



Ed Henninger

design tips

Stating the Obvious? OK

By Ed Henninger

Recently, a subscriber mentioned that she thought one of my columns “...stated the obvious but it’s something that needs to be said over and over until we finally get it.”

I’m OK with stating the obvious because I agree with her on having to make the point over and over.

And so, to state the obvious (in no particular order):

- Headlines, except in special packages, should go above stories.
- We print text in black ink on white (OK, off-white) paper.
- Reverses are hard to read.
- Small type is hard to read.
- Sans serif type is easier to read in smaller sizes.
- Text type works for text, display type works for headlines.
- Overlines make readers go “back-upwards” from the headline.
- Color photos have more impact than black and white photos.
- Larger photos have more impact than smaller photos.
- Running a bad photo larger does not make it better.
- Readers do not like surprises.
- Readers believe it’s their newspaper, not yours.
- Listening to readers helps improve your newspaper.
- Think like readers.
- It takes more time to edit a story than to direct a reporter.
- If you don’t direct reporters, they will control your newspaper.
- Black and white are colors, too.
- Colorizing elements does not necessarily improve their look.
- Tint blocks make text more difficult to read.
- Page labels help readers – and editors.
- Being a good reporter does not make you a good editor.
- Being a good editor does not make you a good designer.
- Being a good designer does not make you a good editor.
- Ad sales people are one of your top sources for news.
- Design consistency is a good thing.
- Organization of content is a good thing.
- Creation of a style guide is a good thing.
- Place the lead visual first, then design the rest of the page.
- Plan ahead ... to control your future.
- Look back ... to learn lessons from what you’ve done.



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- Make design, not excuses.
- Advertising is a good thing.
- Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy.
- Choose a font because it's readable, not because it's different.
- If everything is different, nothing is.
- Have a design reason for what you're doing on the page.
- Great design is the art of taking things away.
- Less is more.
- God is in the details.
- Reporting is work.
- Editing is work.
- Design, too, is work.

If any of these isn't obvious to you, I suggest you rethink your approach to design.

Perhaps you have some ideas to add to this list. If so, e-mail me and I'll state the obvious – once again – but this time with your thoughts.

FREE DESIGN EVALUATION: Ed Henninger offers design evaluations — at no charge and with no obligation — to readers of this column. For more information, check the **FREEBIE** page on his Web site: www.henningerconsulting.com.

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