Creating Brochures

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service

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Forest Recreation Management Guide

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creating brochures

Forest recreation management guide
Cooperative Extension Service
Purdue University Lafayette, Indiana
creating brochures.... for your outdoor recreation area

introduction

Advertising your recreation area will help bring in customers. One method of informing selected individuals is with an attractive, well-organized brochure or folder. Making an effective brochure is an art, best done by experienced people. However, to keep costs within reason, you can do much to prepare your own brochure. You can write the factual information. If you are a good photographer you can take the pictures. You can even make up a trial layout. Most important of all, you must judge the final composition.

A folder describing your recreation area cannot be considered a complete advertising program. Its value is as a supplement to your mass audience advertising. A folder should provide details, in words and pictures, which a sign or radio spot cannot provide. A folder is a reinforcer of your message--something to carry home and refer to later. You can send responses to written inquiries in the form of a beautiful brochure much better than in a letter.

Just as an attractive folder draws customers, a poorly-designed or poorly-printed job can give your business a third-rate look. The following ideas should help you prepare an effective, eye-catching advertising piece.

A brochure is composed of four elements: text, titles, illustrations and captions. Tasteful combination of these elements into a high-quality brochure will appeal to any audience.

The first rule is to consider your audience. You are trying to get customers. Who are they? What do they like? What do they want to know? Plan your brochure by asking yourself what would make you eager to pitch your tent in an area such as yours. From your list of answers, select the key elements of your message, group them, and organize the groups in a logical order.
The written message should consist of key elements which answer questions such as:

What type of area is this?
What activities and services are offered?
What kind of facilities are there?
Why should we go there?
Who else goes there?
Who operates and supervises the area?
When is it open?
When is the best time to go?
How do we get there?
How much do we pay? (A separate insert allows for easy fee alterations.)
How do we make reservations or assure a spot?
Can we look it over before paying to stay?

In answering these questions, be sure to emphasize:

Trees -- people are attracted by shady places with grass.
Water -- prime attractant for swimming, fishing, looking--and drinking.
Activities -- these can be used as the outline topics of your brochure; people are especially attracted by swimming, horseback riding, fishing, and evening programs.
Facilities -- not everyone wants the conveniences, but enough do that you should mention electricity, shelters, rest rooms, showers, ice, store, and services such as firewood and disposal; if some are free, say so.
Special features -- supervised programs, children's programs, reservations, rentals of equipment, unique games, caves, streams, others which make your area unique.
Nearby attractions -- complementary features which your visitors can use.
Rules -- don't include a long list of "don'ts"; a few rules may be necessary, but keep them to a minimum.

Write out your message. Your style should be simple, brief and effective. Make your key words and concepts stand out, by using lists of things rather than burying them in prose. Edit your first draft rigorously, to achieve:

-- Simplicity --
  * Each sentence should have only one message or idea.
  * Every sentence should be necessary; cut out those which are superfluous.
  * Use simple, clear, accurate, easy-to-understand words.
  * Be natural.

-- Brevity --
  * Write short sentences.
  * Go directly to the subject; eliminate round-about words and phrases which seem unnecessary.
  * Keep paragraphs short--never more than 6 lines of type.

-- Effectiveness --
  * Plan before you write, so that your text is in logical order.
  * Write for the public you want to reach.
  * Make sure your brochure:
    a) gets the attention of the reader.
    b) creates interest in the subject.
    c) creates a desire to read to the end.

Revise your writing until you are satisfied. Use a style manual, such as available from the Association Press or United Press International. Then get an English teacher or journalist to rigorously edit and revise your written material. Ask him to look for simplicity, clarity and appeal, as well as grammar and spelling.
Use titles to help the reader find information without reading everything. The titles should be related to the key elements listed above.

On the front cover, the title of the brochure should be appealing and refer to the name of your firm. The front cover should be simple and attractive, so choose only the most necessary words. An example is: Camp - Boat - Hunt ... at TENDERFOOT CAMPGROUND. At the bottom of the cover, a brief slogan, your complete name and location should be in small print. The rest of the cover can be a single photograph. On the back page, a title indicating where to write for more information or reservations should appear prominently. Other titles or slogans should be distributed in a balanced pleasing pattern which is also informative.

The most attractive (and most expensive) way to portray the major features of your area is with color photographs. High-contrast well-composed black-and-white pictures can be almost as effective. Color tone at least the front cover and some of the titles, if you use black and white. Art work can also be used, if the talent is available. Half-tone or posterized printing can make artistic, dramatic illustrations of certain photographs, saving the cost of an artist. Test this out before printing.

Get professional help for all illustrations, unless you are exceptionally capable with a camera and dark room. It is better to have no folder than a poor amateurish one.

1. Well-designed covers are simple, clear and attractive.
If you take your own pictures, follow the principles of good photography found in any manual. Plan your photographs to illustrate your written message. Choose the best features of your area and take pictures of them from various attractive angles. Remember that pictures with water and trees give a good impression. Include people—up close and in action. Don't hesitate to ask your guests to be imaginative subjects for your pictures.

Make sure the pictures show something that will interest strangers. Unless it is exceptionally beautiful, a gate-house, entry road or concession stand is seldom worth a picture.

Keep weeds, litter and other distractions out of your pictures. Make your area look its best. It should not look deserted—take pictures on busy days.

Your pictures will be small in the brochure. Make sure the subjects are large and clear. Do not waste edges on details or extras which won't be seen clearly. Crop and enlarge to achieve clarity and simplicity. Select only a few pictures—your best. An excess of pictures is distracting and expensive. They cause others to lose their drama. Montages are usually ineffective in brochures. Four or five pictures plus a map is a maximum.

