

How To Create Marketing Materials That Get You Noticed Every Time

**Presented by
Roberta Guise, MBA
Guise Marketing & PR**

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LOOKS MATTER!

Your marketing materials, which include everything from your logo, business card, Web site, brochure, fliers — essentially everything visual that has your name on it — speak volumes about you. Yup, first impressions still count!

There's a simple rule-of-thumb for how professionally-produced your materials should look. Create materials to the level that reflects how much you're asking clients to invest in you. It also depends on the situation. For example: is a slick-looking proposal that's neatly printed, bound and presented in full color needed to win the project, or will a well-written e-mail serve the same purpose?

If you ask and answer the right questions before you start producing your materials, you'll save time, money and grief. The result: you'll have a repeatable framework for creating winning marketing materials that get you noticed every time.

I've created this check-list for you to use as a template for planning and developing all your marketing materials. Work through the points *before* you start creating your marketing piece, during development to be sure you're on track, and again once your promotions are "out there", to assess effectiveness.

If you've already got marketing materials, use the checklist to see how the materials measure up, and what can be tweaked before the next release cycle.

To look at professional samples I've created for clients, go to my Web site, <http://www.guisemarketing.com> and click on Samples Portfolio. If you'd like to see a particular brochure in full, e-mail me, roberta@guisemarketing.com after Confab and I'll gladly send you the original PDF file.

THE CHECKLIST

TARGET MARKETS

- Who are the target markets/buyers?
- What different approaches do I need for each target market?
- What are the needs, wants, “hot buttons” of each market?
- Is the recipient a buyer or recommender?

IDENTITY — “LOOK AND FEEL”

Rule of thumb: you can do without high-end graphical and design “bells and whistles.” *Never* compromise quality, however! It sends the wrong message about you.

- Professionally-designed logo/letterhead/business cards. Do I want a professionally-designed logo? A simple font treatment works also, as long as it’s professional-looking.
- How do I want prospects/clients to perceive me/my business? Formal? Informal? Trendy or edgy? Creative? Warm and fuzzy? What do I need so that the “look and feel” reflect my quality, professionalism, style, personality, and business philosophy?
- Does my identity convey my core message and my value/benefits to clients?
- Is my identity apparent and consistent throughout ALL my marketing materials, including letterhead, business cards, Web site, and periodic marketing pieces, etc? Are the colors and type face consistent?

MESSAGES

- Do I clearly and succinctly tell people exactly what my business does (features)?
- Do I clearly demonstrate the value of my services (benefits)?

- Do I show I understand my customers' needs, wants and business environment?
- Do I clearly articulate the one thing that makes me different and distinguishes me?
- Is it clear to the buyer the results they get/how they benefit from hiring me/my company
- Is it obvious what my (relevant) strengths are?
- Have I created a consistent positioning statement that's easy to adapt to each marketing piece?
- What variations in messages do I need for buyers in different markets (one size does not fit all!)?

TESTIMONIALS

- Gather testimonials from happy clients
- Edit into pithy, results-oriented quotes
- Choose to match service offering

Visit my Web site, <http://www.guisemarketing.com> for testimonial examples. You'll find them in the left-hand column on most pages.

MARKETING PIECES TO PRODUCE

To know what to create for your situation, ask these questions:

- What exists?
- What's needed?
- How will prospect receive the piece (e.g. mail, leave behind after meeting?)
- For which target market/s?
- Do I need to educate reader about my industry?
- What's the goal or outcome I want (from each piece?)
- What main message to convey?
- What's the call-to-action?
- Which testimonials to use?

- What visuals to use?
- Do visuals exist or do I need to create?
- Do I have permission/releases to use material belonging to others?

