION   Truck Vacuum Water

The space between the letters on the first line are mechanically correct, but separate some parts of the word too greatly. Optical or visual spacing now determines how the word will "read."

Removing space between certain pairs of letters results in letterspacing that appears more consistent throughout the entire word. Letters were "tucked," or more correctly, "kerned," to achieve the correct visual spacing.

Wordspacing is the space between words. Too much wordspacing creates reading problems by isolating words. See how "gaps" between these words and lines of type distract eye movement? The large spaces that occur between these words form "rivers," most often occurring in type that's justified. There are ways to correct irregular spacing.

Point Size:
Type is measured in point sizes and can be adjusted. Type 18 points or larger is traditionally considered display type, while type that's smaller is text type, but again, that can vary depending on the particular typeface.

Reverse Type:
White type on a black background presents its own problems when the type is too small or has thick and thin serifs. This can slow readability significantly, especially on newsprint.

Line Length & Line Space:
Most of us read by "scanning" the words on a page. The most comfortable grouping is three to four words that are "seen" at one time, so it is necessary to be aware of the column width and the point size of the type. These two factors work hand in hand. Narrow columns require smaller point sizes, while larger columns can accommodate larger point sizes in type. The rule of thumb used to determine line length was 1½–2 times the point size. Still a good guideline today that I tend to follow.

Linespace, or "leading" (pronounced *ledding*), refers to the amount of space between the lines of type and is measured from baseline to baseline.

Leading is dependent upon such factors as the typeface and the x-height of lowercase letters.

Type Alignment:
You can arrange type in a number of ways: Flush left or left aligned; Flush right or right aligned; Justified (type is flush on both right and left) , and Centered.
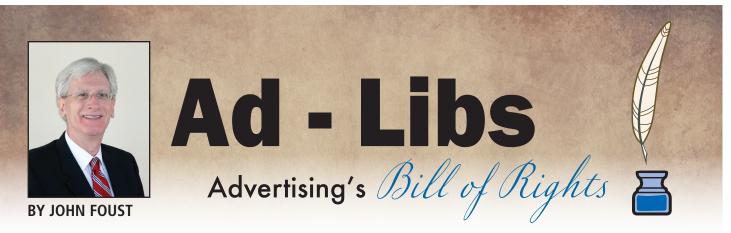
Legibility   Type Weight:
Type families come in various weights—Light, Roman, Book, Bold, Ultra, etc. Typefaces that are very bold or very light tend to rate low on the legibility scale. "Grunge" typefaces or "decorative" typefaces need to be used with a discerning eye. They become very difficult to read. If you aren't sure of mixing type, select a typeface that offers a number of different weights.

Type Shape:
Each character has a unique shape and we can recognize those letter shapes. The dominant shapes can be divided into four categories—vertical, curved, a combination of vertical and curved and oblique. Condensed and expanded typefaces can make reading more difficult—try not to distort the characters any more than necessary and try to find a condensed typeface rather than condensing your own. The integrity of the character may be lost.

Serif and Sans-Serif:
A serif typeface appears to have little "feet" or strokes as part of the main vertical or diagonal stem. Sans, which means "without," refers to type without serifs. The best way to determine which is the most appropriate typeface to use is practical application, past experience and your audience.

Ad - Libs

Advertising's *Bill of Rights*

BY JOHN FOUST

In the advertising business, there are things which must be done in order to create an effective campaign. Think of it as Advertising's Bill of Rights: Send the right message...to the right audience...in the right medium...at the right time...about the right product (or service)...which sells for the right price...in the right environment.

Although some other rights might be added to the list, this covers the basics. Here's a closer look:

1 Send the Right Message

In other words, watch your language. Instead of using empty claims and exaggerations like "fantastic," "incredible" and "best ever," stick to legitimate features and benefits. If you're putting together a response ad (as opposed to an image, or institutional, ad), make a compelling offer – discounts, time-sensitive offers, two-for-price of one, etc.

