



Is there still a place in today's multi-channel communications arsenal for printed brochures?

1. How and why do brochures work?

Brochures legitimise the sales proposition and deliver immediate credibility to the promoting company. This is particularly important for high-value B2B propositions, as the primary buying motive is 'Risk Reduction'. Receiving a well-designed and printed brochure is a good sign-of-intent to 'fitness-for-use' and alleviates many concerns about both the proposed product/solution and its vendor.

It's easy to see why, in a recent ABBA survey conducted by BMRB, brochures were considered the marcomms channel of choice for affecting business decision makers (33%). Add to this the immediacy and visual impact of brochures which enables you to engage with customers.

2. What is a typical format?

The standard format produced by UK companies is A4 portrait with 4 – 12 pages, sometimes printed as landscape. The 'A' size format is preferred as both litho & digital print machines use 'A' size paper sheet and this keeps the print costs down. However, typical formats can deliver lacklustre response and it's easy to get lost in the in-tray mire.

3. What can brochures do that a web page cannot?

Just about anyone can produce a half decent website now due to the plethora of hosted website design solutions with ready-to-use templates. All you need to do is add the content. However, the ideal sales program is to have a quality brochure working in tandem with an equally well designed and functional website, together enhancing the customer experience and helping to drive sales.

Brochures can offer a lot more:

- A. Referral/Mobility Factor** – why is it that the most convenient moments to review product/solution sales information is when we're travelling – planes, trains and automobiles. Not so easy to access a web site on your Blackberry when travelling on the Piccadilly line, but easy to flick through a brochure.



- B. Personalisation** – sure this can be done on the web, we all know that it takes very little effort to achieve by running a database behind the site. But seeing your personal details in print, which is now achievable through the use of PURLs, is still impressive and strikes a chord with many customers. Many vendors within the financial & insurance sectors have taken this one step further by making the personalised brochure the official contract, which includes all of the agreed details of their offer – not just in black & white, but 4 colour.
- C. Quality** – the internet levels the marcomms playing field at a time when you're trying to stand out from the crowd. A well-designed brochure that uses quality paper stock, and printing effects such as UV varnishes will help bring you to the attention of customers and give you that all important competitive edge.
- D. Immediacy of Information** – brochures can often meet the customer's need of wanting the information NOW! The walk-by factor in a wholesaler, bank, at an exhibition, times when the customer has identified a need but is not sat in front of the PC.

4. Are they particularly effective at reaching a particular audience?

Impulse situations – product information within wholesalers/distributors, in-store, banks, long sales cycle situations – property development, IT.

Dissonance situations – part of the after-sales proposition of high-value items, reassuring the customer they have made a wise choice – financial services, automotive, IT products & services.

5. What is likely to happen in the future?

More brochures are finding their way onto the internet as downloadable pdfs. Print volumes have dropped, but perhaps what is more significant is the impact of personalisation – clients are now requiring smaller runs of highly targeted content within each brochure. There is still considerable evidence to support the continuing use of brochures, with many companies recognising that this is still a medium that customers prefer to receive, and a marcomm channel that allows companies to differentiate their proposition and engage with customers.

More people will also use their brochure production as a communication platform to promote their environmental responsibility message through the use of recycled, unbleached papers and water-based inks.



Practical advice:

- A. Do you need a brochure?** – research whether your customers use brochures.
- B. Can you afford to produce a brochure?** – think small and work up, making sure the finished item supports your corporate image.
- C. Agree a single clear sales message** – don't try to communicate too many different sales messages, you'll just confuse your customer.
- D. Get it professionally designed** – resist the urge to do it yourself, because it will look like ...you've done it yourself!
- E. Get it professionally written** – a good copywriter will turn what you want to sell into reasons why your customers should buy.
- F. Invest in good photography** – resist the urge to drag out your digital camera. First impressions often mean everything, and you will quickly recover the cost of professional photography by the positive effect it will have on sales. You can also use the photography on your website.
- G. Don't skimp on print quality** – even a well-designed brochure will look inferior if poorly produced – seek advice!
- H. Always have a call-2-action** – what do you want the reader to do once they've read the brochure? Go visit the website? Email? Call?



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About the Author

Has over 20+ years hands-on agency experience of developing integrated marcomm programs for numerous SME and Corporate B2B brands across many vertical markets. Steve sits on the DMA's B2B Committee; Management Board of the Association of B2B Agencies; past Judge of B2B Marketing Magazine Awards 2006 & 2007; and was the 2008 Chairman of B2B Alliance www.b2balliance.info

Communications Approach: Business Products are Bought, not Sold!

About Clockwork IMC

A lean and very experienced B2B integrated marcomms team based in West London. Best suited to SME and Corporate clients who recognise the importance of 'brand management' and the effect that impactful strategic/creative ideas can have on 'business development'. Acting as an extension to their marketing team, we are:

- Thinkers - Campaign Strategy/Creative Concepts
- Planners - Integrated Media Mix/Media Selection & Buying/Print Management
- Doers - Advertising (Digital/Press), Copywriting, Design, Direct Marketing, Exhibitions, Promotions, SEO/SEM, Support PR, Web.

Client Promise: No frills, just creative thinking, integrated execution and results!