

# Marketing with Magalogs

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Mike Klassen – *The Magalog Guy*

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Marketing with Magalogs, 4th Edition

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# Once Upon a Time...

**D**espite growing up, I don't believe adults ever lose their love of a good and compelling story. If nothing else, the popularity of reality television proves that.

But will adults *read* a good story? Here's a more relevant question for you: *Will adults read a good story in your marketing material?*

I believe they will. I base that belief on the work I do for clients and what I see working in the marketing world.

While the success of any marketing piece depends on a variety of factors, your chances of success go up dramatically when there's a story that resonates with the reader.

When I started as a freelance designer in the direct market world, I saw myself as only that: a *designer*. Perhaps you only see yourself as a marketer.

Not that being a marketer or a designer is a bad thing, but we're really so much more.

These days, I think of myself not only as designer, but as a content bridge and a content publisher.

As a content *bridge*, I take other people's content, usually in a plain Word format, and turn it into something that has visual impact. As a content *publisher*, I share information that I've learned to help other marketers and freelancers.

How about you? Do you see yourself as a trusted resource

or a valued source of information? Have you thought about reaching out to prospects and customers on a regular basis with useful and relevant content, not just a sales pitch?

That word *content* is big these days and with good reason. Relevant content that makes a real connection with the reader is vital if you want to stand out in the sea of information that hits people each day. It also helps establish you as an expert in your field.

Some companies have managed to do a good job creating great content that their audience is interested in. What many have failed to do, though, is leverage that content so it's working for them all the time.

Trying to cover the whole world of marketing isn't my goal in this book. Instead, I want to focus on two areas:

1. The value of useful content in your print marketing.
2. Marketing through magalogs using great content.

As the *Magalog Guy* at [www.magalogguy.com](http://www.magalogguy.com), most people who come to my site want to learn how to successfully use magalogs. If that's you, you'll find what I believe to be the most useful information on magalogs anywhere.

On a personal note, my passion for layout is directly related to my passion for the written word.

We live in a time where information on any topic is available in books, newsletters, reports, or with a few keystrokes on the Internet.

It's an amazing thing... people willing to share what they know to help others, whether there's profit involved or not.

That's why I've developed a special interest in copy-heavy projects like magalogs, books, and training material. They're generally intended to teach the reader something even if it's just part of the sales process.

While I certainly enjoy all the digital devices we use to consume information, there's still something special about print. It's generally read away from the distraction of the computer where things are bouncing, beeping or flashing for our attention.

For many companies, print remains a vital piece of the marketing mix. But they're looking to make sure their print pieces are cost-effective when the temptation is to "save money" by only marketing online.

If that's where you find yourself, I believe the information in this book will help.

Mike Klassen

# Why Print Marketing Still Matters

Just about every week you'll find articles debating whether "print is dead" or not.

Since the majority of my design work is for print, I know print isn't dead. But that doesn't mean print is as strong as it once was. Or that it's the best option for certain sales and marketing goals.

But based on project consultations I offer, it's even clearer to me why print still matters.

In two cases that spring to mind, I was talking with businesses that primarily market online. For one, the business was an online service with no physical product to sell.

Here's what both discovered: *Many of their ideal customers don't know to be looking for them online.*

Both companies have valuable services, but their audience is not the type who sit around at the computer, magically coming up with the right search keywords for services they don't know exist.

So how do you reach those people? Well, you need to get a little more direct. You can't keep hoping your ideal customers stumble across you because it's entirely possible they'll stumble across your competitors first, assuming they're even looking to begin with.

It was that realization that prompted these two businesses



to contact me. They knew that despite whatever success they were having with their online marketing efforts, they were still missing valuable customers by not reaching out to them directly through print, whether it's a magalog, a sales letter, or something else.

The print piece would certainly drive readers to their sites. But they felt the first step of engagement needed to occur directly through the mail.

Even if these two companies could reach their target audience through e-mail, it's getting a bit trickier to cut through the clutter. And in one case, it was highly unlikely the key person they really needed to reach at each company was the one checking e-mail.

I want to be clear: I'm not saying print is for everyone, for every project, for every niche. It's not.

I am saying that print, in my experience at this time, is not as dead as some people make it out to be. And I am saying it's still a vital piece of the sales and lead-generation process in many situations.

Let me give you three more examples.

1. In the business-to-business world, print is still a huge part of the initial lead-generation and sales process. In some companies, the approval process can take months and go through various layers of approval. While you should always use your print piece to drive people online, I would say most prospects in the B2B sector expect to see something in print.
2. Speakers and consultants can be in a similar situation to the two companies I mentioned earlier. They may be easily found online... if people know to search for them. But often that's not the case. Unless there's an immediate and specific need, people probably aren't

sitting around in their free time searching for speakers and consultants. (And if they are, the options can be overwhelming.) To start the conversation, get a strong print piece into their hands.

3. Some people, especially the older generation, tend to be more trusting of print material. We see that a lot in the health industry. Traditional print marketing is what they grew up with. Not that scams don't exist in print marketing, but there can be a perception that if you have the budget to actually mail something to someone, you're more legitimate and more worthy of attention. Again, we know that's not always true. But the perception is there.

So, for those reasons and others, I think print still matters. And when you've got a great list, great copy, great design, and the appropriate format, it can still deliver.

# People Still Read Printed Marketing Material, But There's a Catch

You've probably heard it said that people don't like to read anymore. I'm not buying it. I believe the growth and popularity of digital books partially disproves it.

Of course, getting someone to read a best-selling novel is one thing. Getting them to read your sales letter is another. And that's a major pain point for marketers who truly believe in their product or service.

While there are all sorts of variables that go into a mailing, here's one component ("the catch", in this case) that must be in place no matter what if you want to greatly increase the odds of it being read:

**If your marketing material does not tell a story your readers are interested in while addressing their problems, they'll toss it in the trash long before they get to your order form or call-to-action.**

If your response to that is, "No kidding!", consider that there are thousands upon thousands of companies who fail to understand that point.

Take a close look at the mail you get over the next few weeks and see how many companies understand the concept. Better yet, take a look at your own company's marketing material.

I'm not talking about a local grocery store flyer. I'm talking about marketing material that requires a buyer to put their

trust in the seller that goes beyond getting a good deal this week on milk or cereal.

Go ahead and test it with the longer-form marketing material you get. Whether you're interested in the topic or not, simply judge it on whether it tells an interesting story that the target audience might be attracted to.

You see, lots of companies tell the story *they're* interested in, not the story the customer or prospect is interested in. That's assuming they even bother to tell a story. For some, a list of features is considered good enough. If they understand some basic marketing, maybe they'll go a step further and translate those features into solid benefits the reader relates to.

But really engaging the reader and making the reader feel like the material is speaking to *them* is something different. It separates the companies that are the leaders in their niches and the companies that are left fighting for the scraps.

This idea of telling a story and connecting with the customer or prospect on a deeper level was highlighted in an article published in the U.S. Postal Service's *Deliver* magazine a while back.

Ignoring the fact they referred to magalogs as a "new" type of marketing vehicle (they've actually been around for a few decades), the article confirmed a number of things that magalog marketers have known for some time:

- The extra room in a magalog allows you to tell a story that readers are more likely to respond to. People like to do business with people/companies they know or feel more connected to. In other words, you're building trust and coming across as someone who really understands the buyer's needs.
- Magalogs, because of how much space you have to make

your case, position you as an expert in your industry or niche. That separates you from your competitors in the eyes of your buyers.

- A magalog is like an infomercial in print. You may cringe at the word *infomercial*, but who hasn't been scanning TV channels and been sucked into a well-done or even over-the-top infomercial? Sometimes it's just a quick visual of the information that makes you pause. The same applies to a visually strong magalog... it's just enough to get someone interested in taking a closer look.
- Because of their design, magalogs tend to stand out in a customer or prospect's mailbox. Unusual or unexpected mailings stand out from the bills, real estate postcards, and local flyers. That's in addition to the visual impact I mentioned in the previous point.

While the article focused on magalogs, the idea of telling a story is hardly restricted to that format. It's entirely possible to tell a great, albeit short, story on a postcard.

And that's just print marketing. Taking into account the online world, the possibilities of where you can share your story with an eager audience is wide open.

# Yes, You Do Have a Story to Tell

The biggest concern that comes up when I talk with clients about engaging content and storytelling is not believing they have an interesting story to tell.

It's much easier to simply give the facts about a product or service while making an attempt to wrap it in some sort of half-hearted story to flesh it out.

I almost hesitate to say this because it's so overused, but it's true: Given a choice, people like to do business with people they know. It's just the way we're wired.

But where this becomes really important is when you're selling a product or service that isn't considered absolutely essential.

For example, I have no idea who runs the gas station near my house. And to be completely honest, I don't really care. I need gas, the gas station is by my house, it has a pay-at-the-pump option so I don't need to go inside, and the price is the lowest in the area. Easy sale for the gas station, right?

But if you're selling a financial newsletter, the scenario changes. First, there are loads of financial newsletters. And like just about any industry, there are people who, to be as kind as possible, may not have your best interest at heart.

Having a successful investing track record for your newsletter certainly helps. However, there are lots of newsletters

like that. The question becomes, how do you convince prospects that *your* newsletter is something special compared to your competitors?

A big part of the answer is letting them inside your company to see why you do what you do. Expose your passion for investing and helping others reach their financial goals. Chances are good that even in the crowded world of investing, your story is unique in some way.

By all means, share every relevant fact and testimonial about your product you have available. But it's that extra, personal touch that some people will latch onto.

Let me give you a quick tip to apply this in a sales letter or magalog. I'm a fierce advocate of including a "Letter from the President" type of message on page two or in a sidebar. Ideally, this letter would include a photo of the person speaking. Sounds simple, right? But some companies just don't think of it as they get caught up in focusing on the product or service they're trying to sell.

That letter lets you go a bit "off script" from the sales copy. You have a chance to expose readers to the "why" behind what you do. Think of it as the big picture that encompasses your whole company or product line.

And by seeing a picture of you or your team, it helps create that stronger bond. Your company isn't just some call-center in the middle of nowhere. You're real people with a passion for solving a specific problem. Let the reader know that.

It's also important to carry that over and create a compelling story in your main sales copy.

# Magalog Marketing

It was magalogs that helped me realize just how important content is and what else could be done with that content. More than just about any other marketing piece, content will make or break a magalog. And when done properly, most of my clients realize that the content they've used in their magalog is perfect for repurposing in other marketing channels.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that everyone knows what is considered "common knowledge" in a given arena such as direct marketing.

But when I created MagalogGuy.com and started getting calls from potential clients, I realized that magalogs weren't as common as I thought outside a couple of industries that were having a lot of success with them.

These newcomers to magalogs were asking questions that started with the basic, "*What is a magalog?*" and then moved to the deeper questions about what makes a magalog successful. It seemed like there was a whole new group of marketers exploring the possibilities of magalogs for the first time.