One of the most important illustrations you should include is a simple, clear, precise map. This should occupy a relatively small area in the brochure. This can be done by the device of an inset blowup and a small general map, as shown in Figure 2. The general map roughly shows your location in relation to large cities and interstate highways. The inset blowup shows the local access details, helping people get from the nearby state or federal highways to your door. A small portion of an interstate highway or an indication of the direction to the interstate is all that is needed.

captions

Identify the pictures with captions that are vibrant, enticing and informative. The art of writing captions is as difficult as that of writing text. Take as much care in editing and reviewing. Many people will read the captions before anything else—make sure you put useful information in them. A caption does not need to explain the details in the picture, but should use the picture as a point of departure for describing the feature. The map and the front cover should not need captions, unless they make an essential clarification.

2. A small but clear location map can be made with an inset.
layout

With the text titles, illustrations and captions assembled, decide on their arrangement. The most effective folders are artfully balanced by professionals experienced in customer reaction. Hire one if at all possible.

Probably the most economical layout is a single sheet, printed on both sides in three columns, and folded into three sections. This saves time and money in mailing. Standard business envelopes or the back cover of the folder can be used for addresses and postage.

The layout is a key to the success of the brochure. The brochure should:
1. Attract the reader so that he picks it up.
2. Stimulate him to open it and then continue reading it.
3. Make him want to keep it for future reference—as he heads for your place of business.

The colorful, simple, appealing cover gets him to pick up your leaflet.

The next impression is created by the first columns seen as he opens it. If there is an appealing picture and some short, snappy writing on the first pages opened, the reader is likely to go on. Too much writing will discourage him. A map on these pages is not as good as a picture.

The third impression will come from the inside and back of the brochure. Break up the reading material and pictures in a logical, attractive fashion. Keep paragraphs short and columns narrow (2 1/4 to 3 1/4 inches). Make information pertinent and useful, but not windy. You are trying to attract people, not educate them.

Open space is attractive and encourages reading, when artistically distributed. Do not try to fill every nook and cranny of the paper. Leave side, top and bottom margins, and space between paragraphs. Sans serif type also achieves a lightening effect.

printing

Print, don't mimeograph, your brochure. Deal with a good commercial printer. Talk with several printers before you decide. Look at their previous work, not just their prices.

color

Brochures with bright colors attract readers. People at racks with several brochures almost invariably pick up the most colorful items first. Red seems preferable. Two colors are better than one—usually.

Colors cost more, but there are ways to make a bright brochure while holding costs down:
1. Print with one color of ink on colored paper. Test colors with your printer before deciding on the combination and check the effect upon your photographs.

2. Use screens and toning processes during printing to give the effect of several shades.

Dark ink is most effective. Some very amateurish jobs have been printed with pale red and weak blue inks, in the hopes of achieving striking colors. The result is too often disastrous.

a last look

Before the printer gets into final stages, make sure you examine the layout carefully. Look at it objectively, as you would a work of art. Make necessary changes or corrections. This brochure is your image—does it represent your firm well? Does it really tell what is necessary? Are you satisfied with the graphics and the arrangement? Will this attract customers to your place?
Choose an opaque, quality paper that will accept ink well without running or bleeding through. The printer can best guide you in the choice of papers.

Before accepting the finished job, inspect the folders carefully. Make sure the printer has fulfilled his contract, with high-quality reproduction, crisp, clean printing, precise folding, and accurate alignment. You should have detected all typographical errors during proof stage and before releasing your brochure for printing.

As a final check, make sure the following are included:
The name of the area
The mailing address
Directions for how to get there
Activities
Facilities
Special attractions
Other items you consider essential

distribution

Too often, beautiful, informative folders are ineffective because the people footing the bill don't plan their distribution.

To get your brochures to potential customers, you can use three basic methods:

- Mail to past customers.
- Answer individual inquiries by giving or mailing brochures.
- Place supplies at strategic distribution points.

1. Pamphlets directly mailed to last year's customers before April gives you an opportunity to say hello, announce any changes and invite them back. The pictures in the brochure will be pleasant reminders of last year. The folder can also be used to convince their friends to accompany them.

2. When your mass-media advertisements draw inquiries, a brochure is the most efficient way to supply details attractively. Prompt answers are important. Whenever a visitor just stops in for a look, make sure he carries away your advertising. When you talk to groups about camping or anything else, never fail to leave enough brochures for every family represented.

3. Make sure the Chambers of Commerce in your region, tourist information centers throughout the state, and other public-contact groups are always well-supplied with your brochures. The Division of Tourism, State House, Indianapolis, will aid in distribution if you will supply them. Don't wait for these groups to ask. Make sure the stocks are regularly replenished. If you become personally acquainted with these individuals who contact the public, they will often tend to favor you over competitors.

A little study and imagination will suggest unique distribution points. A filling station at a strategic corner or a popular tourist attraction may provide good locations for "Take One" distribution boxes.

summary

Careful planning, imaginative writing, well-composed crisp photographs, artistic layout and high-quality printing are necessary to make an effective advertising brochure. With a sense of what people want in recreation and the determination and talent to carry the project through, you can create a desirable image of your outdoor recreation area which will compel the reader to spend his next vacation with you.

Personal assistance in planning your brochure is available from the Division of Tourism, Indiana State House, Indianapolis 46204.
Forest Recreation Management Guides offer information from research and development work in all phases of outdoor recreation. Guides are prepared for commercial outdoor recreation area operators, school nature center supervisors, officers of clubs with recreation land and public servants. Suggestions of topics which you would like to have covered can be sent to the Extension Forester, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana 47907.

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The tepee-shaped symbol on the cover represents outdoor recreation. It is a portion of the international campground symbol, used as the standard identification of recreation areas in many foreign countries and, increasingly in the U.S.A. The symbol is used on official European road signs to guide visitors to public and commercial campgrounds.