2 To the Right Audience

There's no such thing as selling to "everyone." On any given day, only a small slice of the total audience is in the market for a new car or a refrigerator or a pair of jeans. Aim your message at the people who want/need/qualify to buy what your advertiser is selling.

3 In the Right Medium

It's rare when a particular product is limited to only one possible media outlet. As a result, most of your advertisers are deciding between two or more choices. The first order of business is to learn as much as possible about the media product(s) you sell. Then learn all you can about the other choices in your market. That will put you in position to make fair – and convincing – comparisons between Choices A, B and C. Along the way, you will confirm ways to present your paper's print and online products as the right picks.

4 At the Right Time

While some products and services are viable all year long, others are seasonal. Unless your publication is in a year-round cold climate, don't try to sell snow shovels in July.

5 About the Right Product (or service)

Likewise, it's not smart to advertise lawn furniture or residential termite services in a congested area with high-rise apartment buildings.

6 Which Sells for the Right Price

A car dealer told me about a salesperson who approached a man in the used car lot. When the man asked, "How much is this truck?" the salesperson replied, "$19,900." The man said, "But the tag says $15,000. Do you think I'm some kind of fool?" The salesman said, "No sir, I was just checking to make sure."

Encourage your advertisers to price their products fairly. If the price is wrong, no one will buy.

7 In the Right Environment

Measurements of success shouldn't stop when an ad runs. Sure, advertising can generate traffic, but if consumers encounter rude employees in the advertiser's place of business, they will leave. And you can say the same for poor parking, inconvenient hours, dirty floors, and complicated return policies.

True advertising success calls for the entire Bill of Rights, not just one or two.

Taking Control of Your Time

Kevin shares tools that increase his productivity

by Kevin Slimp
kevin@kevinslimp.com

It has been one of those days. You've had them. It began with a website that wasn't working like it was supposed to. When you have a website that lists items for sale on the homepage, and the homepage is blank, you have a problem. That's how my day began.

It seems like it's always on your busiest days when things go wrong. Thankfully, with the help of a friend in Dallas, we were able to find our problem and get the site up and running in about an hour. So, the day could have been a lot worse.

I redesign a lot of newspapers these days. It reminds me of the work a lot of my readers do. It's deadline-driven. A newspaper will come out with a new design in two weeks, whether it's ready or not. So, it had better be ready.

This morning, I wondered why I hadn't heard back from the co-publishers to tell me how they liked the designs I sent them two days ago. Then, late this morning, I got an email from a mail server letting me know the emails to my client never made it to their inbox due to an error in my email system. That took about three hours to fix, but everything is fine now.

Both of those issues were caused by servers in other

The difference between designing with two monitors and three monitors is significant. These are three brands I count on when buying monitors.

places that control things like how my websites work and where my email goes. I couldn't have seen those problems coming. Problems arise all the time in the high-tech world in which we operate. Still, it's tough when the problems come in pairs.

Time is my most important commodity. I make a great effort to get the most out of my time. Maybe I can't control a website host in Eastern Europe or an email server across the country, but there are things I can control to get the most out of my time.

One of the most important things I can do is use the right tools to do my work. Some of you have been following my work long enough to remember when I used to receive shipments from software and hardware companies almost daily, hoping I would mention their products in a column. Those days were fun, but they're past. Like everyone else, I buy my own hardware and software these days. I'm not looking for the least expensive tools to complete my work. I'm looking for tools that allow me to get the most work done in the shortest amount of time. Hardly a week goes by that I

Chesona Wireless Keyboard for Mac

don't invest in a new piece of hardware. Here are a few of my favorites that save me a lot of time:

Keyboards:
Logitech MX Keys for Mac ($119 US). It allows me to control up to three computers at once. Typing is smooth, requiring much less effort than most keyboards.
Chesona Wireless Keyboard for Mac ($40). I decided to purchase a second keyboard this week and researched if there were any new keyboards with the same features as the MX Keys from Logitech. I found it in the Chesona, available in both PC and MAC versions. It controls up to three computers simultaneously and feels almost identical to the Logitech while entering text.