But beyond magalogs, I came to realize that some of my clients were really struggling with connecting to their target audience. Not in terms of getting marketing material into



their hands, but creating a bond with them. That's why I mentioned the importance of stories. That's what people relate to best.

Upfront, I want to tell you that it's not my goal to convince you that you *must* use a magalog no matter what. As I explain later, magalogs aren't for everyone, or at least not under certain circumstances or at certain times.

But I'm not going to be shy about telling you how powerful a magalog can be in certain situations.

At the end of the day, though, my job as a designer (as it should be for any designer) is to create the best vehicle for your message. Some times it's a magalog, some times it isn't. My goal is to show you what a magalog is and what its strengths are so you can make a better decision about where and when they'll work best for you.

# So, What is a Magalog?

The most common question I hear is, *What is a Magalog?* And quite a few times, the person is thinking he wants a magalog before fully understanding what one is. He's heard the word or has been told that a magalog worked wonders for other businesses. Naturally, he's curious.

I'm not one to get too hung up on terminology, something I'll touch on in the next chapter. Part of my job is to listen to what a client needs, then we can put a label on it if we need to.

As you've probably guessed, the word magalog is traditionally considered to be a cross between *magazine* and *catalog*. I say traditionally because the way words and names evolve over time, I have no doubt that someone has another origin for the word. But for now, *magalog* plus *catalog* is good enough for us in the realm of direct marketing.

When I was interviewed for *Print Professional Magazine* (July, 2007), I gave my own definition that I thought direct marketers could relate to:

*"I tend to describe [a magalog] as a sales letter on steroids. Like many sales letters, a magalog will start with a 'big idea' or 'promise' headline, include graphics and charts, some sidebars and an order form to go along with the main body copy. But with the magalog, we're usually creating something with*

*a stronger visual appeal, much like you'd notice in a magazine or even a high-end newsletter.*

*“Magalogs also remind me of theater actors who have to project and make bigger movements so people all the way in the back can see and hear. In this case, the magalog has to stand out from the other mail that people get and that's why you often see bold headlines and large cover photos.”*

Because this is such a core question, I'm always been interested in other definitions that might help businesses grasp what a magalog is. This one came from Brianne Noonan at The Mailworks:

*“A magalog communicates brand like a magazine and sells products like a catalog. It's a powerful communication tool that inspires the consumer and reflects how modern audiences interact with media across multiple platforms. They get the magalog in the mail, read it, then go online to purchase. Yes, a catalog works the same way, but a magalog communicates image and brand by telling the story behind the product using magazine-like techniques. A catalog tells you what the fabric is made of. A magalog explains how it makes you look and feel. The result is a more emotional connection to the products being sold.”*

I think that's a great explanation. In fact, it begins to explain why magalogs are so successful. A magalog gives you the space to make a deeper connection with your audience.

It tells the story behind your company and your product that resonates with your audience. It creates an image for your company that sets you apart from your competition and allows you to stand out as the expert in your industry. It allows you to make the case for your product or service, and then back it up with facts and stories that support your claims.

That's how magalogs increase sales and generate qualified leads. It's that deeper connection you can't always get from a tri-fold brochure, flyer or postcard.

There is some flexibility in the design. Some magalogs are not much more than a traditional sales letter, just visually pumped up a bit. Other magalogs could be confused for any magazine you'd find on the rack at your local bookstore.

There will be sales copy, but a great copywriter is going to find nuggets of information to sprinkle throughout the magalog... info that people might actually want to share with others, or even keep around for future reference. I'll talk more about copy in an upcoming chapter.

In my prior career in a radio newsroom, these nuggets of info are what we called the "Hey, Martha" stories. You may have heard that phrase before. I'll talk a bit more about that later.

A few final thoughts to help us define what a magalog is and how they're being used...

- Magalogs can sell a single product or service, or many.
- Magalogs have no set size or page count, although 8.5 x 11 is a common size and a common page count is 12-20.
- Related to the magalog are slim jims, bookalogs and tabloids. What makes them different from each other are primarily their size and page counts. The reasons you might consider one of these variations is usually based on the content you have, or simply a desire to use a different physical look to help stand out from the other mail people get each day.
- Issuelogs often resemble an issue of a newsletter, but with the copy focusing on selling the company's actual newsletter or publication.
- Consultants are beginning to use magalogs to help

establish themselves as experts in their niche and positions themselves a step above their competition. The magalog also serves as a great lead-generation tool for these people.

So that's Magalogs 101.

# Don't Get Hung-Up on the Word *Magalog*

What style do you think of when I say the word *music*? If someone tells you they're a writer, what instantly pops into your mind?

Both those words cover a lot of ground. Music can cover rock, country, jazz, classic and more. Writing can cover fiction, non-fiction, poetry, technical, and more.

While certainly not as wide-reaching as music and writing, the word *magalog* (or *catazine* as some people use) now covers a lot of territory. While it is commonly considered to be a combination of *magazine* and *catalog*, it doesn't tell the whole story.

First, magalogs are not new. Magalogs have been around since at least the 80s.

The reason magalogs might seem new to people is that other industries are starting to see their value. For them, magalogs are new. If you've been in the health and financial industries, magalogs are far from new. Those magalogs tend to be what I call the sales letter style. They're a long-form sales letter, supplemented by lots of sidebars, graphics and colors.

Some people looking at classic magalogs for the first time are a bit taken aback by that. "It looks so... sales-y," they say. Yes!! That's the point... to make a sale.

I realize it may not look high-class like a New York

lifestyle magazine, but that's not always the style we're after in direct sales and marketing. In fact, early on in my career I had a client turn thumbs-down on a magalog cover draft I did because it looked *too much* like a magazine.

Having said that, new industries are adopting the magalog format and turning them into something more like a traditional, high-end magazine.

Both styles have their place, and both styles work. It's simply a matter of what you're going for and what your target audience responds to. You can't dismiss any style based strictly on your own feelings of what marketing material has to look like.

I encourage you not to become a slave to the word *magalog*. Recently, I read someone's blog where the writer got annoyed because the magalog he got in the mail was only selling one product.

It seemed he was getting hung up on the *catalog* portion of magalogs. In his mind, if it's a catalog, it must sell multiple products.

Again, don't get hung-up on the word... focus on the purpose that we use a magalog for and go with the style your audience will respond to.

# What is a Slim Jim?

If you search on *slim jim*, you're hit with a fair number of food and locksmith-related entries. For our purposes, though, a slim jim is part of the magalog family.

Where a magalog is traditionally about 8.5 x 11 inches, a slim jim is around 5.5 x 10. So the primary difference is that a slim jim is narrower than a magalog and can be shorter.

I have to fudge and say "around" 5.5 x 10 inches because printing and mailing costs can affect the size. Sometimes a small change in the size can have a big impact on those costs. That's why I always recommend talking to a print broker if you don't have a printer you trust to look out for you.

Because a slim jim is smaller than a magalog in physical size, it's often larger in terms of page count. The smallest slim jim I've worked on was 24 pages.

That doesn't mean a slim jim can't have fewer pages. But if a company is wanting to test a magalog against a slim jim, obviously the smaller size of the slim jim will require more pages to hold the same amount of magalog copy.

So why use a slim jim?

First, it gives you a different look. Don't forget that part of the goal of any marketing piece is to stand out and be read. The slim jim format is different in size from magazines and traditional first-class mail. So it stands out.



Second, there can be a benefit in terms of printing and mailing compared to a typical magalog. There can be other variables involved in those costs. But it's worth keeping that in mind when considering a magalog vs. a slim jim.

Oprah Winfrey used a slim jim for one of her promotions. While the Oprah slim jim wasn't my design, if you're interested in seeing a full slim jim, you can see one I did for a client on my Issuu site: <http://issuu.com/magalogguy>

While it would be the designer's challenge and not yours, you should be aware of how a slim jim affects order forms and longer sidebars. On the *Accel* sample from Issuu, take a look at the order form on page 23. It's packed! The challenge for your copywriter will be to keep the content to a minimum.

Also, check out page 16, one of many examples where we can't take the term *sidebar* literally. While that slim jim does have some examples of content that is "on the side," the significant sidebars like you see on page 16 are dropped strategically in the middle of the copy. Otherwise, as true sidebars, they'd cross pages which is something we didn't want.

Again, that's the challenge for your designer and copywriter, not you. But I like you to know what's happening behind the scenes whenever possible.

# What is a Bookalog?

A bookalog is a variation of a magalog. As you can guess from the name, the bookalog is much like a small, paperback book.

Like magalogs, bookalog sizes vary, but 5.5 inches by 8.5 inches is pretty common.

For page count, it can be all over the map. The most recent one I worked on was 32 pages. I've seen one that's over 70 pages. (And like magalogs, bookalogs tend to be done in page increments of four... 24, 28, 32, 36, etc.)

The style can vary as well. Some are just as colorful as a traditional magalog. Others are just like a fiction or non-fiction book with no graphics and a single, black color for the text.

For the binding, bookalogs can be saddle-stitched (stapled in the spine) or perfect-bound which is the same as the paperback books you buy at the bookstore. The page count will help determine what type of binding you'll need.

Like others formats in the magalog family, bookalogs have their place.

Because bookalogs tend to have more pages, they have a bit more weight which helps them stand out in the pile of mail you get each day. I've talked about this numerous times in relation to magalogs, but simply the fact that a bookalog

looks different from the rest of your mail generates that extra glance when all the other traditional marketing mail in the pile is being ignored.

There is also a perception of higher value with a bookalog because, generally speaking, we place a higher value on books. And, it's not every day someone is marketing to you in the mail through a book. Again, it stands out.

Some people use the bookalog format for long copy that's currently converting well for them online. Realizing that not everyone is online or will stumble across them online, they want to reach "offline" prospects as well.

If the copy has been working well as a traditional printed sales letter, they might try the bookalog format as a test. If the style is remaining basically the same as the sales letter, and we're not adding lots of new graphics or colors, the bookalog can be a more affordable format to test compared to a traditional magalog, at least in terms of the design cost.

Health and financial topics have been the biggest focus of bookalogs. But just like magalogs are now being used in all sorts of new arenas, bookalogs may follow that path.

One area where I think a bookalog could be a strong consideration is coaches/consultants/trainers who offer higher-end workshops or seminars.

It could be a mini book filled with business- or success-building ideas, but with a strong sales component leading people to sign-up for those workshops or seminars.

A bookalog also might be used to provide multiple samples of books that a company markets.

# A Magalog Primer: The Expanded Version

As mentioned earlier, I was contacted by *Print Professional Magazine* for an article that would touch on magalogs. Having spent 14 years in the media, I know what it's like to interview someone who grunts out short answers; it's a rotten experience. I swore I'd never be like that when someone asks me questions. In fact, I'm at the opposite end of the spectrum... my answers in print can be mini-essays.

So it wasn't any surprise to see about three pages of answers whittled down to six paragraphs in the published article. However, it occurred to me that some marketers new to magalogs would find this information useful.

Since the interview was done via e-mail, it's an easy task to copy/paste the magazine's questions and my answers here in this book.

