

E-BROCHURES— SIMPLE TO SOPHISTICATED OPTIONS FOR EVERY BUDGET



By Debra Kristopson



The old adage a picture is worth a thousand words has never been truer. We live in a society that has one of the highest literacy levels but we hate to read. We want our information quickly, succinctly and with high visual impact.

For example, if I had not used a photo of an attractive man against a stunning red background would you have even read this far? Maybe, maybe not.

E-brochures work on the same principal. They are designed to catch your visually demanding customer getting them to voluntarily spend three to five minutes and hopefully persuade him or her to get to know you better.

What Are They?

E-brochures take on many forms. Some people refer to having your current literature available online, others limit the scope of the conversation to Web-specific presentations. In this article the definition includes any method of providing information to your client. In essence, your Web site is your first e-brochure. Using this broader definition allows inclusion of traditionally printed brochure PDFs, graphical HTML e-mail messages, Web pages and multimedia Web applications.

E-brochures are a powerful, timesaving tool for your reservationists as well as your sales force. Rather than have your reservations department drop a brochure in the mail for a potential guest, instead they can e-mail either the brochure or a link to a Web page which houses the brochure. The information is conveyed quicker and at a lower cost.

As a tool for your sales force the online brochure again allows for rapid, low cost delivery of marketing materials and if needed brochures can be created which are very client specific.

Beginning with the Bare Bones

If you don't have a Web site consider creating one with just your tri-fold glossy brochures (as PDFs) as a starting point. A one page Web site with multiple PDF links can provide a wealth of information at little cost.

If you have a Web site but don't already have your standard tri-fold glossy brochures available from your Web

site as PDFs consider adding them. There is very little cost or effort involved and it is an immediate way to convey readily available information.

Going the Next Step

One of the major advantages of e-brochures is that you avoid the cost of printing thousands of pieces of literature. This gives you the freedom of tailoring your message to a specific market. For instance, if wedding business is important for your facility, then create a wedding-themed message that you use with prospective brides.

Market-specific brochures are one of the main advantages of e-brochures. As you're developing your marketing plan, consider developing e-brochures for each of your major market segments.

HTML Messages vs. Web Pages

Graphical HTML messages will be larger than a traditional text e-mail but they have gained significant popularity over the last years as more surfers have migrated to higher speed Internet connectivity. Keep in mind that many ISPs continue to restrict the size of an e-mail message or block graphics-only e-mail messages. Therefore, if you're going to use graphical HTML messages it's important to embed text along with your graphics as well as provide a text link back to the same information housed on a traditional Web page within your existing Web site. While this approach will increase your cost, it will also increase your opportunity to reach as many people as possible with your message.

If cost is an issue, place your e-brochure on your Web site only and then use a standard text e-mail message to notify people that the information is available.

Multi-media—The Ultimate in Internet Marketing

Multi-media e-brochures are expensive to create but if your marketing budget can afford the hit, they can be highly effective. One caution is that in order for these multi-media Web pages to perform well both your hosting company and surfers need high-speed Internet access. Few things are as painful as waiting on a Web page to load. Even with a T-1 connection speed I have experienced delays and performance problems with some multi-media presentations because the hosting company was not prepared to service this type of Web page. There are also hosting companies who charge based upon the bandwidth of

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your Web site. These two issues make it important to check with your hosting company before you retain a designer to create the ultimate multi-media brochure.

To enjoy samples of multi-media e-brochures go to www.softvu.com. There are several located on the Web site.

The possibilities are endless. Sample applications include: package promotion, meeting space education, catering event stimulation or special event promotion. The benefit is that the e-brochure is quickly created, can be used for a limited period of time and the upfront investment is minimal.

Selecting a Vendor

When selecting a vendor start with your existing Web designer. Ask to see e-brochure samples and realize that costs rise dramatically if multi-media are desired. If your existing Web designer isn't the correct fit, the Internet has many companies listed which provide this type of service.

With the freedom to easily create these brochures comes the need to manage them. Make sure you archive your brochures and have a way to identify a brochure when someone refers to it. One of the easiest ways to manage this is identifying each brochure with a promotion code, file the brochure online with the promotion code as its name, place the promotion code somewhere in the brochure and, if needed, ask for the promotion code when you're discussing the brochure with a client.

As with any marketing effort, there needs to be tracking and accountability. If your brochures are housed on Web pages within your site this should be a simple task. Most hosting companies have available Web site monitoring reports which will provide statistics that include which Web pages were accessed, when and by whom.

E-brochures can be as simple as your current tri-fold glossy printed brochure available online but they can also be as sophisticated as a multi-media presentation. What solution you choose depends upon your business needs and your budget.

For any questions, please e-mail Debra Kristopson at dkristopson@ndic.com.