

HOW TO MAKE A POWERFUL FLYER

THE POSTER AND FLYER CHEAT SHEET

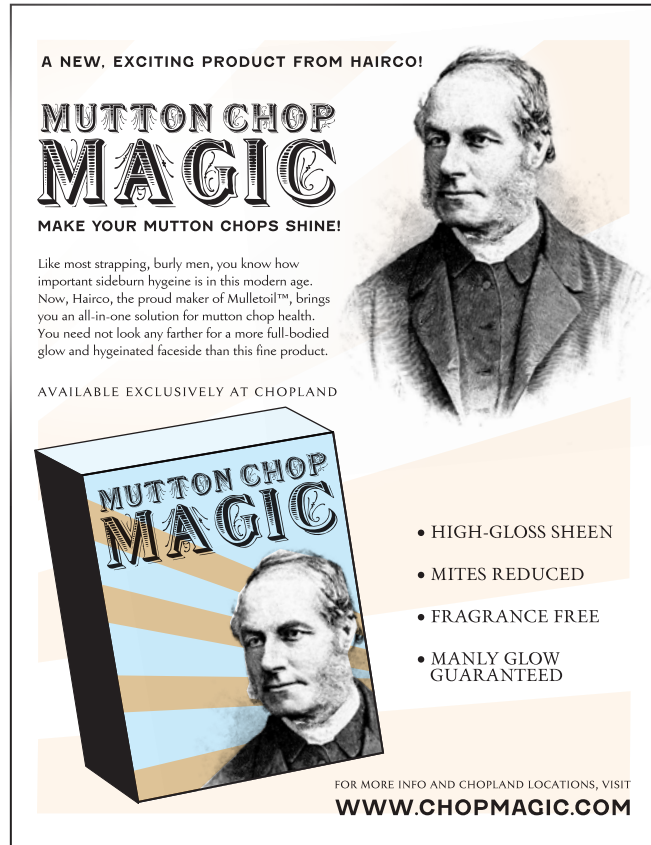
Created by Evan Lange

COMPOSITION METHODS

Unify your colors. If you are using a color image, match your flyer's colors to the colors in the image. The black image used in the example is matched by the black text, and the orange from the product's box is used again in the background of the flyer.

Reduce elements to only what's necessary. A flyer should be easy to read and uncluttered. Not only is everything on the flyer serving a purpose, but extra care has been taken to aid the eye in receiving the information. For example, notice how the orange is reduced throughout the background, but also fades away around the bulk of the text. This makes the text easy to read, and at the same time, gives the flyer some color.

Associate your elements. Things that are the same color, close together, or aligned, are automatically associated with each other. The product title and the man's mutton chops are as close together as they can be, to associate the product's name with the product's purpose. Similarly, the "available" line is placed close to the product box.



USING THE GRID

A 6x6 grid is your most useful composition tool. It separates your workspace into halves, quarters, and thirds. Use the lines and sections it creates to arrange and align elements to each other.

The grid begins and ends at the margins.

The two red dots are points to balance the two most prominent visual elements.

Grid lines can be center points, boundaries, or simply guides for placement. After everything is in place the way you want it, remove the grid and make final adjustments with your own eyes. The grid helps you arrange elements, but the eye is the ultimate judge.

WEAK FALLOW AREA

This area can hold a larger or more prominent image than the strong fallow area above, and can act as a grounding, balancing element.

