

full circle.

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**integrative project.
2007-2008.**

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Introduction

Time and again we hear that first impressions are everything. On a campus where student organizations flood the grounds, a first impression is can command attention or blend into the background.

The most basic part of a first impression, of course, is the visual presentation of the organization. Since most of the events and meetings held by organizations are seen exclusively by those who choose to attend them or by the chance passerby, it has become necessary for student organizations to project themselves through public postings. Most of these public postings take the form of flyers scattered throughout the campus grounds and plastered to the Angell Hall Posting Wall. Because of the many groups trying to sell themselves, there has become a growing need for each individual organization to distinguish itself from the rest through a particular visual identity or by communicating through an innovative format.

Influences

Students walking around a college campus generally are not on the lookout for advertisements around them, and this is very important to consider when devising a strategy. One needs to catch the attention of their audience in order to be heard. As Jan Tschichold writes in his book *The New Typography*:

“Modern man has to absorb every day a mass of printed matter which, whether he has asked for it or not, is delivered through his letter-box or confronts him everywhere out of doors... The speed at which the modern consumer of printing has to absorb it means that the form of printing also must adapt itself to the conditions of modern life. As a rule, we no longer read quietly line by line, but glance quickly over the whole and only if our interest is awakened do we study it in detail.”

Tschichold says this as a reminder that though there may be a lot to be said, no one is going to listen unless something gets his or her attention at first glance. Students are busy people, and few things beyond the word ‘FREE’ will make them stop dead in their tracks to read on. Tschichold also emphasizes in this statement the importance of being clear and brief with what is to be communicated to the audience. In his book, Tschichold makes it clear that one should not overwhelm the page with too much information, but allow it to contain exactly what is necessary to convey what is to be said.

When observing the mass of flyers and other advertisements for student organizations around campus, it is evident that the principles outlined in Tschichold’s work were not taken into consideration. An evident flaw in current flyers is that the 8.5 by 11 inch space on which they are printed is overflowing with information, much of which is ignored. Much more importantly, in many of the flyers, there is no organization of the

information. Organization is very important when one is communicating with the audience because it will allow those reading to take in the most important information first and make that part stick in their heads. The hierarchy of the design can be formed in several ways; through scale, color, or other side factors that serve to highlight the information. A very important part about the hierarchy of the design is that the vital area be clear and easy to read.

Intentions

Working with a student organization at the University of Michigan called Circle K, I embarked on a comprehensive strategy meant to solve many of the problems I observed with the current advertising techniques on campus. I wanted to initiate a campaign for Circle K that would highlight their values and create an image for them that would make it look fun and cool. Circle K is an organization based upon community service. They have a wide range of service projects that can appeal to almost any interest. This is very important to the organization, and therefore very important to the image that I wanted to create for them.

I spent the first portion of my project devising a design scheme that I felt would be appropriate to fit the goals I had for creating a successful campaign for the organization. One main goal that I had was to create a cohesive set of flyers that were adaptable enough to fit the different projects. I also wanted make a look for the organization that would stand out from what other organization were using to advertise. In order to do this, I also set the goal of developing unique and innovative strategies that would publicize Circle K.

I started by creating a look through flyers. Something I noticed about many of the flyers that were up was that they were overloaded with color and text, so my goal was to move away from that format. I began my designs in black and white and based them roughly on the layout of an advent calendar, since the calendar for Circle K is like the core of the group because it serves to inform and organize. My design uses clear, bold fonts in order to be read from far away as someone is passing at a quick pace. It also separated the page, much like how an advent calendar does, with a black bar along the bottom. The format of the design would contain a statement in large letters in the upper white portion meant to provoke the interest of a college student, and a more informative explanation in the lower black area. My approach was to address individual community service projects with different humorous or witty phrases related to them.

The reasoning behind the bold and witty statements was that they would be the first things that people would read upon approaching the flyers, and would catch their attention leading them to read on. The relation of the phrases to the actual project would make sense to the viewer once he or she read on. For example, a phrase like “paper or



plastic?” would tie into the Sequoia Place Grocery Store project because this project involves helping out at a free grocery store in a retirement home. Because all of the flyers would relate to each other by means of similar design, they create a collective bunch that communicates the essence of the Circle K. This strategy for creating a cohesive representation based on the relation of messages makes the campaign come full circle and allows people to identify what organization the flyers belong to at a first glance.

Project Overview

Upon establishing an identifiable look for the organization, I was able to expand this look beyond flyers alone. As long as the look and feel of the campaign was maintained, there would still be a sense of cohesion among the different methods of communicating any given message.

One thing that I really felt was lacking in campaigns for student organizations was variety in placement. Most organizations hang flyers in the most obvious places on campus, covering over each other and creating a big mish-mash of advertising vomit. While these places are easily recognizable as containing information on the happenings of student organizations, they also create a space where it is very difficult to stand out from one another.

Therefore, I decided to take a new approach in an area that I deemed untapped as a venue for student organization advertising; the dorm bathrooms. More specifically, my goal was to create a form of advertisement that would not only live in a new environment, but would also take on a new form. I chose to create messages on paper towels with that would serve as a complimentary gift to students in the dorm bathrooms (as a side note, the dorm bathrooms do not provide students with paper towels).

The paper towels were stamped with a message in permanent ink about an upcoming meeting for Circle K.

The idea was that when students came in to dry their hands they would pick up a paper towel with a message on it and, out of curiosity upon finding a message in an unexpected place, would read the message. Just the act of finding something like this in a venue that is regarded as private would make enough of an imprint on the viewer that he or she would at least remember the organization as being cutting edge or taking an innovative approach.

Another issue that I set out to resolve was the issue of the printed matter standing alone to represent the entire organization. I wanted to create an event where a passerby could interact with the actual members of the organization and be able to ask questions about it. In order to accomplish this, I set up a free hot chocolate stand in the most frequented place I could think of on campus, the Diag.

The stand was set up on a very cold day in January during mid-day so that people would be passing it on their way to or from class. As it turned out, people appreciated the free warm drinks and had some very good questions to ask the members running the



stand. Having the option of interacting with actual members of the organization exposed more of the organization than what could be shown on a simple flyer.

While adding this new form of communication for the organization, the overall design established for the flyers was maintained through signs posted on the stand itself and printed labels attached directly to the hot chocolate cups.

The idea of maintaining a specific look throughout the campaign is vital to making a stronger campaign because otherwise it is like starting all over again each time a new design direction is taken. With a cohesive collective of strategies, each builds upon the last, making the entire collection a very strong campaign.



Final Form

In its final form, the entirety of suggested strategies and tips have been compiled into a comprehensive guide for student organizations to use to successfully launch an effective campaign. The guidebook covers everything from establishing the look that will get your group noticed, to how to apply that look to a new format, to how to brainstorm new methods for your campaign. It also includes tips on where to go for things like printing and supplies and simple tricks that can save a great deal of time and money in the long run. It is meant to facilitate creative thinking in organizations that are looking for more effective ways of communicating with their audience. The guidebook will be donated to several organizations at the University of Michigan, including the one that I have been working with, Circle K.

Conclusion

As a whole, this project has given me a better understanding on how to completely and effectively create a campaign for a group. By working with a student organization that is on a budget, it forced me to be more creative in my approaches and to think outside of the obvious or convenient. As the project progressed, I realized more and more how important it was to maintain the look that I had created for Circle K. It also became more important that the look was flexible enough to be applied to different formats, because this was a big part of my project.

I believe that the book compliments my work this year perfectly. It provides stepping-stones for the people that have to think about publicizing their organization and it gives real life examples of what can come from this type of thinking without pushing the readers to copy any one idea.

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