Examples of items and pieces that you can produce:

- Logo
- Letterhead/business card system
- Brochure
- Speaker Brochure
- Product Brochure
- Postcard/s
- Announcement/s
- Sales letters
- Pitch letters to media and press releases
- By-lined articles
- Promotional items (“ad specialties” such as logo pens, tee-shirts, etc.)
- Web site
- Table-top promotions
- Fliers

PRODUCTION

- Establish a budget. Costs will depend on the next four items.
- Who will write? Edit?
- Who will design?
- Who will print?
- Who will oversee and manage development

DESIGN — General Guidelines

- Layout** — is it clean, easy on the eye, yet moves the eye from top to bottom the way I want the piece to be viewed?
- White space** — is piece balanced with a moderate amount of text and graphics and not cluttered with too much information?
- Header/Title, Subheads and Body Text** — is there strong visual/graphical difference among the various text blocks?

Headline — is there a powerful, compelling headline that visually and verbally draws the reader in?

Colors — do they properly represent you (see “Look and Feel” above)? Do they work with the message? Are they appropriate for the target market? How well do they reproduce? How well do they reproduce in gray-scale for faxing? Do they separate information and create visual interest? Are they your established business colors?

Fonts — maximum two (e.g. title/sub head font, and body text font), ideally one each serif and sans-serif (serif has curly ends, **sans-serif has straight ends**)

BONUS: SPEAKER BROCHURE CHECKLIST

For those of you seeking speaking engagements in addition to those from IMC's speaker bureaus, here are guidelines for creating a professional speaker's brochure. The brochure can be one-or two-sided, or you can create a 2-fold if your needs dictate.

- Professional photograph** of you the speaker (4-color or black & white). If you want to create a one-color brochure, for example in blue, create a 2-color sheet instead so that your photograph is black & white. Your face in blue will not look that healthy... *NOTE* — print shops consider black to be a color when combined with a color.
- Brief speaker biography** with information relevant to your topics that also gives you maximum credibility. Keep the bio with the photo. Text underneath the photo is best. Another option: wrap the bio text around the photo. Separate your name from the bio text.
- Feature any relevant book or white paper** you've authored in your bio.
- Testimonials** (from people at the kinds/level of organizations you want to speak to). Keep them brief, one to two short sentences. Edit where appropriate, use three dots ... (ellipses) to show you deleted words.
- Catchy headline** about your main theme to draw the reader in.
- Strong supporting sub-head/paragraph** loaded with benefits.
- Speaking topics/titles** plus a sentence or two about each topic. List up to about 5 topics.
- Mention your target market** (i.e. the audience you'll be speaking to) somewhere in your text.
- How to book** you/call to action (i.e. what you want the reader to do to book you for a speaking gig).

Add a professional association logo that you feel adds to your credibility.

List of big-name clients can go on the second side.

More Bonus Ideas

Use quote marks only if quoting a person.

I prefer using italics for presenting testimonial quotes than regular type and quotes, because the look is cleaner and easier to read.

Use testimonials only if you have permission to use the client's full name. Using initials or putting quote marks without attributing the quote to a person looks as though you made up the quote and reduces your credibility.

If you have a super hot testimonial, use 5-9 words as a pull-quote in a shaded box. Use oversized curly-quote marks for emphasis (see my Web site, <http://www.guise-marketing.com> for examples of big curly quotes)

Please, don't quote yourself! It defeats the purpose of the testimonial and makes it appear as if you couldn't find anything better.

Two-column format is an effective layout. If you use two columns, play with making one column thicker than the other.

When laying out your piece, remember that the eye reads from left to right, then generally moves diagonally to the left, much like the number seven (7). (Ask me about Hebrew — oy vey, everything is reversed!)

Use shading to create visual areas. Example: put all your testimonials in a shaded box.

About Roberta Guise, MBA

“Be visible!” is Roberta Guise's rallying cry to experts, consultants and small business owners. Through coaching, consulting and professional speaking, Roberta helps you develop your marketing vision, strategy and action plan, create promotion materials, get exposure from publicity in the media, and shows you how to shake loose your inner rainmaker.