So, you've been warned... this will be lengthy. But if you're new to magalogs, I really believe this will be helpful.

***Q: They [magalogs] do contain advertising, correct?***

Primarily, yes. But it's not always as direct as "Read this magalog about our product, then order the product when you're done." For one client, the thrust of their magalog was to get people to go to their site to take a quiz. Obviously, once the quiz is complete, their intent is to sell their products and services, or at the very least get contact information. But

there wasn't an order form at the back of the magalog where you could actually buy something.

I've also been contacted by individuals, primarily consultants, who feel that a magalog would give them a vehicle to contact their current and potential clients throughout the year without it coming across as a blatant ad. Again, the ultimate goal is to sell a product or service they offer, but they want to provide more than just sales copy... perhaps some inspirational articles, or tips related to the industry they target. Their hope is that people won't throw the magalog away as junk mail. They're hoping the reader will find the articles useful and keep the magalog or pass it on to others so their name is visible throughout the year.

***Q: Is the term [magalog] synonymous with bookalog?***

Not completely in my mind, but we could debate the point where one becomes the other. Some would say it's physical size, some would say it's page count, some would say it's the binding that's used. (At a certain point, saddle-stitch might not work so you'd use perfect binding and thus slip into bookalog territory.)

Personally, I don't spend much time on terminology. I try to listen to what the client is wanting and give it to them. Whatever they want to call it is fine with me.

***Q: Which industries are among the biggest users of magalogs?***

Health (normally alternative health) and financial products, by far, are the most popular topics for magalogs that I see. And for a couple of reasons this makes sense. First, those two areas have to deal with a lot of skepticism. So having a long-form magalog allows you the space to "build your case," so-to-speak, and include all your supporting information... testimonials, charts, graphics, etc.

And in the health field, large, full-color photos of healthy people enjoying the benefits of your product look better in a glossy magalog. (Of course, all sorts of paper types are used in magalogs... they're not always glossy.)

***Q: What makes this an effective format compared to, say, a brochure or other type of printed promotional piece?***

In the beginning, the magalog's newness is what made it effective. All of us do a pretty good job of filtering out the noise in our lives, including the attempts to sell us something. So when something new comes along, it takes us a while to put up the barriers to ignore it.

And to a certain extent, as we sift through our daily mail, a magazine-size magalog, or a thick bookalog, seems a bit more important than a regular envelope enticing us in some way to open it.

If a magalog is a self-mailer and looks just like a magazine with a great cover, a strong headline, or some interesting bullet points to pique interest, there's really not much effort involved for the reader to thumb through it. At that point, any number of things could catch their eye and entice them to invest more time reading it, and, hopefully, placing an order.

While brochures and other printed pieces can be self-mailers, quite a lot of the "junk" mail we receive has to be opened because it's in an envelope. If you've got a stack of mail and you see something in an envelope that appears to want to sell you something, it gets an even lower priority rating than the bills you get.

Also, a magalog is well-suited toward people who really want to be convinced to buy a product or service. We tend to think that all people hate all advertising, but that's not true.

If I'm interested in alternative health, for example, I'm

willing to read a lot of copy – far more than you could fit in a traditional brochure or other promotional piece – to get information that might help me be healthier. I want to see charts and graphs in full color and I want to see people who look healthy and are having a good time.

It doesn't mean I'm a sucker for every marketing piece that comes my way. But because of my interest in the topic, I'm willing to invest the time to see if the product might be right for me.

So a magalog typically allows a marketer far more space to build and support a case for a product or service compared to other methods.

***Q: What would be three to five general dos and/or don'ts to keep in mind when designing a magalog?***

I'm not sure any one idea is more or less important than another because if you drop the ball on one of these points, it could bring the whole magalog down.

A quick summary would be:

**DO** talk with a printer early on in the process. Because of a magalog's complexity compared to some other print pieces, it's really important that the printer is part of the discussion (along with the designer and copywriter) right from the start.

**DO** spend lots of time on the order form. It needs to be as complete as possible so that if, for some reason, it gets separated from the rest of the magalog, the customer can still place the order and know exactly what they're getting.

**DO** spend a lot of time on the front and back cover. Depending on how it arrives in their mailbox, either the front or the back cover is what the customer will see first. If you don't grab them at that point, the inside of the magalog won't get read.

**DO** highlight the word FREE anytime in your copy. Despite our inclination to be skeptical about such things, FREE still has power.

**DON'T** think that photos on your website are high enough quality for print. Traditionally, website photos are smaller and set at a lower resolution so they load quickly. That usually means they're not going to be appropriate for print.

**DON'T** get overly fancy with fonts. Fonts are a whole world unto themselves, but more people have been sunk by using some fancy font that they thought would help them stand out or look clever, when all it did was make it hard for people to read the copy.

**DON'T** proof a magalog design on the screen. Print it out and look at it because that's how your customers will see it.

***Q: Are magalogs typically big-budget items?***

Relative to many other methods of print marketing, yes. But with variables such as page size, page count, color usage, mailing costs, the price can be all over the map. And since magalogs usually have more content than other marketing methods, that would mean your copywriting and design costs will be higher. (That's assuming you're not doing that work in-house.)

Magalog marketers also like to make the offer enticing, so you'll usually see a variety of premiums added which will also add to your costs to some degree. It might only be a downloadable bonus report, but someone still has to write, edit and lay it out.

I have been approached by some online marketers to design magalogs, but not for use in print... they want to try



them as a PDF download. That cuts down on the printing and mailing costs.

***Q: Who would not be a good candidate for magalogs for business-building purposes?***

In theory, if you have a solid product and the right mailing list, I'm not sure there's anyone who wouldn't be a good candidate for a magalog, but I think you'd want to ask a lot of questions upfront if you're a first-timer including:

1. **Why am I doing a magalog in the first place?** I've run into people who want to do a magalog simply because they've heard it's popular or someone they know had success with one. From initial idea to mailed piece, magalogs can take a relatively long time to produce and mail compared to a brochure or traditional sales letter, so it's not something you do on a whim.
2. **Do I have a list that I trust?** I think so much rides on the mailing list. Because of the costs, you just can't afford to send magalogs to any name you come up with, unless you have an unlimited budget. You've really got to feel you have a list of solid names and that you understand what motivates them to buy the product or service you're selling.
3. **Am I confident with my sales copy?** Design is certainly important, but the copy needs to make people want to turn the page to keep reading. Like a great action movie, you want to start with a bang right on the cover and keep the excitement and interest high on each page. By the time the reader gets to the order form, the case for buying needs to be air-tight and that takes a skilled writer to pull off.
4. **Am I willing to test?** Most successful marketers test like crazy. This includes testing cover copy, the bonus

offers, the size, certain design elements, and even the price of the main product. So it can take some time and money to find something that works. Not everyone has that kind of patience or budget.

So a short answer to your question of who might not be a good candidate is someone who lacks patience. (Lacking money is kind of obvious.) It takes time to get things set up for any type of print marketing, but magalogs, I believe, are at the higher end of the time scale.

And now you know why the magazine had to edit out so much. But as mentioned, it's useful information if you're considering magalog marketing.

# Why I Sometimes Steer People Away From Magalogs

I'll get calls from potential clients who tell me they want or need a magalog. That comment is immediately followed by, "Oh... and what exactly is a magalog?" That's a red flag. I don't want someone to go down the wrong path.

We've already tackled the "What is a magalog?" question. Now let me focus on why I might try to talk someone out of using one.

Ultimately, a client knows his or her business far better than I do. But it's fair to say that some clients aren't as clear about the positives and negatives of certain types of marketing material.

So it's natural that if you hear people talking positively about some type of marketing – such as a magalog – you're going to want to learn more about it. You might even think it's a magic bullet that will have customers jamming your phone lines to place an order.

But that's where a designer you trust is going to pay off. A good designer is not going to get hung up on terminology. He or she isn't going to assume *magalog* just because you used that word. Your designer is going to ask questions about your copy and even ask to see it if it's available at that point. Based on that, the designer will have a good idea of which direction to go if you're not sure.

Even more important, if you actually do think you have a direction, a good designer isn't going to be shy if he disagrees with you. That doesn't mean your designer indulges in endless arguing. It just means he'll give you other options to consider and explain why he's presenting those options.

## **Sometimes, there are better options**

What occasionally happens when I talk to people who think they want a magalog is that they really need a sales letter. No, it's not quite as glamorous as a magalog, but based on the content the client has, along with other factors, a sales letter is best for the job. (And we can make a sales letter look great even without all the extras that go into a magalog.)

That doesn't mean you can't make adjustments and additions to the copy to create content more appropriate for a magalog (or slim jim, or bookalog). It just means that, as it stands, your copy isn't to that stage yet.

By the way, this situation normally occurs with clients who write their own copy or are considering taking existing website copy and converting it into a magalog. A good freelance copywriter is going to know from the beginning what he or she is writing for... magalog, sales letter, white paper, etc. In that case, the designer simply takes the copy and applies it to the proper format.

Content alone is not the only reason to question whether a magalog is the best choice. The cost of producing and mailing a magalog can be quite a financial hit... it's not for the financially timid.

Just speaking from the design side, a magalog costs more than a sales letter because there's far more work involved. A very basic rule of thumb: if it ends with 'log', it's not going to be inexpensive... *magalog*, *catalog*, *issuelog*, *bookalog*. And

that usually not only applies to the design, but also the copywriting, printing and mailing.

While I love working on magalogs, I don't steer clients down that path if I really don't believe it's the best marketing vehicle for them. That's why I'll ask any number of questions to ensure that they're picking the right format.

## **A vital question to ask yourself**

One question I ask is about the life-time value (LTV) of your best customers. This question also applies to just about any marketing activity you're thinking of investing in.

And that's the first thing to talk about... your marketing is an *investment*. If you just see it as an expense, then maybe you're not confident about your message and your product or service. Smart marketing is an investment that brings in business that more than covers your costs when you factor in the lifetime of the customer's relationship with you, not to mention new customers that he or she may refer to you.

So do you know the value of your best and ideal customers in terms of how much you make from them over the lifetime of your relationship? If you're at an early stage of your business where you don't have that figure, what is the first-year value of your ideal customer?

Let's keep the numbers simple and conservative and look at a business coach. Let's say you charge \$1,000 a month and your average, ideal client is with you for at least two years. That's \$24,000 over two years.

Let's say a magalog costs you \$10,000 to produce... design, copywriting, printing, mailing out to your list. How many new clients do you need to sign-up from that magalog effort before the magalog pays for itself? Just one client, right?

Are you confident enough in your mailing list, your copy

and your design to know that you can at least sign-up one person? (Again, I know this is ultra-simplistic, but you get the point.)

The trouble we can get into is looking at that \$10,000 and going, “Whoa! That’s a lot of money!” Yes, it is, but not compared to what we’re going to get in return.

You may not be a consultant. Maybe you have a membership site, or you have a single initial product but a lot of back-end sales potential. What is the value of those customers in your case?

