

How Effective Are Your Posters?

Some of the ways to ensure that your posters are getting seen, and conveying the right message.

Posters come in all sizes. From an A4 window sticker for a shop, to a full blown roadside hoarding. But they all share the same focus. To get your product, service, shop etc. noticed by people who pass it. In the case of a roadside poster or hoarding, the message has to be clear enough to be seen and understood by someone driving in a car from a distance of at least 150 feet - and even then, if the motorist is driving at 50 mph, they will go past a sign 250 feet away in about 3 seconds. Not long.

In the main, copy for these types of poster has to be blatantly obvious. The message has to be clear and easily absorbed. There are exceptions to this of course - if you are going to position your poster in a bus shelter for instance, the viewer is likely to have enough time to read message in some detail, and indeed will probably appreciate the diversion, (someone waiting for a bus on their own provides the advertiser with a great opportunity to get a more complex message across). But let's look at the challenges of attracting the attention of a driver.

The first thing to say is that there seem to be more and more cars on the roads almost anywhere in the world these days. The opportunities this provides for advertisers is tremendous. However, the use of shocking or titillating images to attract attention are strictly controlled by advertising authorities - it's not hard to understand why really. Should too many motorists be distracted by an inappropriate image, and traffic carnage ensue, I'm sure there would be many happy litigation lawyers, and many unhappy marketing managers and advertising agencies.

Having said this, images are extremely important in gaining attention. Having gained your audience's attention, the copy required to ensure the right message gets across is critical. And you can only do this with the minimum of words. Brevity is not just key, it is the single most important guideline for writing poster copy of this sort.

Writing a few words to convey a strong message is extraordinarily difficult. Winston Churchill knew this, and was known to have spent as much as ten times longer to write a short speech than a long one. Do you remember an advertising slogan "Beanz Meanz Heinz"? It was brilliant. Short, catchy, and alliterative, it conveyed exactly the right message across with only three words. Better than this, it was accompanied by a TV advertising campaign which featured the jingle " A million housewives every day, pick up a tin of beans and say, Beanz Meanz Heinz". It made an impact strong enough for the campaign to last 30 years, and was created by a gentleman called Mo Drake in 1967. When writing advertising copy for posters, I always

remember that campaign, and try to emulate it. I haven't succeeded yet, but at least I know what I'm aiming for.

Finally, if you're looking for a shop poster, ie. A4, A3 or A2 sizes - have you ever considered lenticular posters? These are posters on which the images and text change as your angle of viewing changes. A bit more expensive than a normal poster, but certainly eye catching, and as a window poster in a shop, extremely effective.