Mice:
Logitech MX Master 3 ($99). Like the Logitech keyboard, this mouse fits firmly in my hand while allowing me to control up to three computers simultaneously. Other mice pale in comparison, except…
Logitech M720 Triathlon ($36). Again, I researched to see if another mouse worked as well as the MX Master 3 without the price tag. I found it in the M720. It's almost identical to the $99 mouse.

It's built with less metal and more plastic. Thus, the lower price.

Monitors:
I use three monitors. Believe this: If you design pages for a living, the difference between two and three monitors is significant. I've tried many monitors and found three 4k monitors (QHD) I love without breaking the bank (4k monitors can run $1,000 or more). I get great results with each of these.
Dell S3222DGM ($349). This 32" monitor is my favorite. I never thought I'd enjoy working on a curved monitor. Go figure. The color is excellent, and the detail makes me think I'm working on a much more expensive machine. Built for gaming, it's great for what I do.
ThinkVision T32h-20 ($389). Another 32" monitor, the ThinkVision, replaces the Lenovo (same manufacturer) C32q-20. I've owned several Lenovo monitors, so I decided to trust the ThinkVision. It hasn't let me down.
Samsung ViewFinity S60A ($349). Again, an excellent monitor. It sits above my desk, along with the other monitors, held up by adjustable gas spring monitor arms.

When purchasing monitors, shop around online for the best price. I found some of these monitors selling for $600 or more online. I always check Amazon, Best Buy, and the manufacturer. Just now, the Thinkvision was listed for $200 less on Lenovo.com than on Amazon.

Okay, I'm going to be working late today. There have been a lot of interruptions, and somebody is waiting for a new newspaper design.

By Mark W. Rummel

Fenton, MI

Thanks to A.I. – Artificial Intelligence – writers might soon be optional

If you read national stories discussing the future of print publications, you'll see that the "next big thing" coming is the loss of human writers / authors / commentators.

Instead, computerized language programs such as "ChatGPT" are being perfected, to write complete, human-like responses to questions. This amazing era likely marks the end of needing humans to write news stories, ad copy — and even school assignments, reports, term papers and doctoral theses.

BASICALLY, A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) is a new level of computer intelligence. It is creating machines to put words together that sound as though a human wrote them. By scanning billions of stories, definitions and words written by humans, A.I. simulates how we speak and write.

It is scary to see how lifelike such stories are. It will be used in many types of word handling, such as newspapers, since your computer can create an entire story from your request. Schools are already nervous about students ordering a "200-word story describing the early life of George Washington." Meanwhile the student goes off to play a video game, while the computer does all the writing...

companies that have been in business longer?

SERVING YOU SINCE **1986**

SERVING YOU SINCE **1968**

SERVING YOU SINCE

Original version as written

Businesses are rightly proud of their years, decades or centuries of serving their communities. Small company owners are often willing to regularly promote the tradition that their great-grandparents or parents or whoever started that firm 'way back when.

I am rightly fascinated when a small company's logo proudly states "Serving You Since..." as that shows stability, plus obvious great community and customer service and pride for that many years.

For some reason, three dates have been of interest to me lately.

As my examples show, the digits 1-9-8-6 can be reworked several ways... and how it's said makes a big difference in years of service.

SINCE 1986 — this represents quite an achievement in 2023, as it means the owners and operators have done something right for 37 years. That's almost two generations! Amid recessions, wars and other difficulties, this company has persevered. And, only 30% of all businesses last this long, so that's an achievement on its own!

SINCE 1968 — even though these are the same four digits, any company which has served customers for 55 years deserves

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FOR INSTANCE, at left is part of the column about 1986 - 1968 - 1896, which I wrote last month (see above.) I asked the A.I. Program ANYWORD.COM to edit / rewrite that February column.

AT RIGHT, the blue words show all the changes the computer produced within about five seconds. Now, this isn't a fully new A.I. story, but it shows some possible upgrades and improvements to my writing. (I could not actually use a total A.I. writing program since the waiting time is so long. But that will change soon as more are available.)