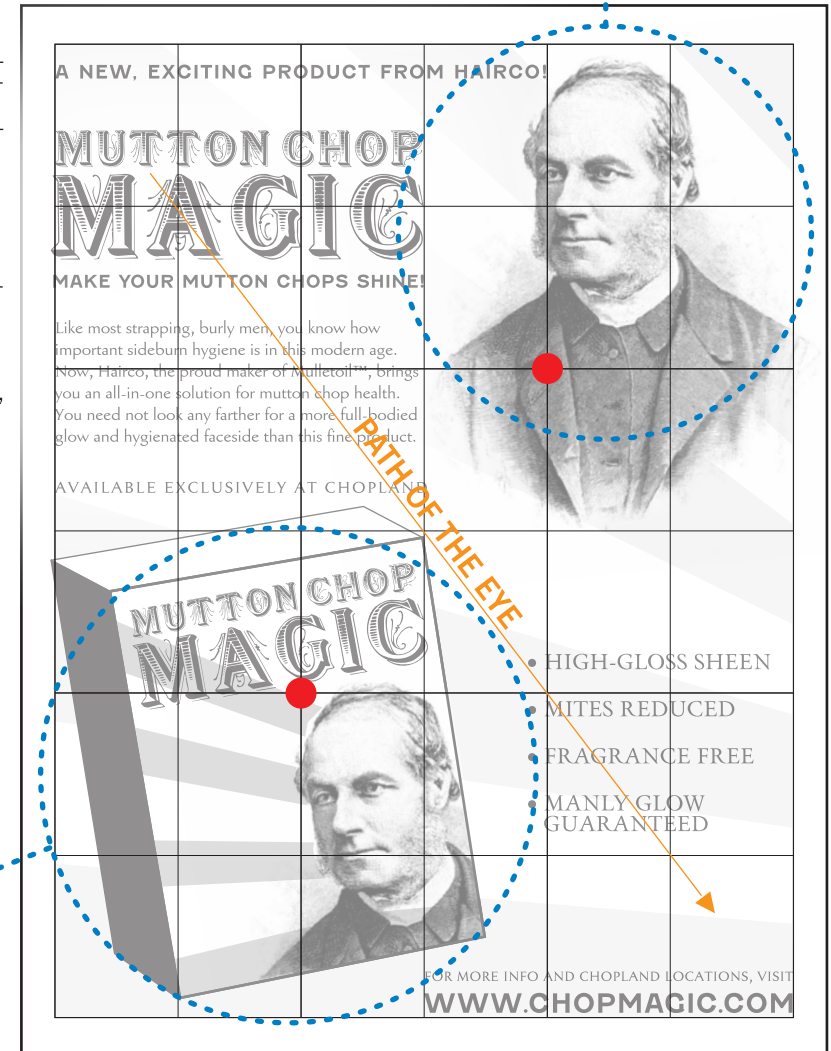
Elements are aligned using grid lines.

Image and text are top-aligned.

Entire headline/subhead chunk is centered on a horizontal on grid line.

STRONG FALLOW AREA

The eye will not normally rest here, so placing an eye-catching element here, such as a photo, will be a good use of space.



This example flyer utilizes many of the methods on the cheat sheet. The cheat sheet itself uses the methods as well!

The reader's eye will generally run from top left to bottom right, in quick, horizontal passes. Elements in this path will be seen first and most often.

WRITING METHODS

CHUNK THE INFO

When listing bullet points or benefits, the rule of chunking dictates a list of 4 +/-1. In other words, include no fewer than 3 and no more than 5 items in a list. This rule helps a short attention span absorb information quickly, without being overwhelming.

SAY ONE THING

Make one point. Talk to one audience. If there are several target audiences and multiple points, make more flyers, each with its own major focus, rather than including them all on one piece.

Dictate One Action

What is the next thing you want the reader to do? Is it to visit the website? Sign up then and there? Give you a call? Pick one action and make sure the flyer is distinctly asking them to do that. Make the path from this flyer to purchasing your product as smooth, easy, and quick as it possibly can be.

BE READABLE

Construct sentences with regard to the intelligence level of your audience. Larger words and longer sentences take longer to comprehend than shorter words and sentences. See where you can turn one sentence into two, and choose similes with less letters to replace collegiate-level words. Always spell check.

PLAY AN EDGE

Don't try to please everyone, or to be everything for everybody. Those products are boring, and they don't get noticed. You have a specialty, a niche – what is it? Using the example on the other side, *Mutton Chop Magic* is good for all facial hair, but they've decided to play the edge of mutton chops specifically. There is no other hair tonic on the shelf that is made entirely with the mutton chop in mind. Thus, this product stands alone. Because of that, it will most likely be the first choice for mutton chop aficionados, and probably be used for moustaches, beards, and goatees anyway.

COMMUNICATE YOUR VALUE

There is a way to be compelling, appealing, and valued without any use of deception. Telling the compelling truth requires you to know your product's value and be able to tell others about it. If you don't know what it is that is honestly valuable about your product, you will deliberately or inadvertently lie about it in your materials, and people will pick up on that message sooner or later.

ECONOMIC METHODS

COST VS. BENEFIT

Weigh economic decisions by judging the cost of a decision (time, money, effort) against the potential benefit that decision may provide (how many people read it, reaching the right audience, etc.). Each item below is an opportunity to weigh those options. The best question to ask about your flyer is, "Is this flyer necessary?"

SIZE

What size is necessary for visibility and information? Consider that your flyer can be half-, quarter-, or one third-size of a letter-size sheet. That way, one sheet yields more than one flyer. Do you need to say everything you thought you did? How can the piece achieve more with less?

