

**[HOW]**

**GOOD DESIGN  
WILL ATTRACT  
MORE CLIENTS**

**When it comes to marketing your business, finding the right message for the right audience can be difficult; but figuring out what you want to say is only the beginning. Once you've arrived at the [WHAT] you have to start thinking about the [HOW].**

**That is what this little book is concerned with: the [HOW] of using good design in marketing — how to make design work, how to keep it working, and how it can help you attract more clients.**

**It's about asking: What is good design? What does it look like and what makes it work? More importantly, what does bad design look like and how can it be avoided?**

**So keep reading, and you might just find some information that will transform the quality of your marketing forever.**

**KEEP  
IT  
SIMPLE**

It takes 0.5 seconds for a user to form an impression of a website. That's a frightening statistic for anyone with an online presence. Here's another one: **48% of people cite design as the number one factor in judging the credibility of a business.** If we put those two together, what it tells us is that within half a second of clicking onto your website a user has already decided whether or not you're a trustworthy and legitimate business. And that's before they've read your catchy strapline.

This isn't true just for websites, either. It goes for anything visual: posters, billboards, banner ads, leaflets, magazine ads. To put it bluntly, if it's out there to be seen, it's out there to be judged.

So, with that in mind, how can you ensure that all of your marketing materials provoke a positive reaction?

The simple answer is to keep it simple. In fact, that's just what Kelly Johnson had in mind when he coined that golden old design principle back in the 60s; **KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid).**

### **Some tips on KISS:**

**Avoid jargon.** Although it's often used with the best of intentions, business jargon can all too easily wind up alienating your listener and, at worst, making them feel patronised. The last thing anybody wants is to be made to feel inferior, and confusing business-speak can have exactly that effect. Simply put: **in business it's better to be a Hemingway than a Shakespeare.**

**Be economical.** Try not to use your headline to describe what's being shown in an image, and, vice versa, try to avoid using an image to represent exactly what's being said in a headline. This is an easy but effective technique that can have a big effect on the quality of your marketing material.

**Don't overwhelm.** If possible, steer away from using lots of different colours at the same time, and try not to combine large imagery with large headlines; when there's too much to look at people will become confused and often won't know what the point of your message is.

Consider this quote from Albert Einstein:

***"If you can't explain it to a six year old, you don't understand it yourself."***

This translates very well as a marketing concept. For the sake of this book we'll call it Einstein Design. Ideally, you want all of your marketing materials to follow the Einstein Design principle, which is to say: **if you were to describe any given piece of your marketing to a six year old, be it the home page of your website, a booklet, or a leaflet, would they understand what you were selling?**

Another golden rule in the pursuit of simplicity...

**KEEP  
IT  
CLEAR**

**T**hese days, when it comes to advertisements and the internet, people don't read, they scan. This is an unfortunate consequence of the digital age, and perhaps the only writers not affected by it are novelists. For everyone else, though, it pays to write for the scanners.

The trick here is to optimise your marketing for skim reading. Make it scan-friendly. **Focus on the relevant message and repeat it throughout.** Constantly remind your audience what you want them to do.

Remember that the average human has an attention span of 8 seconds and can read 300 words per minute. **This allows us to assume that most people will only make it through 40 words of text before getting bored.**

This might be an exaggeration, and it certainly isn't representative of everyone, but in the spirit of playing it safe you have to consider what you can achieve within that time frame, or, within those 40 words. If you're about to circulate a print ad containing a large amount of body copy, think about what the core message is, and see if anything around it can be shaved away.

**Remember: if you can say it in 8 seconds, then everyone's going to hear it; they won't have time not to.**

Once it's been established that people are in fact scanning your content, you then need to think about

how exactly they're scanning it. A study conducted by the Neilson Norman Group showed that people often read web pages (i.e bodies of text) by scanning two horizontal lines across the top of the page, and then one vertical line down the left-hand side, which happens to be the shape of an "F". In relation to content, this suggests that people are reading headlines followed by the first sub-heading, and then scanning the first couple of words of each subsequent line in an attempt to pick out relevant information.

**Make that process easy for them.** Create relevant headlines and sub-headings. Put important bits of information in **bold** or *italics* to catch a reader's eye as they scan over your content. Speaking of headlines, here's what legendary advertiser David Ogilvy had to say on the matter:

*"On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your headline, you have spent eighty cents out of your dollar."*

So whether it's a print ad, blog post, or magazine article, **your key message should always be present in the headline.** A simple way of ensuring this is to apply the Einstein Design principle to every headline you come up with.

**KEEP**

**IT**

**RELEVANT**

**S**pecifically, this refers to your **call-to-action** (CTA). Which is your key tool for provoking an immediate response from an audience. Remember that a relevant call-to-action is the most effective means of turning passive interaction into active pursuit of a product or service.

First of all it's important to be clear that your CTA means nothing if it isn't aimed at the **proper audience**. Though this seems obvious, there are still many businesses out there who find great difficulty in connecting with their target market.

It's important to remember that your CTA should take into account, and be targeted towards, a specific stage of the **buying cycle**.

For example, imagine you're online searching for a digital camera. You're not sure which model you want just yet, but you know for certain that the brand has to be Canon. You've just finished reading an article about Canon digital cameras, and at the bottom of the page are two links: one says 'Learn More About Digital Cameras', the other says 'Compare Canon Digital Cameras'. Which are you more likely to click?

You'd probably follow the second link, because you've already moved beyond the stage of the buying cycle which requires learning more about digital cameras in general — you know which brand you want, so learning about others isn't valuable to you, but comparing

different models within the range offered by your desired brand is.

