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Marketing Your Community Park and Recreation Resources Developing Brochures
Michigan State University
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Maureen H. McDonough and Gary Ackert, Department of Park and Recreation
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Marketing Your Community Park and Recreation Resources



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Developing Brochures

by Maureen H. McDonough and Gary Ackert
Department of Park and Recreation Resources

Whether you are the director of a nature center, a recreation programmer at a local community center or involved in community tourism development, you need to promote your organization to attract visitors, users and customers. Promotion can also help you build clientele and generate financial support.

While there are several tools to use in promotion, many groups choose to create a brochure. Some people think it is easy to "throw together" a simple brochure, but when they try to make one, they find out it is not. Others choose to turn the task over to an outside group of professionals to do it for them. The first approach often leads to disaster while the second may not produce the best brochure for you.

Good brochures can be created by anyone, if some basic principles are understood and followed. This bulletin will help you understand these principles and get you started on the road to designing a great brochure.

The Pros and Cons of Using Brochures

Before you get started, ask yourself a very important question. Is a brochure the best tool for you to use to accomplish your objectives?

Brochures have certain advantages:

1. They are a "mobile" form of communication. People take them home and show them to others. This mobility also allows them to have a long term effect unavailable through other media.
2. Brochures often get into the word-of-mouth information system and are passed to others from the person who originally picked them up.
3. Brochures have souvenir value. They communicate long after any personal contact is over.
4. Brochures allow you to contact more people for less money than one-to-one communication.
5. You can develop a series of brochures that allow you to target a wide range of audiences.

These advantages make brochures useful in certain situations. You might consider using a brochure when you want to create a general image of yourself or if you need to reach a widespread audience with a general message. Brochures are useful when you cannot have personal contact with people or as a follow-

up to personal contact. You might use one when you want people to have something to remember their visit or to pass on to friends and acquaintances. Finally, they can be useful when you need to pass on reference information that people will need such as a map or dates and times.

Brochures may not always be the best choice, however.

1. If not distributed carefully, they can wind up in racks with other similar brochures. The chances of someone picking up your brochure decreases in these situations.

2. Brochures often reach a very limited audience who actually read them even if they are widely distributed. People tend to use informal sources of information to make decisions and these informal sources are usually someone that is perceived as credible. Brochures alone, therefore, may not persuade someone to visit you.

3. Brochures are impersonal. They do not allow the reader to ask questions.

4. Brochures must be targeted at specific audiences to be effective. This takes good planning. The audience you are trying to reach may not use brochures to get information.

5. Brochures are overused and the public has become oblivious to them in many situations.

It is important to carefully consider all pros and cons before you invest in a brochure. Once you decide that brochures *are* the best tool for you, however, there are ways that you can make them great and overcome some of the handicaps associated with them. The rest of this bulletin is devoted to helping you do just that.

Step 1 — Consider the Audience

The first step in developing a good brochure is to think about who you are trying to reach. To communicate effectively with those people or your audience, you need to understand their needs and interests. These needs and interests are based on many factors including age, sex, place of residence, and level of familiarity with your service, facility or product.

But, in addition to knowing demographic characteristics of people such as you might find in the census, it is important to understand what those characteristics mean in terms of people's interests and what they need to know. For example, if you are trying to reach urban families, it is not enough to know how many urban families there are and where they live. You must also know what urban families like to do, what appeals to them, and what they find entertaining and humorous.

Another important piece of information you need to know is how your audience gets their information. Different audiences get information from different

sources. Not only will this be important to you in determining whether to use a brochure, but it will be critical in determining where and how you will distribute your brochure. If urban families do not get information from information centers, then you would not want to distribute your brochure there to reach this audience.

Step 2 — Setting Your Purposes and Objectives

Now that you have decided who your audience is and the best way to reach them, it is time to set purposes and objectives for your brochure. To create an effective brochure, the purposes and objectives for the brochure must be clear and concise. The purposes and objectives become both guidelines for developing the brochure and the measuring stick by which you see if the brochure has done its job.

Objectives are what you want to accomplish with your brochure, so they need to be very specific. Objectives are statements of what you want to have happen once you have made and distributed this brochure (Fig. A). Clear, concise objectives will help you evaluate the effectiveness of your brochure.

Step 3 — Deciding on a Distribution System

Decide how to distribute your brochure *BEFORE* you start to design it. The requirements of your distribution system will often dictate the size and shape of the brochure. For example, a brochure for a travel information center rack must be a certain size. Once you determine where and how to distribute your brochure, be sure to determine if there are specific requirements for your outlets.

When deciding on how you want to distribute your brochure, it is important to know how and where your audience gets information. Traditionally, people have distributed their brochures in information centers and travel agencies. However, many people get their information from word-of-mouth or from more informal sources. Friends and gas station attendants are examples of these sources. Make use of these sources. Be creative in deciding where and how you want to distribute your brochures to take advantage of these sources.