Old TV shows warned us that computers would some day take over all our human thoughts, action and words. Maybe that day is closer than we think...

Mark has worked on all sides of papers since 1972. He and wife Sally even worked for The Walt Disney Co.
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New version from Anyword.com

Businesses are justifiably proud of their years, decades, or centuries of serving their communities. Small business owners are often eager to regularly emphasize the tradition that their great-grandparents, parents, or whoever established that company 'way back when.

I am always fascinated when a small business's logo proudly proclaims "Serving You Since..." as that indicates stability, plus obvious great customer service and community pride for so many years.

For some reason, three dates have recently been of particular interest to me.

As my examples show, the digits 1-9-8-6 can be reconfigured several ways... and how it's stated makes a big difference in years of service.

SINCE 1986 — this represents a remarkable accomplishment in 2023, as it means the owners and operators have done something right for 37 years. That's almost two generations! Despite recessions, wars, and other difficulties, this company has persevered. Additionally, only 30% of all businesses survive this long, so that's an achievement in itself!

SINCE 1968 — even though these are the same four digits, any company that has served customers for 55 years deserves

BUILDING **MAIN STREET** NOT WALL STREET

Small Business, Big Impact

by John Newby

The importance of locally owned businesses for community growth and sustainability cannot be overstated. As Albert Einstein once said, "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking." To ensure a prosperous future for their communities, leaders must prioritize the growth of local businesses, shifting their focus to hidden expenses and stresses that have long-term effects on the community.

There are several considerations that should be at the forefront of every community conversation regarding growth, strategy, and the future. The first consideration is the financial impact of various types of retail establishments on the community. A study a few years ago by Tischler & Associates revealed that specialty retail establishments consisting of locally owned small and medium-sized businesses generate a net yearly return of $326 per 1,000 square feet of store space. In contrast, big-box stores and fast-food outlets not only generate lower tax revenues but also have higher infrastructure and maintenance costs, costing taxpayers $468 and $5,168 per 1,000 square feet, respectively.

The second consideration is the charitable giving by businesses. The research conducted by Oregon State University for the Small Business Administration found that small and mid-sized businesses with fewer than 100 employees give an average of $789 per employee in cash and in-kind donations to the community. On the other hand, larger businesses with over 500 employees give only $334 per employee on average, which is nearly 60% less than the amount given by smaller and mid-sized businesses.

The third consideration is the relationship between locally owned businesses and the economic growth of the community. A study by Pennsylvania State University showed that counties with a greater number of smaller and mid-sized locally owned businesses had a greater per capita income growth. In contrast, counties with a higher proportion of large absentee-owned businesses, such as big-box stores and non-locally owned chains, had lower incomes. This finding is not surprising since big-box stores and chains usually provide wages at the lower end of the income spectrum.

Lastly, there is evidence to suggest that locally owned businesses have a positive impact on the health and well-being of the community. Researchers in the Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society found that counties with a greater proportion of small and mid-sized businesses had lower rates of mortality, obesity, and diabetes. Furthermore, Walter Goldschmidt's study on small agricultural communities in California showed that communities with small and mid-sized owner-operated farms had a more vibrant, diverse economy and a higher quality of life.

Considering these findings, it is crucial for smaller and mid-sized communities to prioritize the growth of their local business base. To thrive in a way that benefits future businesses and generations, half of economic development dollars should be directed towards locally owned businesses. Communities and their media companies need to educate the entire community on the advantages of a truly local small business DNA. As the internet continues to drain communities of their much-needed tax dollars, it is increasingly important to create a solid business base to sustain the community.

In conclusion, as Albert Einstein once said and we shared at the beginning of this column, "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking." The community's future depends on its ability to change its thinking and shift its focus to the growth of locally owned businesses. The financial, social, and health benefits of local businesses are clear, and communities must prioritize their growth to ensure a prosperous future for generations to come.