### **Tailor your CTAs to the buying cycle.**

Another important component of effective CTAs are action verbs: Join. Learn. Free. Now. Save. **Words like these direct prospective clients toward a desired action.**

Some marketers also believe that CTAs formatted as buttons are more effective than plain text. Have a look at the following examples and see what you think:

Enter your email below to download your free ebook  
VS

**FREE eBOOK**

Which one seems more appealing?

The key point to remember is that **your CTA should be a necessary and enticing addition to the content you're already providing**. If you've written a blog post about essential networking tips, then at the end of that post offer more essential networking tips, maybe in the form of a downloadable ebook; or inform the reader that you offer free network coaching sessions. Just how every page in a novel should be turnable, so should every blog post be actionable.

Think about what your prospective clients need and mix it right into your call-to-action.

**KEEP  
IT  
USEFUL**

**M**ost of the time, marketing is seen as fringe information; the general consensus is that it's peripheral, there's a lot of it, and nobody pays it much attention.

This is because the simple (if slightly ugly) truth is that **people don't really care about anything unless it benefits them in some way**. It's possible that this is nothing more than a gut reaction to the sheer volume of advertisements we're subjected to on a daily basis; but whatever the reason, it has serious implications for your business and your marketing. The problem is that many people have stopped listening because they assume that all marketing is superficial, manipulative, and offers no real substance.

This results in what can be called Apathetic Consumer Syndrome — defined by a general feeling of numbness towards all forms of advertisement and marketing — and the best remedy for this kind of ailment is a healthy dose of useful content: **marketing that benefits the prospective client** — working for its living instead of just sitting back with its feet up.

When it comes to the internet, this concept of useful content means publishing information that can be of genuine value to a user, without forcing a purchase on them. It's about providing quality content first, with no pretences; and only after it has been consumed and deemed useful can you expect prospective clients to engage with your call to action. **You need to provide content that's informative, practical, educational, and, most importantly, free**. No strings attached, no hidden terms, no sleazy salesmen hiding behind a tree.

Consider the following extract from a Guardian article looking at how many adverts we're exposed to on a daily basis:

*"In 90 minutes, [our participant] saw 250 adverts from more than 100 brands in 70 different formats. The number recalled without prompting was 1."*

If you want to be the 1 in 250, you have to stand out. You have to do something worth remembering; something that looks good, sounds good, and acknowledges that its target audience is both intelligent and human. You have to provide as much value as possible, in whatever way possible.

### **Some tips on the creation of useful marketing:**

**Show the benefits and not the features** — "See the world like never before in crystal clear HD" instead of "Displays images at a resolution of 1080x720".

**Find the demand in what you're offering and turn it into meaningful content** — Why are people buying whatever it is that you're offering? What problem does it solve? If you're selling a vacuum cleaner then people will be buying it to clean things, so you're marketing could be focussed on offering cleaning tips and how-to guides.

**Create succinct and relevant headlines** — remember the David Ogilvy quote; if your message isn't in the headline then experiment with different ways of incorporating it, as long as it gets there in the end!

**Always tell prospective clients what's in it for them** — people generally respect businesses who are open and transparent with their customers, and tend to distrust those who are ambiguous and evasive.

**KEEP  
IT  
CLEAN**

This isn't the dirty language sort of clean, it's more literally about the aesthetic and editorial quality of your marketing.

A study found that a **single spelling mistake on a website can reduce a company's revenue by half**. This highlights (though quite dramatically) the importance of quality even on a minute scale.

When it comes to grammar, it's not enough to rely on auto-correct alone; remember that word processors don't flag up the improper use of words. Its and It's. There, Their and They're. Where and Were. Misplacing apostrophe's. Unfortunately these also happen to be the easiest mistakes to miss when checking back over your work.

So the thing to do is proofread. **Proofread everything multiple times**, preferably by someone who didn't write it (often the writer is the person most prone to making mistakes, as they know the text too well and so can easily miss small mistakes). It's good to send it to a fresh pair of eyes, and then to go over it again yourself, ideally with a magnifying glass and a pair of tweezers, before publishing.

Speaking of publication, remember that mistakes on print jobs cost money. If you discover a mistake on your website, it doesn't take too much effort to set right. Printed mistakes, on the other hand, can not only damage your business's credibility, but cost money to be corrected and reprinted.

Above all else, **keeping things clean is about respecting your current and prospective clients**. Small mistakes risk giving off an unprofessional image, and can make people question your authority on a subject. So it pays to be thorough; and though, unfortunately, you're not likely to receive credit for good spelling and grammar, you're quite likely to receive criticism for the alternative.

**Never underestimate how unforgiving people can be of poor quality**. There are so many fraudulent entities out there in the world, and so many reasons to be suspicious, that modern consumers can often equate things as: **bad quality = scam**.

**Hopefully some of the tips and techniques discussed in the previous pages have provided you with some food for thought on design in the marketing process.**

**Good design is an integral part of any successful business, and it really can be the difference between a potential client choosing to work with you or moving on to your nearest competitor.**

**In this book we've covered some of the basics, but there's still lots more to consider. If you want to learn more about how good design can change the face of your business and attract more clients, then why not get in touch for a free consultation?**

**Visit [www.redsqdesign.co.uk/contact](http://www.redsqdesign.co.uk/contact) and sign up for your FREE consultation.**

My thanks to Declan Wilk Freelance Writer for his invaluable contribution in producing this book.  
If you are looking for a copywriter call him on **07482 266 562** or **[declanwilk@gmail.com](mailto:declanwilk@gmail.com)**

# RED SQUARE DESIGN

0191 276 0169

07968 976 949

[paul@redsqdesign.co.uk](mailto:paul@redsqdesign.co.uk)

[www.redsqdesign.co.uk](http://www.redsqdesign.co.uk)

 @REDSQDESIGN

 REDSQDESIGN95