

Be Creative!

If it's one thing I've learned throughout my numerous years of being a graphic designer/creative director, it's this: no matter what type of business you have, your success relies on the extent of your creativity—even if your business is deemed very corporate and conservative.

Creativity is the one thing that will make one company stand out from the rest. Remember, in business, image is everything, and creativity is the essence behind the image.

Often, self proclaimed “conservative” companies will tell me they want me to design something corporate, professional, and very “conservative.” I always tell them that it's easy to “hone back” creativity, but rather difficult to go the other direction, and make a conservative layout creatively dazzling.

I generally will then provide them with a few concepts to choose from, ranging from extremely creative to conservative.

More often than not, these clients choose the layouts that exude the most creativity! What they ultimately realize is that a conservative company image has little or nothing to do with the degree of creative presented in their corporate materials. The only thing that happens when they push the envelope of creativity is that they get “remembered,” and that's what helps them gain more business, and hence, success!

Is there such a thing as too much creativity?

I personally don't think so. However, you must be aware of the client's target market in everything you do, and make certain your creative is compelling for that target.

For example, very recently a client showed me a piece of stock art that she absolutely loved. The stock art was interesting and innovative, but had absolutely NOTHING to do with her line of work! To put that kind of image into her materials just for the sake of creativity would have only confused her potential target clientele, and they probably would have shaken their heads and walked away.

I came up with some equally creative designs for her, on target for her market, that hopefully will help her attain a prime client base.

Don't stop at thinking "outside the box..." think outside the "bubble" as well!

What does that mean, you ask? Everyone always talks about "thinking outside the box." Sometimes, you may achieve a certain level of creativity that's a bit outside the proverbial box, but you haven't gone "far enough" to out think the competition. That's what I call being in "the bubble."

To get past the "bubble," it takes a bit more work...or maybe, "play" is a better term, if you're like me and enjoy the thought process.

Try to think far past obvious designs/concepts for your client, and really stretch the limits. The most far-fetched ideas may very well have the most solid impact.

For example, one of my clients, Otten & Associates, a company that sells and values dental practices, was locked into that "conservative, mundane, blah" thought process.

An appealing graphic was all they were looking for in their ad campaign...something to get them out of the "box" of boring looking ads that are typical for their industry.

I went far past that thinking, and came up with a campaign that I knew would attract attention in their trade magazines, and blow their competition away. Getting attention is the name of the game. Then, hopefully the company's solid performance achieves the rest.

The ad campaign I created used a "tongue in cheek" approach. I used off-the-wall dental imagery and punchy headlines, subordinated by some sharp text to bring Otten's message to life.

For example, rather than just use nice graphics and a boring headline to say "Otten & Associates are the ones to call when you get ready to sell your dental practice...blah, blah, blah..." I used, in one of the ads, a totally depleted, curled up tube of toothpaste with a headline that said: "Don't Let Your Practice Come Out Like This." Then, the ad text continues by talking about how after all the years you've put into making your dental practice a success, make sure you get the right price for it, and don't come out depleted and penniless, and so on.

Another ad in the campaign has a photo of a woman with a look of horror on her face as she is being "worked on" by a dentist. The headline states: "Valuing Your Practice Shouldn't Be Like Pulling Teeth."

Otten has continued to have much success with this campaign. Their competition (which they had shown me before I came up with the concepts), was left in the dust...or perhaps, I should say, left in the decayed tooth enamel. (You can see the ad campaign layouts below).

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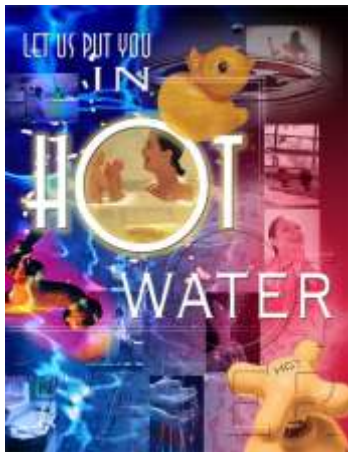
What follows is another example of taking a concept outside of the box and then some.

I was given the task of creating a brochure for companies that sell water heaters to consumers (hence, the end user). They wanted a very inviting marketing piece with a cover that featured photos of people enjoying themselves in various hot water scenarios.

I found photos of people in bathtubs, spas, showers, etc. I created a complex collage of the elements, and made it a very visually exciting brochure. Then I took it one step further.

Rather than go with their chosen headline: “Your Water Heater Safety And Comfort Guide” (real exciting, huh?), I made the title: “Let Us Put You In Hot Water.” I then made the “o” in “Hot” the main visual of the phrase. (You can see the design below).

Obviously, in most cases, it’s not a good thing to be “put in hot water,” hence the attention grabbing value.



Cover



Back/Cover

Here's one more example of doing something that goes beyond the creative norm, and does it very simply.

I created an ad for Dandee Shutters, a company that, as the name implies, manufactures and sells all sorts of decorative shutters for the home.

In addition to giving them a nice layout, I came up with the headline: "Shutter With Joy." It was simple and to the point, yet right on target, and incredibly effective!



The bottom line to all of this:

BE CREATIVE. But don't just stop with "getting out of the box."

If you can get out of the attached "bubble zone" too, while staying in tune with your client's desired market, you'll find that you will be an indispensable addition to companies of any and every type and size!