

## Ten tips for successful promotional literature

Your promotional materials need to grab people's attention and maintain their interest if you want to achieve anything. Whether it's an annual report, a funding appeal or a rallying campaign flyer, the following tips can help you improve your effectiveness:

1. **Have a single objective for every piece you write**  
If you have more than one objective, you risk alienating and losing some of your readers. Just like you, everyone has too much to read in too little time. Don't give them an excuse to switch off.
2. **Write simple**  
It don't have to be grammatically perfect. This is not literary stuff. It's a substitute for the visit you wish you could make to each reader. Think what you would tell someone about your work in a pub or coffee shop. Send that.
3. **Use short forms**  
Numbers, bullet points, lists all cut down the number of words. You are always up against the clock. Edit the piece down to the essentials only. People will get bored reading line after line of information. Space out your text. Use short paragraphs and bold headings to make it easier to read
4. **Use pictures**  
Eyes, faces, and action work best. Bear in mind who is reading. People react best to images that are close to their image of themselves.
5. **Use testimonials**  
Don't just tell people how great you are, let others do it instead. Include testimonials and positive quotes from customers, partners and service users. Keep a record of positive feedback. Include names and organisations for credibility. Happy customers might offer extra details or even let you tweak their quote.

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## What the experts say

*Remember that the purpose of writing is to express, not to impress. Don't get carried away showing off your impressive vocabulary and your knowledge of Latin words and phrases. You'll come across as boastful and alienate your reader.*

[DIY Guide to Powerful Publicity \(2006\) p65](#)

6. **Write to somebody, not everybody**

Most charities have a cupboard full of their general information leaflet. It is supposed to tell everyone everything they need to know, but is rarely read. Keep your materials focused on one service or objective. This way you write to a set of people with the same basic needs or interests.

7. **Keep the tone positive**

Don't always react to life's negatives. People want to be associated with making a positive change. That way you'll get them onboard for the long term.

8. **Make a call to action**

Tell the reader what you want them to do. Should they buy your product? Donate money? Sign a petition? Provide a form to fill in. Offer a short link to your website. Give them a number to call. Make it as easy as possible for people to get involved. Show the reader how they can take action right now.

9. **Evaluate and test**

Measure everything:

- Response rates
- Comments
- Average gift sizes etc. etc.

Most people change their approach because they get bored with it. You should only change things when readers tell you they are bored with your approach!

10. **Give the reader what they want**

How much do you read of the stuff others send you? Not to nick ideas and approaches, but because it grabs your interest, and keeps you reading. Probably very little. That's what you have to remember when you write.

Give the reader what they want to read. Not what they ought to read. Let them do this in as short a time as you can. All promotional writers live on time borrowed from their readers. Borrow as little as you can from as many as you are able. Then you can enjoy the response.

*Marketing techniques can help charities promote their work, raise money, develop services that people need and want, and run successful campaigns on important issues. Put like that, can you afford not to take marketing seriously?*

[The New DIY Guide to Marketing \(2001\) p7](#)

*Do not tell the whole story on your e-newsletter, but just enough to make your reader interested and curious. Use wording and phraseology with enough impact to catch their eye.*

[Get it Read, Not Deleted \(Course\)](#)

*take care not to assume too much knowledge, but at the same time not to patronise. If in doubt, invite someone independent to review your material and let you know if it could be made clearer or more appropriate*

[Promoting your Cause \(2002\) p25](#)

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