Now, I did make this example as simple as possible and there are always some variables that might be unique to what you do.

But the point I want to get across for any marketing you do is understanding what a good client means to your business in financial terms. Knowing that will help you determine what might and might not be good marketing platforms for you.

When I first got started as a freelance designer and was working with experienced clients who really understood marketing, I was somewhat shocked at the money they put in to selling what, to me, seemed like a small, inexpensive product. What I didn’t understand at the time was that the lifetime value of their customers was far more than just that initial purchase. I made a typical rookie mistake of not seeing or being aware of the bigger picture.

So if you’re considering a magalog (and using existing copy), but not sure if it’s right for you, find a designer you can trust and discuss it. In particular, focus on whether the content currently supports the magalog format, and whether you have a budget that will allow you to get the most out of your magalog.

# The Magalog's Untapped Lead Generation Potential for Consultants

Consultants know better than most how important it is to make efficient use of their limited time. With only so many hours in the day, consultants must divide their time between working with clients, the behind-the-scenes functions of actually running a business, and one of their most important tasks: finding qualified new clients.

All of these tasks, and more, are time consuming. But the successful consultants have processes in place to automate as many tasks as possible. Lead generation is one such task.

Even the most in-demand consultants are constantly marketing themselves. Ideally, clients come to them already predisposed to make a long-term commitment. But often the consultant is going to have to get materials into prospects' hands that will help solidify the case for making that commitment.

It's a multi-step marketing process that plays out over months and even years. The question for him or her becomes: How do I convince a prospect that I'm "the one"?

## **Worth the time, worth the effort, worth the cost**

One of my clients completed a magalog after spending over a year working on it. Before I go any further with this

story, let me assure you that “over a year” is an extreme exception and nowhere close to being the rule.

But getting it right trumped getting it done fast. Copy rewrites, getting opinions from marketing experts outside the company, and even changes in company personnel created a process that took longer than expected.

So why all the effort?

Because they knew, if done properly, the magalog was going to provide a big payoff not only in immediate sales, but also with long-term relationships that would lead to more sales.

In other words, all the time, effort, and money that went into the magalog was going to give them a much higher return that would make it all worthwhile.

As I mentioned earlier in this book, health and financial services or products generate a lot of skepticism. It’s not that people aren’t willing to buy if there’s value... they will. But they take their time to research and find out if the product or service is really beneficial for them.

Successfully meet the customer’s needs in these industries and you’re likely to have a customer for a long time.

That’s why a magalog (or slim jim, or issue log, or bookalog) is so well-suited to these prospects. The company has the space to build their case and provide the information that their customers or prospects demand. And in that process, the company also positions itself as an expert in its field.

## **Being viewed by prospects as an expert among your competition**

Now, other industries are seeing the value in that benefit. One such industry is consulting.

For all the value and experience they offer, consultants



are often viewed as a bit of a luxury. It's not that clients wouldn't love to hire one to help increase sales or solve other problems, it's just not always given the priority it should, especially when times are tough. (Of course, that's one of the most important times to hire a consultant.)

Then there's the matter of finding the right consultant. Any one can throw up a basic sales letter website in a day and claim to be an "expert". Try a Google search on "business consultant" or similar phrase. Not exactly an easy process for the person responsible for finding the best fit yet having no idea where to turn.

That's where magalogs come in.

The fact that they're used so widely in other industries should tell you something: When done properly, they generate qualified leads and increase sales.

If you're a consultant, you know it can take some time to turn a prospect into a client. Part of that process is finding ways to communicate with the prospect on a regular basis. It can't be a constant hard sell. That can drive prospects away.

## **How to make your magalog work for you**

Think about how you filter the marketing material you receive in the mail. If it looks like blatant advertising, it generally gets a lower priority. But something that stands out from the norm attracts attention.

A magazine-styled magalog with cover copy addressing your prospect's core needs is going to get far more than a passing glance.

Here's just a quick list of things you could include in your magalog:

- Advice that the prospect can put into action right now to increase sales.

- Little-known marketing techniques that can give the prospect an edge over his competition.
- Branding success stories and what your prospect can learn from them.
- Advice on hiring the right people and keeping them motivated.
- Tips to save time that actually work.
- Success stories from clients that your prospect can relate to.
- Q&A section addressing common questions about the value of consulting.

Each article helps to establish you as an expert in consulting while at the same time providing immediate benefits to the prospect. When the prospect feels you're truly interested in helping them *before* they're a client, you begin to break down the barriers that make them hesitant to hire a consultant.

And when they do decide it's time to write the check, who are they going to call? Chances are it's not the consultant who believes "value" is including a free recipe in their generic, template-based newsletter or postcard.

It's likely you already have a lot of content via articles you've written or presentations you've given. Now, it's simply a matter of taking that content and putting it into a format that few, if any, of your competitors are investing in.

A magazine-styled magalog spotlights you as an expert and adds to the perception that you're one of the top people in your field in a way that a traditional sales letter, newsletter, postcard, or special report doesn't.

Those are all good marketing vehicles, but are they helping you stand out from other consultants who are doing the same thing?

Unlike some industries that mail their magalogs to a large mailing list, you can save money by only printing a small number of magalogs to send to your “A+” prospects and current clients. (We never want to forget providing extra value for existing clients who are an excellent source for referrals.)

For prospects that may not be too serious on your radar, e-mail a PDF version if you choose, or a link to the online version.

## **Turning a cold-call into a warm-call... or having prospects call you**

When you send useful information, prospects are more likely to respond in a positive way and are much more willing to engage with you. You’ve presented a positive image that helps you stand above the competition.

Better than you cold-calling, imagine your prospects calling you to discuss some of the ideas you presented in your magalog.

Even if you’re the one making the call, your magalog in their hands turns a cold-call into a warm-call and gives you a great starting point for a conversation.

Successful consultants know what they’re worth and charge appropriately. But to convince a prospect to write that check, you have to prove your value and find ways to separate yourself from your competitors. (Just like your prospects have to do with their customers.)

Because of their complexity and cost, magalogs aren’t done on a whim. But that’s one reason they increase your professional perception. It shows you’ve reached a certain level and should be taken seriously as an expert in your field.

# 4 Ways Magalogs Help You Stand Out at Trade Shows

Over the years, I've been to a number of trade shows in various capacities. At the end of the day, after walking the aisles and talking to people, I look at the collection of handouts I received – flyers, brochures, inexpensive trinkets – and find a lot of it lacking, or not much different than everything else I've dumped on the hotel room bed.

I can partially understand why most material is the way it is. There's a thought that you have to hit the high points fast before the prospect moves on to something else.

But if you're at a trade show that is really targeted to what you do and your audience, I think magalogs give you a stronger opportunity to stand out from the crowd.

Let me tell you why magalogs work in these situations.

1. A magalog stands out because it's different than about 90-95% of the printed material you get at a show. You can test this for yourself with your own mailbox at home. If you subscribe to magazines, don't they stand out from the other mail you get when you look in your mail box? They're larger and thicker. For a trade show, that extra bulk stands out even if the physical height and width is the same as other flyers or sell sheets. Standing out in the pile is half the battle.
2. A magalog lets you tell your story better than you can

with other marketing material. Brochures, flyers, and sell sheets have to take a more “bullet-point” approach and hit the highlights because there’s not room for much more once you toss in some photos. Having easy to read bullet-points is great, but you can include that in a magalog. That’s the best of both worlds... easy to read bullet points for those who want it, and a deeper story for those who want more.

3. A magalog continues the brief conversation you probably had with the prospect as they walked past your booth. Because of their nature, trade show conversations are often brief. If you’re lucky, you’ll get a business card to follow-up on after the show. But why not have your magalog do some extra sales work for you as well? By the time you get to that call, your prospect will have a much better feel for you and what you offer. And if the prospect doesn’t want to give you any contact info (that happens a lot), your magalog may have to carry even more of the sales load. Try putting that sort of pressure on your single-sided sell sheet. The other printed material simply throws some facts and figures at people. A magalog tells a story and makes a deeper connection, while still having plenty of room to include those facts and figures.
4. A magalog helps you to stand taller than your competitors who aren’t using magalogs. I’ve mentioned that point a lot and I believe it 100%. Magalogs take effort... effort that a lot of your competitors simply won’t do because they feel it’s too hard, too expensive, too... whatever. Perception counts for a lot. If you’re perceived to be the leader in your niche, you may get the call that your competitors won’t. Magalogs help

give the perception that you're a successful and confident company. Any company can run off a bunch of homemade brochures and flyers. That's not the case with a magalog.

Is a magalog perfect for every trade show? Not always. I've been to some consumer trade shows in the local mall and my feeling is that a lot of stars would need to line up before I'd use a magalog in that environment.

But industry or B2B trade shows? That's a different story. The right trade show will likely have your ideal prospects. That being the case, you don't want to let those opportunities go to waste. You want to put your best foot forward with your marketing material.

# How Much Does a Magalog Cost?

You're probably not going to like my initial answer to this question, but... *It depends*. The question is a fair one, but it's like asking a builder how much a house costs, or asking a car salesman how much a car costs... it depends.

It depends how big you want your house and how many features you want in it. It depends on the type of car that's appropriate for you and your family and the features you want in it.

Same with magalog design. For that matter, it's the same for magalog copywriting, printing, and mailing. And it applies to other types of marketing material.

Just like a house or car, there's a range that you can expect to pay for a magalog. The trouble I've found is that when I give a range, most people think their magalog project should be on the lower end of the range. That's natural and I don't blame anyone for thinking that way.

When I talk to people during my free project consultations, and have more information to get a sense of what's involved, I can say how much the layout magalog will cost. But only after I've asked a lot of questions.

I can tell you, though, what's involved in the pricing.

1. **Page count** – This is probably pretty obvious. The

more pages, the more it costs. An average magalog is 12 - 20 pages. It can be more, it can be fewer.

2. **Size** – Magalogs come in various sizes. Your average magalog is about 8.5 x 11 inches, give-or-take. Slim jims and bookalogs are narrower, tabloids are larger.
3. **Complexity** – Financial publications, in particular, tend to use tables and graphs that may need to be created from scratch. (Or recreated if the client has website graphs that aren't print-quality.) The more complexity, the higher the cost.
4. **Photo work** – Sometimes photos (either stock photos or photos provided by the client) need some degree of prep work in Photoshop. Your designer should be able to explain what's involved if that is an issue for your project.
5. **Stock photo searches** – If a large number of stock photos are needed, there may be a search fee. Searching for the right photos can be very time consuming.
6. **The copy** – Ideally, a designer will see the copy before quoting a price, although it seems to rarely happen that way. Most designers are hired before the copy is complete. That's smart for the client because you need to book your designer ahead of time and not wait until the copy is done. But seeing the copy, even if it's a rough draft, helps the designer zero in on a price because some copy (including sidebars and order forms) requires more time to lay out than others.

OK... I know you would have preferred to see some specific prices here. But as you can see from the list, it's hard to give an accurate answer until these variables are known.



