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Document Design: The Need for Attractive Documents

By Andrew Atchison

In a society where an overload of visual information provides constant stimulation, attractive design is necessary in order to stand out. Billboards, advertisements, and personal brands should have a unique style to make them stand apart from the ordinary so they can sell products while still conveying the necessary information. Even a personal brand is essentially selling a person's services or intelligence; résumés, curriculum vitae (CV), and personal statements hold vital information for an individual to be accepted into professional schools and even employment.

According to a study published by The Ladders, admissions committees and employers often spend an average of six seconds viewing a resume! With this thought in mind, the important information these documents contain must be readily available and accessible in order for an individual to have an advantage over competition.

Document design should not be a daunting task. A few simple techniques can transform a document or advertisement from bland and ordinary to attractive and visually appealing. Keep in mind that design can easily be overdone and the end product will not be effective.

1. Choose a typeface wisely. Don't be compelled to use Times New Roman because professors require it for academic papers; it's used so much in the academic world that it has become outdated. Any easy-to-read font will be sufficient for the body of the work.
2. Bold and underlined text is not the only way to make information appear important; use a different font for this information. Just make sure it works well with the other font.
3. Put information in places that make sense. An address in a résumé shouldn't be contained in the personal skills section.
4. Use color(s). However, choose colors that work well with one another and make sure the product is still easy to read in color. Use a color wheel if choosing colors becomes a problem.

These are just a few techniques that can be used to make most documents stand apart from others, but there are many more. Just remember to try not to create ordinary and outdated documents because viewers will associate those qualities with the author's personality.