COLOR

A full-color copy can cost over 10 times the amount of a black-and-white photocopy. Consider that your flyer can be done with black ink only, and perhaps pick a brightly colored paper. Know that b/w design often takes more care than color design. In a field of very high contrast, fine details can be lost, so b/w designs must necessarily use bolder and simpler elements.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGN

Are you able to make a flyer on your own that looks professional and has a clear message? Consider hiring someone to do this for you and propose your own price - what you are willing to pay. The benefit of professional design can be great, but the cost in time money and effort on either side of this option must be considered. How easy will it be for you to commission a flyer that will meet your needs? If you need flyers often, propose a production plan.

E-FLYER

The problem of cost for colorful, info-heavy flyers dissolves when considering creating an electronic flyer that can be bulk e-mailed. Can you reach your audience this way?

PRINTING

If you need 250 or more flyers, or if you are creating a postcard, consider professional printing. Look at your unit cost - how much each single flyer costs, in addition to your total cost. There are many quick, economical, professional print shops with online ordering systems available, and you probably have one in your area. Remember that office print houses like FedEx Office are often prohibitively expensive, so seek out club flyer and overnight online print houses.

DISTRIBUTION METHODS

PROMINENCE

Pick the most visible and traffic-heavy places when placing your flyer. Beyond that, colorful, well-designed flyers stand out in a crowd. Putting in extra time to design your flyer right will pay off when placing it around town.

POSTING

What locations do your target customers frequent? Talk to business owners if there is no flyer area – see if it would be possible to put your flyer in a window. Scan the bulletin boards and wall space you choose and see what stands out most to you. Once you've posted your flyer, scan the wall again and see if yours stands out.

MAILING

Bulk mailing to random strangers is a waste of money. Mail flyers only to people who have already agreed to receive information from you. Remember to include the required space for postage and addresses if your flyer acts as a postcard.

STACKING

When stacking flyers on a table, a smaller flyer will do. How many flyers are other people leaving at this table? Leaving only a few can be more effective than leaving a huge stack.

HANDING OUT

This intrusive method of distribution can be wasteful, unless it is to a controlled, willing group of people. At an event where everyone is a target customer, consider giving everyone a flyer. Otherwise, you're littering.

CARS & HOMES

It is illegal to put anything that is not mail into a mailbox or slot. Similarly, when is the last time you appreciated a flyer left on your windshield? There is a point that the content of the flyer doesn't matter: when it is outweighed by the method with which it is given. When choosing distribution methods, apply the golden rule.

WEBSITE DOWNLOAD

Make your flyer into a PDF, and upload it to your website. Create a prominent link button that, when clicked, allows a person to download it.

E-MAILING

Again, make sure you're sending the flyer only to people who will be interested. A customer who has never been bothered by you in the past is more likely to read the one flyer you definitely want them to see.

DESIGN METHODS

CONGRUENCE

The adjectives used to describe your product should be the same used to describe your flyer. Strive for an energetic, emotional match between your product and your collateral.

ALIGNMENT

The example flyer shown (over) is a dynamic, left-to-right composition. A center-aligned flyer, where the vertical center is the main guide for all information, has less movement and is a more challenging composition to pull off successfully. Have fun with the grid, and remember how the eye tends to move from one element to the next.

VISUAL BALANCE

In general, have larger elements (i.e., more weight) in the lower half, and make one side (left or right) heavier than the other. This will reduce the chance of a top-heavy, awkward, or floaty feeling. Balance heavy elements with a visual counterpart on the corresponding, opposite side.

VISUAL CONSISTENCY

If you have a business identity, don't stray from it. Incorporate the colors, shapes, and imagery that your logo, public image, and name suggest. Consistently used visual elements and information arrangement will build recognition and put your frequent customers at ease.

TEXT ALIGNMENT

Left-justify everything in most cases. Typically, left-justified text is the way to go for the novice. Center-justified text is often misused, and is more difficult for the eye to follow. Aligned elements will be automatically associated with each other.

DESIGN IN SECONDS

Take a look at your flyer. What do you notice in one second? Two seconds? Three? What would you want to be heard in three seconds? Re-arrange your elements so that they show up to your eye in the order you want your customers' eyes to notice. Then, look at your flyer as an interested customer - is anything missing? How easy is the flyer to navigate? What is the flyer asking you to do?

RESEARCH & BORROW

The line between stealing and borrowing is thicker than you may think. Gather some of your favorite flyers around town. Look in magazines for ads you like. What are they doing? Learn from the masters of advertising, and spot what methods they used to get your attention. Where do they succeed and fail? Have fun being a critical judge of flyer design. Get a friend to judge yours!