# 3 Easily Avoided Mistakes Companies Make With Magalogs

Being at the higher end of the marketing cost ladder, magalog marketers are more focused than most on getting the maximum return from their investment.

While any number of mistakes can cause a magalog to fail – such as a bad mailing list, weak copy or design, a poor offer – I’m going to tackle three common mistakes that are relatively easy to avoid.

## 1. Not enough sidebar stories

This is important for a variety of reasons. First, magalogs are longer than most other marketing material. So you’re asking a lot for your readers to stick with it until the end. Even the best copywriters realize readers have only so much patience.

Sidebars break up the main copy and give the eyes some visual relief from page after page of flowing sales copy.

The second reason is related to the first. Readers are often more accurately *scanners* when it comes to marketing material. Before they decide to invest the time to read your magalog, they’ll probably quickly thumb through the pages to see if anything catches their eyes.

Page after page of plain copy with no breaks? A likely candidate for the trash. Some sidebars to break things up?

Your odds of converting the scanner into a reader just shot up.

Third, your sidebars can tell stories that don't quite fit within the main copy. Maybe it's a testimonial, maybe it's a quick history of your company that helps the reader make a deeper connection with your product or service.

A skilled copywriter with magalog experience already knows that sidebars are vital to its success. If you're writing the copy yourself, look for stories that support the main message you're wanting to get across.

## **2. Too much information, too little space**

This may seem a bit at odds with the first point, but let me explain the difference.

Magalogs aren't cheap to produce. So if you have a budget for a 16-page magalog, but 18 pages worth of information, it's tempting to push the limits of what can actually fit in 16 pages while still being readable. Direct market designers have all sorts of tricks to make things fit. But there comes a point where you have to be realistic about what's possible.

Generally speaking, if you add pages to a magalog, you add them in 4's. In other words, a 16-page magalog would increase to 20 pages, then 24, etc. Obviously, that page increase means an increase in your costs... from design, to printing, and possibly mailing.

For good reasons, you want to avoid increased costs. But remember the point about the layout being enticing for a reader. If we're cramming in copy, it's far less enticing and then what have you gained? Probably not more sales.

Instead, and I know this can be painful, it may be time to start hacking away at the copy.

Safe to say the copywriter felt all that copy was important

which is why he or she has it there in the first place. But as someone who had a long career as a writer prior to becoming a designer, I can tell you that there are usually places to cut. For example, something that was said in four paragraphs can be said in three. Or, a sidebar might be dropped if there are plenty of other sidebars and visual relief points.

### **3. Not bringing in creative and production people until the last moment**

It's not a surprise that creating and printing a magalog takes more time than creating and printing a business card. The latter can be done in a matter of days (or even hours) if all the pieces are in place. The former can take at least a few weeks for copy and design in the best of circumstances.

From a design angle, part of that time relates to the second point about too much information and trying to fit all the pieces into a given amount of space.

Layout is a bit like a puzzle, but a puzzle that has multiple valid solutions. So it takes time to make all the pieces fit just right and find the best solution for your project. But that's why you're paying a professional to handle it, otherwise you'd do it yourself.

I've had more than a few calls over the years from potential new clients who want to get the copy to me that afternoon and have a completed magalog done within a few days.

I'm not saying it can't happen in that time frame. I am saying you should be worried if your new designer says it can. Here's why...

Magalogs are a bit of a specialty item in the direct market realm. A lot of work goes into putting the pieces together properly and that comes with experience.

As in any industry, experience not only comes with a

price, but it usually comes with a waiting list for new clients to get the benefit of that experience. In other words, a skilled designer in any niche is likely already busy with existing clients. That means ultra-quick turnarounds can be a bit unrealistic.

Plus, any creative person worth working with is going to want to know about your business before jumping into a project. For a designer, that usually means looking at past marketing material you've done. That includes material you've used that makes you cringe.

Both the good and the bad help the designer get a better sense of what you're looking for and come up with ideas that will work for you.

I mentioned production people and that includes your printer. For larger projects like a magalog, some printers may need more time to work that into their schedule.

From a design point of view, your designer actually needs to know some things about the eventual print process before he or she starts work.

Choosing a printer after the design is done is asking for trouble. In fact, working with a designer who doesn't ask some questions about the print process right at the start is asking for a double-dose of trouble.

Here's the takeaway: ***Magalogs are not rush projects.*** When you treat them as such, the odds of success drop dramatically.

# Is There Any Value in Magalog Templates?

As the uses for magalogs have grown over the years, there have been questions about whether a business can get by and save money by using a magalog template for each magalog they produce.

My short answer is, in some circumstances, yes.

Now, the more detailed answer.

It's not uncommon for me to have a new magalog client suggest that the layout work will go quickly because I probably use a template.

However, for all of my magalog clients, I don't use a template. I treat each client's product as unique. I don't try to shoe-horn their copy and graphics into something else I've already done.

Like any smart designer, there are certainly basic elements that I may use over and over... not only because they save time, but because I know those elements work.

Copy and design requirements are usually unique for each magalog I do. Trying to force it into a template would probably take more time than it does to start from scratch and build a magalog based around the uniqueness of the copy.

Yet, as I mentioned, there are some circumstances where a template can be helpful. This is true where businesses are

using magalogs to build and enhance their branding and not necessarily selling a single product.

Think of monthly magazines you see at the book store. The cover and contents may be different each month, but there is generally a foundational look the magazine retains. That's especially true of the cover. Most magazines use the same font or logo for their name to make it easy to spot on a rack full of other magazines.

If the look of the magazine was radically different each month, people would have a harder time finding it. Once you've trained your audience to look for something specific, you don't want to mess with it haphazardly. So in that case, consistency in appearance counts.

A great example of a magalog that uses a template effectively is my friend Dale Beaumont's *Business Blueprint Magazine*. ([businessblueprint.com.au/magazine](http://businessblueprint.com.au/magazine)) Dale's magalog template was actually created in the Pages word processing program.

Just looking at the covers, you can see a consistency in the look. There's also a consistency to the interior pages.

By using this template for their marketing magazine, they saved a lot of time each month and knew pretty-much what amount of content they'd need for each issue to fit within their template. They also had the flexibility to add more pages if necessary. Even more important, they were building a recognizable brand with their magalog.

Coaches and consultants would benefit from this style of magalog because it would help with that recognition factor among clients and prospects.

Companies that lean more heavily on using their magalog as a catalog of products (along with lots of articles) would also benefit from a consistent look.

But for a more classic, sales letter type of magalog that is focusing on single products or services, a template might not be worth the trouble.

If you're like a lot of my magalog clients, the products or services you sell, while perhaps having a common thread, need unique copy and graphics that will change each time. Sometimes you'll need a different page count, other times you may want to try different physical sizes.

And, believe it or not, most of my magalog clients don't want their magalogs to look anything like what they've used before. In other words, they don't necessarily want it tied to a specific brand. They want it more like a standalone piece so there are no preconceived notions when the reader looks at it for the first time.

Like any marketing piece, you need to be clear on your goals. That will help you decide whether a template is worth considering.

## **How handy are you with design tools?**

The other thing to keep in mind about a template is whether or not you're going to be the one to fill it in each time. Most magalogs are done in higher-end software programs like InDesign or QuarkXPress which is really intimidating to someone not used to powerful software like that.

However, as Dale's magalog shows, a lot can be done with Pages. By the way, that's a Mac program created by Apple. I'm not sure if Word or Publisher are up to the challenge for you PC folks as it's been years since I've used them to do any serious layout.

The question becomes... If you have a template made so you can do your own magalog, how comfortable will you fixing something if your template goes out of whack while

you're moving things around? It can be extremely frustrating to feel that, despite saving money doing your own layout, you're wasting so much time to get the template to do what you want that it's not worth the money you're saving.

In the following chapters I want to give you some practical advice if you're going to start using magalogs, whether you're creating them yourself, or hiring others to do it for you.



# Be Careful Using Stock Photos For Testimonials

A common practice in direct marketing is using a customer photo to go along with testimonials. The trouble is, companies may not have actual customer photos to go along with those testimonials.

One solution has been to use stock photos of people to represent the customer.

And if you've spent any time looking at direct marketing (print or online) over the years, it's likely you've run across a few faces used with different names and different products.

But over time, I've seen a change in the way stock photo sites deal with this. Some hadn't specifically mentioned using photos of people in testimonials. However, I'm finding that rare to non-existent these days.

Take a look at the prohibited uses from one popular stock photo site. They include:

- Use that depicts personal endorsement by model
- Use that depicts model in a sensitive way i.e. mental or physical health issues, substance abuse, criminal behavior, sexual activity or preference without a disclaimer.

Those two points are almost the norm for stock photo sites today.

I'm not a lawyer, but because I like my clients to stay out of legal hot water, I'm upfront with them about this issue.

However, as you may have noticed with the second disclaimer, there may be some wiggle room.

In fact, one stock photo site I talked to suggested sending a mock-up of any design so they could take a look at it and help determine if the usage had crossed the line.

Being that all my design time is spent in the direct market and response world, I know how important a photo can be with a testimonial. For that reason, I suggest my clients do one of two things:

1. Get a customer photo at the time you're getting the testimonial. With webcams and cameras built into computers and phones, taking a picture of yourself is easier than ever. Plus, you're getting a more realistic photo than you get with stock photography where every attempt is made to make the photo look as professional as possible.
2. If stock photography is your only option, check with the stock photo site and give them a mock-up of how the photos will be used. If they OK it, great. If not, ditch the photos and move on. It's not worth the potential legal hassle.

If testimonial photos are really important to your campaign, then I believe you have to treat the gathering of actual customer photos as seriously as you treat the copy and design.

# The Value of a Great Magalog Copywriter

I can remember a particular magalog project for a relatively new client. It quickly became one of my favorite projects. There were a few reasons for that, but one was that I was working with a wonderful copywriter who understood how to write copy for a magalog. Not all copywriters can write great copy for a magalog, just like all designers can't design magalogs.

There are subtleties in the various copy and design niches. Skills in one area don't always translate to another. To give a quick, personal example, my passion and skill-set is with magalogs, books, sales letters and a few other areas. You do not want to hire me to do your logo or website because I don't have the proper skill-set, or passion, in those areas.

When it comes to copy for magalogs, I get some clients who want to use existing sales copy that they're already using somewhere else, such as their websites. While we can make that work, it's not ideal and the process is usually longer to get the copy into "magalog shape."

Instead, on this project I just mentioned, using a copywriter who understood how to write for magalogs, was worth it. The writer understood the value of creating immediate impact with the cover copy... understood how to keep the reader interested enough to read through all the

pages... understood how important sidebars are throughout the magalog... and amazingly, wrote the exact amount of copy needed for 16 pages.

That last point is important because too much or too little copy slows things down as copy changes usually result in layout changes of some sort. Slowing down is a bad thing when you're anxious to make some sales.

Any magalog's success will be determined by factors you're already familiar with... the copy, the design, the actual product, the offer, the mailing list, etc.

But you certainly increase your chances of success when you've got winning copy from someone who knows what goes into successful magalogs.