John Newby, from SW Missouri, is a nationally recognized Columnist, Speaker, & Publisher. He consults with Community, Business & Media. His "Building Main Street, not Wall Street," column is read by 60+ communities around the country. As founder of Truly-Local, he assists communities, media and business leaders in building synergies that create vibrant communities. He can be reached at: John@Truly-Local.org.

How To *Successfully Handle*
Workplace Disputes

by Christina Lattimer
Featured with Permission

Workplace disputes are futile egotistical diversions, which waste a lot of time and energy. Personally, I usually avoid them like the plague. That's not to say I don't feel strongly about certain issues. I abhor it when my values are dishonored. However, I now know enough to realize that everyone is entitled to their opinion. Also, life is simply too short to become embroiled. The way to handle workplace disputes is to shift into higher self-leadership mode and tackle them from that perspective. This is the way to approach any dispute whether it is one either you or your team members involved.

Disputes usually arise when someone else's rules, opinions or behaviors impinge on our own personal boundaries that we can no longer turn a blind eye to.

The Cost of Workplace Disputes

At work in the UK, around 117,926K employment disputes were recorded in 2020/21. So the phenomenon is real. The emergence of an application to an employment tribunal is quite often the end result of a long and arduous route. Whereby somewhere along the line, parties to the dispute have failed to find a solution or a meeting of minds.

Workplace conflict is extremely costly. In a study by CPP Global, it was found that resolving conflict took up, on average, one day per month for each and every worker. If you start doing the math, then you realise that the cost to businesses is pretty huge. But even then, disputes at work have a ripple effect. Not only do they take precious time to resolve, but they can also create an awful atmosphere. Other consequences include absence from work, knotty HR issues while disputes are being solved and simply dragging down the business.

Why Disputes Occur

There are many reasons why disputes occur, but some of the common dynamics present are: Roles of victim and victimizer, a sense of unfairness or injustice: A need to be right and the other wrong and sometimes a need to be better than or indignation at being seen as less than.

Some of the causes of disputes arising from:

1. Rules imposed by one party have been broken by the other. The other doesn't agree on the rules in the first place.

2. There is a disagreement on the facts.

3. One person is seen as having an unfair advantage over another.

4. A person's behavior is or is seen as unacceptable.

5. Decisions are made which don't consider the person or their circumstances.

6. There is a personality clash.

7. Inadequate communication exists.

Because we are all so unique and our perspectives are so very different, conflict resolution management isn't always a success, As can be seen by the number of disputes which have reached an employment tribunal. In fact, many companies might argue that the most important HR Expertise is being able to minimize the effects of disputes in the workplace.

A Different Mindset

There is no magic wand, unfortunately. Human behavior doesn't transform instantly. A change of mind is needed. This is not just in the workplace, but at home, in politics, and in global leadership. When you place your higher self in charge, you approach conflict from a place of kindness, respect and care for everyone involved.

The mindset shift you achieve from operating from your higher self would produce a significant change. Instead of unhealthy disputes which simply squash the spirit, waste time and stunt creativity and innovation, the focus is on creating dynamics of equal value, harmonious working (healthy conflict is allowed!), and respect of boundaries and understanding each other.

These can translate into possible actions to handle workplace disputes such as:

1. Helping people who feel victimized to access their inner strength and honor themselves.

2. Creating a common purpose and vision when setting rules and boundaries, and when others can't or don't meet them, helping them as much as possible to do so.

3. Allowing people to make an occasional mistake.

4. Treating everyone with equal value as a person.

5. Involving and honoring everyone when instigating change.

6. Being aware of and acknowledging decisions may have a negative impact on others and finding ways to help people when that is the case.

7. Raising awareness of how we operate as human beings and our impact on others.

8. Creating congruent communication, where different styles are respected and used.

9. Avoid judging perspectives as right or wrong, but as working out what does and doesn't work.

When you realize the way to handle workplace disputes can be opportunities to unite and bring greater understanding, then you will approach them in a completely different way.

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