

# A Professional Touch with Desktop Publishing

Desktop publishing is using a computer to produce high quality printed materials that will communicate the message you want to relate. Good design enhances presentation and gets the attention of your reader.

## Who can benefit from desktop publishing?

Anyone who wants to produce quality materials can benefit from desktop publishing, especially church communication directors. Your ideas need to be clear, concise, and designed in such a way to grab the attention of your audience.

## Computer Software

There are several desktop publishing programs on the market. As you select a program, address the following questions:

- A. Will the program meet my needs?
- B. How much is budgeted for a new program?
- C. Are there resources readily available to assist me in learning the program?

Most computer programs, such as Microsoft Word and WordPerfect, have word processing programs that can be used for writing and doing simple designing. More complicated desktop publishing programs include Aldus PageMaker, QuarkXpress, and Ventura.

The advantages of using a word processing program are that you only need to master one program. There are also many people who could assist you in learning this software. The disadvantages come with complicated features found only in the more complex programs.

## Other equipment needed

Producing clear, sharp copies is important in presenting an image that shows professionalism. Materials representing the church should be of the highest quality possible. When choosing a printer, think about the types of projects you will be producing and research to fit within your budgetary limits. **Hint:** Printers with Postscript capabilities provide the greatest control over the size of text and quality of graphics.

## Basic elements of design

Desktop publishing allows you to develop a uniform design for your church. This will give your church an identity that your members and others can easily recognize. Desktop publishing gives you the capability to make templates that will help in the preparation of other materials, such as newsletters and bulletins.

A. Desktop publishing helps you to visually get your message across. Begin by thinking of your page as a picture frame for you to compose.

B. Keep text shapes simple and balanced with white space. When including pictures, make sure pictures are of good quality.

C. Different typefaces have different tonal effects on the page. Leading also affects the tone of type: the more leading the lighter the tone.

- a. Text in all CAPS IS NOT READABLE; short text blocks can be set in all caps – but with increased leading.
- b. Altering the letter spacing and word spacing affects the tone as well.

D. Legibility depends on typeface and layout – what typeface you choose and how you use white space.

E. Type is measured in points (there are approximately 72 points to an inch). There are two major classifications of size:

- a. Display type – type size over 14 is used for headlines, titles, etc.
- b. Text type – is used for long passages of text and is usually between 9 and 12 point.
- c. Don't let your text lines exceed 60 characters, including space between words.
- d. Display type needs to be legible, so that it is noticeable.
- e. Text type needs to be both legible and readable. We read text in groups of words at a time, and it is the shapes made by the characters viewed together that enables the reader to easily interpret these groups.

F. Emphasizing words

- a. Use **bold** and *italic* variants for your text typeface for emphasizing words.
  1. **Bold** emphasis is effective and affects readability.
  2. *Italic* emphasis is more subtle and doesn't affect readability.
- b. Do not use underlining.
- c. Overuse of emphasis is counterproductive and irritating to the reader.

G. Organizing your page

- a. Page layout is not just a visual problem; it must reinforce the communication of content.
- b. Experiment with two and three columns of text. Vary the column gutters (space between the columns) for the best visual appearance.

H. Look at the details of typesetting

- a. Use em dashes (—) instead of ordinary hyphens (-) for sentence breaks and en dashes (–) between numbers.
- b. Avoid using vertical quotation marks (”), rather use properly sexed quotation marks (“ ”).

- c. Try to avoid widows—hyphenated words with part of the word on a line by itself.
  - d. Develop your own rules for the use of different fonts, variants, measure, leading, etc., to insure consistency throughout a job.
- I. Typefaces or fonts
- a. Typefaces are either serif or san serif. Serif is the most common type for text because it is easier for the eye to read (*this type is serif*). San serif has no serif endings (**Example:** Helvetica is a san serif font).
  - b. Typefaces carry a message. Make sure the face you choose is relevant to the style of the text content.
  - c. It is better to use different variants of one type family than to use a variety of typefaces.
- J. Captions
- a. Separate captions from text copy with a different type of font.
  - b. Vary the captions by placing inside the image, setting text to justify left or right, or by placing text underneath image.
- K. Introductions – Leading the reader’s eye to the beginning of the text.
- a. Try using a larger point size or variant of the body type for the introduction.
  - b. Use white space around the introduction to capture the attention.
  - c. People scan a page from the top left to bottom right and see the right-hand page first in a spread. Use attention-grabbing introduction on the right-hand page.
  - d. Many desktop publishing programs have special features, such as dropped, raised, and half-raised caps. Be sure you don’t overuse.
- L. Other Enhancements
- a. Use bullets to set lists apart (•).
  - b. Select a quote from the article, called a pull quote, and set it apart by placing it in a box, putting lines above and below the quote, doing a reversed-out (placing in a black panel and reversing type), or setting off with large quotation marks, to name a few ways.
  - c. Use lines and boxes to separate information on a page. Rules can be used to guide the reader’s eye across the page. Again, reversing type, placing text in a box, or using decorative rules will draw your reader’s attention to the area of importance.
  - d. A heading’s effectiveness depends as much on its content as on the style in which it’s treated. The size of the heading ensures its prominence on the page. Establish a coherent and consistent system for headings.

Producing quality materials comes with practice. Experimenting with fonts, sizing, rules, captions, and other enhancements can make your printed materials attractive and will communicate your message in the best way possible.