By the way... that wonderful copywriter was Eileen Coale (EileenCoale.com), someone I work with as often as possible.

# Avoiding Pain When Printing and Mailing Your Magalog

The first big design project I worked on was a 300+ page training course. The project included a binder cover design, CD labels, and a number of other elements that had to be printed, in addition to the main content.

The company I was working with used a *print broker*. In fact, quite a number of my clients over the years have used a broker. If you're not familiar with how they make your life easier, let me pass along some basic information.

Unless you already have a process in place, choosing a copywriter and designer, and then printing and mailing your project, can be a daunting task.

I've been through the process with enough clients to know that one of the things they appreciate most is working with professionals who will take care of details that they either don't want to deal with themselves, or have no experience with.

## **Does a print broker cost more? If it does, you've got the wrong broker.**

The one thing you I most often when talking to someone about using a broker for the first time is, "*Won't I pay more because I'm having to pay the broker as well as the printer?*" Most likely, no. Here's why.

The brokers, at least the ones I know, work with a handful of printers who specialize in different types of projects. Because the brokers are bringing in business the print shop might not otherwise get, the printer is happy to give a better deal to the broker. The broker then passes those savings along to the client, minus a fee for himself.

Even with that fee, your cost can still be lower than if you had called the same printer on your own. In fact, I've heard stories of businesses getting a price from a broker, then trying to go behind the broker's back to get a lower price by working directly with the printer and avoiding the broker's fee.

They're shocked to find that the price is actually higher! Why is that?

## **Why brokers can usually get better prices than you can**

A good print broker can be bringing in literally millions of dollars a year to a print shop. The print shop may only market itself locally while the broker could be bringing in business from anywhere.

Because of that, you better believe the print shop is going to give the broker a good deal as a "thank you" for bringing in extra business and income.

You, on the other hand, not having a long history with the printer (if any) are getting the "regular" printing rate. In fact, chances are you're talking to a print shop salesman like everyone else who calls. The broker, meanwhile, is often working directly with the print shop owner or manager.

Again, that's because they bring in so much business to the print shop, they go straight to the boss. If you're working with a small print shop, you may be talking to the boss, too.

But then we're back to the issue of the broker bringing in far more projects than you are.

Because of his/her experience, the broker is also going to be able to advise you on the best type of paper to use for your project, and steer you around some common print issues that can trip up a project. That makes sense... a broker who's been in business for a while has probably seen it all.

Many brokers can also handle the mailing of your piece if that's required. Mailing is a whole separate topic that can drive you to tears. But with a solid broker, that's one less thing you have to worry about.

Unless you're totally happy with your print/mail process, and know for a fact you're getting the best price and service possible, I strongly advise you to at least talk to a print broker and see if they can make your life easier and save you money.

# Is Your Designer Pricing Your Project Fairly?

Earlier I said projects that end with “log” can be more of an investment... *magalog*, *issuelog*, *catalog*, *bookalog*. These types of projects are typically more complex, especially from a design point of view. Naturally, that will cost more.

Having said that, a common rookie designer mistake (or, unfortunately, an intentional money grab by a more experienced designer) is to price a project based on what it’s called rather than on the content.

A bookalog project I worked on was a perfect example.

When the client contacted me asking for a bookalog, I immediately thought of other bookalogs I’ve been involved with or seen. Many are quite complex.

However, in this case, the copy was very simple and the layout would be very simple. In fact, it wouldn’t be much different than a sales letter. It’s just that the size of the layout would be different. To top it off, only one graphic would be involved, and the whole piece was a single color.

So while the project was a bookalog, the layout work on my end was more like a sales letter. And based on that, the price I quoted the client was over 50% lower than the average price of a more complex bookalog. I priced the project more like my average sales letter work.



The point here is that the project price was based on the *content* and what needed to be done, not based on the format name.

If that seems obvious to you that it should be that way, I can assure you not all creative folks work like that.

Granted, it can be hard for you to know what a fair price is if you don't have much experience working with designers or copywriters.

That's why I always encourage you to keep looking until you find a designer you trust. Or ask business colleagues who they would recommend. In other words, do as much research as you can so you're as confident as possible that you're picking the right person.

# 3 Points to Consider When Judging Your Designer's Work

**H**ow do you, as a client, judge any work your designer gives you? (In this case, I'm talking about print design, not online.)

Most of the clients I work with are very experienced when it comes to marketing. They've been around a long time and have a great sense of what works and what doesn't when it comes to copy, design, offers, pricing, when to mail, etc. Another way of saying it is that they know their target audience really well.

But some clients have little experience in direct marketing. They know they need help, but they're not quite sure if what they end up looking at from their designer will really work.

To a certain extent, you won't be able to fully judge your designer's work until you've tested the material. (And to be fair, success or failure is dependent on more than just design.) But there are some things you can do before setting your marketing material free into the cold and crowded mailboxes of the world.

## **1. Don't judge things too much on your personal preferences**

The fact that you may not personally like the color blue,

for example, isn't terribly relevant. That's hard for some client's to hear, but your marketing material isn't designed for you... it's designed for your audience.

Now, if you have some study that shows your target market hates blue, blue is out. If you have a color scheme for your business or product that doesn't lend itself to blue, again, blue is out.

Most designers I know don't pick random colors and certainly don't pick colors to annoy the client. When there is no color scheme that needs to be used as a foundation, your typical designer is going to go with certain colors that he or she knows will work well based on experience with other projects.

Or they'll choose certain colors or color combinations that reflect a certain feeling you want to put forth. Sometimes a significant photo on the cover might dictate the color palette.

## **2. Show your designer samples of things you like or don't like**

One of the biggest mistakes clients make is waiting until after seeing a draft of a design to say things like, "Oh... forgot to mention... I really dislike \_\_\_\_\_." Ideally your designer will ask about your likes and dislikes at the start of the project, but don't be shy speaking up if he or she doesn't ask.

The reason this is important is because, as any designer who has been around can tell you, some clients will take a PDF proof and say they don't like it at all when they actually just dislike one little thing. But that one little thing is so important to them, it causes them to dismiss the whole thing

as bad. If that little “thorn” had been known ahead of time, it would have saved you and the designer valuable time.

By the way, I’ve run into plenty of clients who hated the idea of showing me (or any other designer) samples of stuff they’ve used in the past because they hated it and didn’t want that to influence the new designer. But that’s the wrong way to look at things... you want it to influence your designer!

By showing the designer pieces that bombed or made you sick to your stomach just looking at it, you’re helping your designer dismiss any ideas he or she might have had that had similar characteristics.

In other words, you’re influencing your designer to avoid things you don’t like.

### **3. Is it easy to read?**

Ah... now we’re at the heart of direct market layout and design: Did the designer make the copy easy to read? While this can be subjective, more often than not it’s going to be pretty clear whether the designer has hit the mark or not.

This includes not only the font choice and font size, but white space, leading, kerning, tracking and a host of other issues. You may not know the “rules” behind some of that terminology, but you’re going to know if you can read the thing easily or not.

Sometimes clients ask the near-impossible: Fitting way too much copy on way too little space. At a certain point, there’s only so much a designer can do and then it’s up to you to either cut copy or pay for more space.

For example, your magalog may need to expand from eight pages to twelve. Bottom line: Your designer will do his or her best, but you might have to face the reality that things aren’t

going to fit the way you thought they might. If it's not going to work as-is, it's time for Plan B.

Like just about any topic, we could spend pages and pages discussing this in more details. But for now I simply wanted to highlight some key points so that your projects can go as smoothly as possible.

# Why You Should Request Your Designer's Source Files

On the surface, this may seem like a boring topic. But I urge you to take the time to read this and understand the issue as well as the consequences of not caring.

For any type of layout project – magalog, sales letter, book, etc. – your designer likely is using some professional-level design tool like InDesign, QuarkXPress, Photoshop or Illustrator.

When he/she sends you a proof, it's usually a PDF that's easily viewed on just about any computer. Sending you the actual source (or native) files from those professional level tools would be pointless if you didn't have that software yourself. You wouldn't be able to easily open the files, if at all. And most projects are made up of many source files.

That's why PDFs are so great... one file to see the completed project. That makes your life easy.

Print shops sometimes want to print your project from source files. Other times they're just as happy with a press-quality PDF. It depends on the printer and the project. Designers are happy to provide the printer with source files if required. (If they're not, they're not doing you any favors. Consider finding another designer.)

But quite a number of designers will do just about anything not to hand over source files to the client. This is a

very controversial subject and I don't make many friends in the design community when I discuss it because I'm very pro-client on this.

## **Why some designers don't want to give you source files**

Some designers are afraid that if you have the source files, you'll simply do future projects yourself, or hand over those files to someone who will work cheaper. By having the source files, it may save another designer lots of time creating similar projects.

Personally, I don't want clients to feel they have to work with me. If a client doesn't see any of the extra value I bring to a project, we're probably not a good long-term fit anyway.

So if it's just a single project and they're going to use that as template for years to come without using me, so be it. I do have to tell you, though, that many designers hate working with someone else's files. They could end up wasting too much time trying to clean-up what to them are inefficiencies, or figuring out odd things the original designer did in his or her files.

Remember earlier when I said layout is like a puzzle with multiple, valid solutions? Well, there are multiple ways to work with copy and graphics within layout programs. Each designer has preferences in how they do that.

Other designers fear that the client will muck up the files and create a mess that either makes the end-result look bad (with the blame being unfairly placed on the designer), or cause the designer extra work to fix the mess.

To be honest, that's a valid point; I've seen it happen. My personal method of dealing with that is to be clear what the results may be if the client does alter files.

If they insist on tampering with the files and causing me extra headaches, I simply stop working with them. (I value my sanity.)

And then there are designers who are happy to hand over the source files... for a price. That's not something I do – I give them to the client for free if they want them – but charging extra for source files is very common in the industry.

It's a discussion to have with your designer before the project starts and have that included in your agreement.

## **How I came to my “You can have the source files” policy and why you should care**

Unfortunately, “stuff” happens.

Let's say you have a magalog that's working great for you, but you change your company's phone number, address or a URL. If you're still working with the same designer who created the magalog, no problem.

But what happens if the designer went out of business and you can't get in touch with him? (Freelancers going out of business is an unfortunate reality.)

What happens if you have a falling out with the designer and they refuse to talk to you or do anything to help you? (That happened to a client of mine with his previous designer.)

What happens if you're unknowingly working with a designer who has a terrible back-up policy? Computers crash, files disappear. Happens all the time.

I'd like to say that most freelancers are good about making regular back-ups. Experience tells me that not everyone does. How safe are your files with your designer?

What happens if you want to print more copies of the magalog with a new printer, but your designer is out-of-business



(or not speaking to you) and you have nothing but a low-quality PDF proof?

Well, here's what happens: A quick, inexpensive change turns into a brand new project for a new designer. That costs you more money and takes extra time.

It didn't have to come to that if you had the source files to hand over to someone else. Or could hand them back to your designer if something bad happened on her end.

## **The argument that should cause you to consider finding a new designer**

If a designer ever gives you the old “Well, does a restaurant give you the recipes for meals on their menu?” argument for not handing over source files, kindly remind them they're not a restaurant. But if that's how they want to be judged, ask them if you'll get “free refills” on certain design services or get “Happy Hour” pricing.

It's a silly argument and any designer that uses it on you should be embarrassed. Consider whether you want a long-term relationship with a designer like that.

Here are some things a designer may not be able to hand over:

**1. Fonts** – Most fonts have copyright restrictions of some kind. It's usually OK for the actual fonts to be packaged and sent to the printer for printing along with the source files. But sending you, the client, the fonts with the source files can be a legal no-no. Your options are to simply take the source files without the fonts, or get a list of the fonts used by your designer and buy them yourself.

**2. Unique creations** – I am sensitive to designers who create logos or other unique pieces of art. But designers can “flatten” an image so that you can still have the source file,

but are prevented from editing the pieces that make up the final result.

A logo is a good example. You may need to give that logo file to another designer for a different project. Having the flattened source file allows that designer the maximum flexibility to add the logo to a letterhead, banner, business card, or some other project that the logo designer doesn't handle. Most logo designers understand that and will provide you with the appropriate file(s).

**3. Plug-ins** – Plug-ins are software extensions that designers can add to their design tools to help automate tasks or create some unique design element. It's likely that the plug-in has copyright restrictions that prevent the designer from handing it over to someone else. That might mean that while you have the source files, you can't edit some portion of the project, or even open it, because you don't have the plug-in. That's another case where you may need to buy the same plug-in assuming you have the same design tool your designer is using.

There may be other valid reasons, but I simply want to make you aware of some common situations where it truly is an issue.

Beyond that, it's always in your best interest to get source files and store them in a safe place on a company server or back-up DVD.

Boring, I know, but essential.

# 10 Things You Must Know About Magalog Design

**M**y intent for this chapter is to point out things for “magalog beginners” to be aware of related to the design aspect of magalogs. Many of the things I’ll touch on are really the responsibility of your designer.

But as the one ultimately responsible for what is mailed, I’m letting you know what you should be looking for when the designer e-mails his or her first draft for your feedback. And I’ll start with a couple of things that need to happen before you even let a designer begin the layout process. (And as it turns out, quite a number of these suggestions apply just as easily to most other types of layout projects.)

## **1. Choosing a printer should be one of your first tasks**

Your *very first* task should probably begin with the Post Office. Mailing costs are just as important as anything else we’re talking about here. But postal rates and regulations in all the countries where this guide will be read are beyond our scope here. If you’ve done any direct mail, you’re already familiar with the questions you need to be asking in this area. With that said...

Copy may be King, and design may be the King’s court, but your printer is the one who builds the castle foundation

that your copy lives on. Everything from color (B/W vs. 2-color vs. 4-color), page count, page size and paper weight should be explored and priced up front based on conversations with your printer. The reason? So many things your designer does (and your copywriter to some degree) will be based on that information.

My “printer first” advice doesn’t mean you don’t consult with a copywriter or designer early on. After all, you’ll want to have some sense of your ultimate goal for the layout and content of your magalog and your copywriter and designer can help with that. But I’ve seen plenty of projects derailed once the client got around (too late) to talking with the printer and finding out that for some reason – cost, scheduling, etc – the initial ideas needed to be reworked. So just because printing is one of the last steps in the process, don’t wait until that point to talk with a printer.

Scheduling is also an area worth discussing with your printer. If you’re printing a large number of magalogs and you need to mail them at a specific time of year, you’ll want to ensure your printer is not already booked solid with other large jobs.

And unless you’re confident you have the best printer in the business and getting the best price possible, I’d recommend contacting a print broker. A print broker may be able to find a better print shop option outside your local area. The fact is, not all print shops are equal. Some handle small jobs better than large jobs and vice-versa. A print broker may have contacts that can save you money and time. (Contact me if you’d like to be connected a broker in my network.)

Many of my clients use printers in other states because either the price is better, or because a particular print shop is specially skilled in certain types of jobs.

By the way, some printers have a special file that presets certain options in a designer's layout software. This helps the printer to get the files in a way he or she prefers them. Why is this important? Because a delay at any point in the process, especially the print process, can delay your mailing and/or cost you more money.

## **2. Make sure everyone is communicating from the start**

Introduce your copywriter to your designer and your designer to your printer. Then, give them the freedom to talk to each other as needed. This is an area where you really want to have trust in your creative team. You want them to handle matters on their own that don't need your input. And you want them to know when it is time to get you involved.

The reason you want to stay out of things unless necessary is three-fold.

First, sometimes the discussion can get technical. If you're always serving as a go-between, something is bound to get lost in the translation and that could cause trouble. (Designers and printers in particular can get involved in lots of geek-speak.)

Second, if every little thing has to go through you, it's liable to slow things down. Sometimes a designer simply needs to clarify something with the writer about a sidebar, or needs a minor re-write of a sentence to make things fit better. Let the designer and copywriter work this out on their own.

Third, you've got better things to do than be involved in every little detail, right? Sure, you're ultimately responsible and have the final say on everything. But trust me, there are loads of little things that happen during the creation process that don't require your direct involvement.

Now don't misunderstand me... I'm not saying you let things go to the point where you get your first proof back from the printer only to find the copywriter changed the headline, the designer changed the cover photo, and the printer changed the paper stock all without your knowledge.

What I am saying is that your team needs to feel free to do their jobs (which they're experts at, otherwise why would you hire them for the project?) without having to wait any longer than necessary to get the information they need.

If you're the micro-managing type, at least try this with your team, "I'm leaving the nitty-gritty details in your hands to work out how you feel best. I just ask that you CC: me on all the e-mails so I can follow along. And if you have a question for me, I'm here to answer them as quickly as possible."

### **3. Creating a cover that entices people to open the magalog**

Magalog designers spend quite a bit of time on the cover of a magalog for obvious reasons... if the cover can't help to entice the reader to open the magalog, the whole magalog effort is wasted.

Your copywriter knows the value of the cover, too. He or she will often want the cover to focus on that one big idea or promise. This is the copy that's going to make the reader curious enough to move from page one (the cover) to page two. At that point, the rest of the magalog will generally be spent building and supporting the big idea or promise with background information, relevant research, testimonials, a rock-solid guarantee, and more.

There should also be a flow (often left to right, top to bottom) to the cover. The designer's job is not just to bring the words to life with a variety of design elements and

techniques, but to lead the eye of the reader so they're getting their information in the order the copywriter and client want it to occur.

While a magalog can be used to sell multiple products at the same time, I'm speaking here about a magalog that is focusing on just one product or service.

If you have lots of competing design and copy elements on the cover, all at about the same size, where does the reader start? More important, if they're not being led properly through the copy on the cover, the build-up your copywriter is trying to establish throughout the subsequent pages becomes less effective.

Consider the magazine rack at your local bookstore. There are sometimes hundreds of magazines fighting for your attention, so the cover has to have something that stands out from the crowd.

While your magalog isn't competing against a rack full of magazines, it is competing against the other mail your reader is getting and their desire to move on to something more enjoyable than sifting through mail.

So if your cover can "grab the eyes", you've at least got a fighting chance of your prospect making it to page two.

And what's the purpose of page two? To make them want to read page three. You can probably see where I'm going with this. Each page, starting with the cover, should be designed in such a way that it supports the copy and makes the reader want to move on to the next page.

#### **4. The back cover is important, too**

While a lot of time is spent laying out the front cover of a magalog – and justifiably so – the back cover is just as important.

Have you ever thought about how people find the mail in their mailbox? It's not always an organized stack from largest piece of mail on the bottom to smallest on top. And quite a bit of it is going to be upside-down. That's why it's important that time is spent laying out an eye-catching back cover... it might be the first part of your magalog that your customer sees.

In this case, we're talking about a flat, unfolded magalog that mails like a magazine. Typically, the recipient's address is going to be on the back. The whole address/return address area may take up over a third of an 8.5" x 11" back cover. That only leaves you about two-thirds of the page to work with, but it's prime real estate.

One common approach to the back cover is to restate the big idea or promise, combined with a number of bullet points which will pique someone's interest to open the magalog. Taking it a step further, you might want to feature a partial table of contents, pointing out interesting facts found in your magalog and what page to find them on.

Another technique for the back cover is to list (and even picture) some of the bonus gifts that are being offered.

Again, we're wanting to make sure that if someone sees the magalog for the first time from the back cover, we've generated enough interest to make them see what's inside or at least turn it over and look at the front cover.

## **5. The inside of your magalog is where the meat is**

Sidebars, call-outs, pull-quotes, graphs, charts, photos... these are the things that either help to break up long blocks of text, or support the claims being made in the copy. (And often they'll serve both purposes at the same time.)



We've talked about whether people like to read any more. But ask a successful magalog marketer about how well long copy still works. The fact is, if someone is interested in the product, or at least the general topic (health, finances, etc.), they will invest the time to learn more if you give them a reason to.

But that doesn't mean you can just throw dry text at them every time. Even the simplest of sales letters use subtle design techniques to keep the reader's interest. If you look through a random sampling of magalogs, you'll be hard-pressed not to notice these techniques being put to use.

Maybe it's a dramatic sidebar right in the middle of the page that you can't help but notice. On the more subtle side, it might be encouragement to turn the page. Something like, "Turn the page to learn how women living in Norway live longer, on average, than anywhere else in the world and how you can be just like them." OK... a copywriter would come up with something better, but you get the idea.

Photos speak for themselves... a picture (or chart or graph) is worth a thousand words, right? I'll touch on photos in just a bit.

For sidebars, they can expand on a point made in the main copy, highlight premiums you're offering, establish credibility for you or your company... the possibilities are endless. Make sure your copywriter is looking for sidebar items.

Here's another tip: Include information that's so interesting, people might actually want to keep your magalog after they've made the order, or even pass the magalog on to someone else.

This is where your sidebars come in handy. Not only do sidebars help break up the main body copy, but they can be used for what the media refers to as a 'Hey Martha' story.

When I worked as a news director, we were always on the lookout for some story that, in the general scheme of things, wasn't important compared to other world and local events. But it was such a fascinating story that people couldn't help but tell someone else ("Martha") about it. I have yet to run into a company that didn't have at least one interesting side story to tell, either about their product or their industry. If space allows, use those stories.

## **6. Order forms that work**

Right up there with the importance of your cover is the importance of your order form. Nothing kills a sale like a poorly executed order form. The rules for magalog order forms really aren't much different than an order form for any other type of marketing piece:

1. Make the order form complete unto itself. In other words, if the order form got separated from the rest of the magalog, the reader would still know exactly what he or she was ordering and where to place the order because everything he or she needs is right there.
2. Confirm that all your contact information (website URL, phone number, fax number) is correct. That means calling the phone number and faxing yourself a fake order. Don't laugh... incorrect contact info is more common than you'd think.
3. Keep background colors off your order form, especially in the area where your customers write their contact and credit card information. Background colors can swallow text, especially light, hand-written text, when everything is converted to black and white for faxing. I know it doesn't seem creative, but a white background on the order page is your safest bet. Sometimes a light

color can still work, but designers have a number of other techniques to make your order page “pop” without using a full-page background color.

4. Make sure there is plenty of space for people to write in their contact and credit card information. People hate having to cram their information in space that just isn't big enough. For credit card numbers, some people believe a line to write it out is OK while others opt to include boxes for each individual number so it's clear to the reader if he or she forgot a number (since there would be an empty box left over.) There's no right or wrong, but be aware of the options.
5. If you have multiple offers, list your best offer first and make it stand out a little more from the other options. In a sense, that shows excitement about the best offer and will be what your customers consider first. You'll also want a clear call-to-action, something I discussed earlier in this book.
6. Restate your guarantee. The better the guarantee (for example, a lifetime guarantee) the stronger you want to highlight it on the order form.
7. If room allows, show pictures of your product and any bonuses you're offering. If room doesn't allow, consider chopping some copy. Order forms are notorious for being packed with information... sometimes more than is needed to the point that the form is too overwhelming.
8. Consider not using the word “form” at the top of your order form. The I.R.S. has us fill out “forms” and no one enjoys that. We get forms at the doctor's office, too. People can see that it's a form they need to fill out in your magalog. Try to make whatever heading on the

form be a positive statement like “Risk Free Subscription Reservation”.

## **7. FREE still means something**

We may feel there’s no such thing as a free lunch, but that word “FREE” still makes us take notice. If you’re offering something free, even if it’s a free gift with a paid order, make sure it’s highlighted.

Designers do this in any number of ways... capitalizing the whole word, underline it, using a yellow highlighter effect, using a different color for the word, using a different font, or using a different font size.

If something is FREE, make sure people know it.

## **8. Choosing appropriate fonts**

I wrote an article long ago about a brochure I received. The font choices were horrible to the point of making the brochure extremely difficult to read. Not a great way to try to sell a product or service, is it?

What got the designer in trouble was using fonts that, used sparingly, have a very elegant look to them. But when used as the main font, it caused trouble.

The text you’re reading right now is using a *serif* font and that’s preferred for paragraphs of copy, especially in magalogs that can be many pages in length. The subheads of this book use a *sans serif* font, often used in headlines and subheads. That’s not to say you won’t see it mixed and matched, but it’s the most common usage.

We could spend hours discussing font choices and why Serif fonts are good for large amounts of text, but here’s the bottom line: Font choice is one of the most critical pieces of a magalog layout... from the headline to the main copy.

Make a bad choice and readers likely won't bother investing much time with your magalog... it simply won't be worth the effort to read.

A related issue is font size. Seniors will have more difficulty with small print. Yet, in an effort to fit too much copy on too few pages, designers will use a font size that's too small for the target audience. And, believe it or not, a font size that's too large can also be difficult to read in long blocks of text.

Don't be tricked into making judgments about how a font looks based on what you see on your screen. When your designer sends you a PDF proof, print it out and see how it looks on paper. After all, that's the way your readers will be seeing it.

Font choice is a balancing act, but figuring out that balance is part of the designer's job.

## **9. All photos are not created equal**

A photo you may have for your product or service isn't necessarily usable in all your print and online marketing. The resolution of the photo plays a key role in determining where a photo should, and should not, be used.

While there are no absolutes, there are some general guidelines to follow:

1. Photos used for websites or eBooks will often be around 72 dpi (dots per inch). This keeps the file size of the photo small which either makes your website load quicker, or makes your resulting eBook file size smaller. Imagine a website or eBook with lots of photos. The file sizes add up quick.
2. Photos used for high-quality print will normally be anywhere from 250 dpi to 300 dpi. This creates a

larger layout file to send to the printer, but that's expected and it won't have any affect on your customers who read the magalog.

The higher resolution allows for a clearer picture which is important because professional print shops use printing equipment that is far more powerful than your home printer. For magalogs where you have a product shot, or photos of people, higher resolution photos help ensure they'll look good in print.

Then we have the issue of RGB vs. CMYK. At a glance, you may not notice the difference between a photo that is RGB (Red, Green, Blue) and the same photo in CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black... yes, K stands for Black), but your printer and designer know.

For print, we want CYMK. For online it's RGB. A digital camera gives you RGB photos, so if you're using photos from a product shoot, they should be converted to CYMK. This is easily done by your designer.

RGB... CYMK... DPI (and PPI – pixels per inch)... You might be wondering how you'll remember all this. Relax! That's for your printer and designer to worry about. I raise the topic only because I get lots of clients who tell me to grab photos from their website, thinking they're appropriate for print. They're usually not and you just need to be aware of that.

## **10. Be realistic about stock photography**

If you're asking your designer to find stock photos to go in your magalog, understand what's involved. The price range for a single stock photo can range from \$1 to hundreds of dollars or more. Have a sense from the beginning what you're willing to spend on stock photos. Most clients

I've worked with are willing to pay a higher price for a great cover photo since the cover is so important. But for inside pages where the photos will be cropped smaller, less expensive stock photos may be just the thing.

Also understand that for each detail you want in a photo, the price is probably going up.

For example, if you want a stock photo of an apple, you can get a pretty good one for a few bucks.

If you want a stock photo of an apple being eaten by a man in his mid-50s, who is slightly overweight, with a two-day beard growth (not one day and not three days), eating the apple in a park with elm trees (not oak), and eating the apple as the sun is going down over his left shoulder (not right)... well, expect to be disappointed. You could probably stage that shot with a professional photographer, but it will be more than "a few bucks."

While my example is an exaggeration, it's not far off the mark from a couple of requests I've had from clients. When possible, be flexible on how exact a photo needs to be.

Finding the "perfect" stock photos is a time intensive process, so expect to pay your designer for his or her time.

I could spend pages and pages getting into far more detail about design issues, but honestly, it would bore you to tears. It's all important information... no doubt about that. But unless you're a designer, its value is limited in terms of putting that information to good use.

However, I am aware that not everyone can afford a designer. The next chapter is especially for you.

# 6 Design Tips To Save Your DIY Marketing Material From Disaster

One of the worst color combinations I've seen by someone doing their own marketing material is light pink text on a black page.

My point isn't to make fun of the person who sent it to me for feedback. Instead, I want to illustrate what often happens when someone without a lot of design experience attempts to tackle things on his own. He's not the first to do something like that and he won't be the last.

On one level, his idea had some logic behind it. He was talking about getting a pink slip and losing your job, so it was completely natural to use pink as a color for the text. That doesn't mean it was a great idea, just a natural one.

And I suppose the full-page black background was used as a contrast with the pink. But unless you know how to properly make the colors interact, and you choose the proper font, the results can be almost painful to read.

In another example he sent, pink text was used on a white background. It failed just as much as the pink-on-black. A light color (pink) on the ultimate light color (white) is rarely going to fly.

For the record, a magazine ad for the *Susan G. Komen Race For The Cure* is an example of pink-on-black working. But it was because a professional designer knew how to make



it work. Using a default pink that you find in your word processing program is different than the varieties of pink a designer can create with professional design software.

One of the primary design goals of any marketing piece is readability. And just about the easiest thing to read is black text on a white background.

Obviously, we stray from black-on-white in our marketing material. If we didn't, marketing material would be boring and look similar to what everyone else does.

So we know we're going to stray from black-on-white at times. It's knowing when and how far we can stray that separates professional designers and DIY designers.

I realize not everyone reading this is going to hire me, or any other designer for that matter. So let me give you some tips if you're doing small-scale design projects yourself.

## **1. Stay away from fancy fonts, at least at first**

As you're doing your draft, stick with common fonts like Times New Roman and Arial. That doesn't mean Times and Arial will be the fonts you end up using. But I don't want you to get distracted from what should be your main purpose...

## **2. Get all the pieces in place without any thought to color or fancy fonts**

Text, graphics, your logo... whatever it is, just get the raw pieces organized on the page(s). Make it readable at it's most basic level without getting sidetracked by other issues. Ensure that any graphics you throw in, especially stock photos, have a clear relationship with the copy. Copy and photos should be sending a unified message.

### **3. Look at your basic layout in all it's non-fancy glory**

If you could only print your piece in black & white (like in a newspaper), how would it look? Would everything be readable? Would there be an obvious relationship between the copy and any graphics you're using to support the copy? If not, go back to step #2.

### **4. If things are looking good, now is the time to make color and/or font changes**

But don't go crazy, and don't always feel that you have to be literal. Just because you're talking about pink slips doesn't mean you need to use pink. Pink text, in many cases, is a bummer to read. Obviously there are exceptions. But, and I don't mean this to be insulting, unless you have some sort of design background, you're unlikely to know what those exceptions are. The same applies to other color combinations that seem clever, but really aren't.

### **5. Take a moment to study what others have done**

For example, let's say you're designing an ad for your local business newspaper. Get some recent issues of the paper and see what people are doing. What's standing out to you, for good and bad reasons? I'm not suggesting you copy ads, but I think you'll find the easiest-to-read ads are not too complex. They grab attention (since they're fighting for it among the news and articles that people actually want to read) while being very easy to read.

### **6. Get feedback on your layout from someone you trust**

Phrase it this way: "I designed this ad and I really want

you to rip it to shreds. Tell me every little thing that you don't like about it and why you think it might fail." The goal here is not to boost your ego with praise from someone who doesn't want to hurt your feelings. Your goal is to make money with your marketing material. For that, you need people who aren't afraid to tell you that, in a manner of speaking, your baby is ugly.

Now, I have to be honest... there is so much more to the design of marketing material than these steps.

If you're counting on your marketing material to help you make sales, yet you're doing the layout of your material yourself and have no real experience, you're asking for disappointment.

In the business world, "disappointment" is usually translated as "waste of money," "missed opportunities," and "our first impression made us look foolish and unprofessional."

But I know that, for a variety of reasons, it's not always possible to bring in a professional.

If that's the position you're in, use these steps to at least give yourself a fighting chance.

# About Mike Klassen

## – *The Magalog Guy*

After many years of copywriting and layout work, I've switched gears. With a career that started in radio back in high school, I now do voiceover work full time in the area of eLearning, Training, Narration, Corporate, and more.

But having invested so much time in the area of magalogs, and the great feedback I got from all the content I've created over the years, I've kept the Magalog Guy site in operation.

I'll occasionally do layout work for previous clients, and even referrals from those clients, when my schedule allows. But I no longer do layout work for new clients. I do, however, consult with new clients if I feel there's a good fit.

Consulting takes the form of advising companies or individuals as they produce their own magalogs. Since I don't take on new layout clients, you can be sure that my goal in consulting is not to somehow steer you into paying me more to do the actual layout work. I mainly just give direction on the layout of the magalog. An experienced third-party like myself can often spot things you miss, or provide ideas for things you hadn't thought of.

My contact information is on the Magalog Guy site.