For example, your organization has an event scheduled that you want to promote with a brochure. You can pass them out by hand in the various shopping malls and the business districts of your area. Contact local newspapers and arrange to have your brochure used as inserts. Send it home with visitors as a souvenir of their trip. Then they will show the brochure to friends and relatives, and extend your

Topics	Purposes	Objectives
Family group activities at a recreation site	To inform people of the family group activities available at your site.	Family group use of our site will increase by 10% over last year.
Maple syrup festival	To inform people of the process involved in making maple syrup.	Public turn out for this year's festival will be 5% higher than last year.
Community resources	To inform people of the services available in the community area.	Service usage will go up by 25%.

Figure A - Examples of Goals and Objectives

range of promotion. They will also have your brochure when they plan their next trip or vacation. In this way, brochures can be good for developing repeat clientele. These are only a few suggestions of ways to distribute your brochure. Use your imagination to devise additional methods.

Step 4 — Developing Your Theme

Writing a brochure is like telling a story. Just as a story has a theme that ties all its different parts together, so a brochure needs to have a theme that

ties all of its different parts together. The theme of your brochure is the same as the main point that you have decided to tell people. Another way to think about themes is to think about your product. What is it you are trying to sell via your brochure? Your product is your theme!

All text, photographs, or drawings should relate directly to your theme. Otherwise, you will be presenting more than one idea. This makes your brochure confusing and hard to follow.

Let's go back to the previous examples. Themes could be developed directly from purpose. (Fig. B).

Topic	Purposes	Theme
Family group activities	To inform people of the family group activities at your site.	"Recreation Family Style at.."
Maple Syrup	To inform people of the process involved in making maple syrup.	"Come taste and experience maple syrup made the old-fashioned way"
Community resources	To inform people of the services provided in the community.	"Leave the land of the lost - Discover Your Community"

Figure B - Examples of changing purposes into themes

Step 5 — Developing Your Message

Once you have decided on your theme, the next step is to develop the actual content of your brochure. Develop your message around your theme and get the point across in a clear and understandable way. This section deals with the principles that need to be followed to help you do this.

Principle 1 — Keep It Short

Remember that long-winded teacher you once had in school? That teacher would talk all period long when the main point of the lecture could be condensed into five minutes! That was boring! Well, your brochure could end up like that teacher unless you keep it short and to the point.

Many people try to jam as much information as possible into one brochure. It is a common belief that this tactic is cost-effective. It isn't if the brochure isn't read, however! The point of the brochure may be missed or the reader may become so bored that it is thrown away. Either way, the brochure is ineffective and money and time have been wasted putting it together.

There are three things that can be done to avoid this problem. Limit your information to that which is absolutely necessary to get your story across. Remember, the most important thing to get across is your theme. Decide on which points clearly communicate your theme and limit the information to these points only. For example, you decide to do a brochure on the winter birds found in your area. The theme is "What our wintertime visitors eat." Limit the brochure to the types of food eaten by winter birds that visit your area. References to any other birds or other kinds of food eaten by birds would be inappropriate for the brochure.

The second thing that you can do to help keep your brochure brief is to avoid filling it up completely with text or pictures. This is a common problem. Do not be afraid to leave blank areas, or white space. By leaving white space the brochure looks less crowded, is more attractive, and it is easier for the reader to focus on the material presented.

The third thing that you can do is use short, simple sentences. People will be able to better understand it and will be able to read it faster. After all, which of the following would you rather read?

People prefer to visually interpret sets of important, informative, and thought provoking ideas in diminutive blocs of unadorned, latitudinal rows of type-written terminology.

VS. People like to read messages that are short, simple, and to the point.

Principle 2 – KISS IT!

We do not mean that you should actually kiss your brochure. KISS means "Keep It Super Simple." That means that the brochure needs to be brief and also simple to read and easy to understand. For example, by using short, simple sentences you keep the brochure brief and simple to read.

Another problem is clutter. Clutter is defined as cramming so much unrelated material into your brochure that there are no empty spots left. Limiting your information and leaving white space reduces the problem of clutter.

One problem that is not solved by keeping it brief, however, is the problem of jargon. Many times, when people put together a brochure, they use a lot of terminology used by people in the same business, but which may be confusing to the public. Avoid using jargon AT ALL COSTS! If you cannot avoid it, be sure to explain what the terms mean.

Which of the following is easier to understand and read?

Use f8 at 1/30

or Set your camera's f-stop at f8 and its' shutter speed dial at 30.

Principle 3 – Legibility/Readability

Making your brochure readable is as important as making it brief and simple to understand. One very important consideration is spacing. Try to keep your margins and the spacing between your pictures and text as consistent as possible. People's attention will be drawn to the areas where there are inconsistencies and they may miss important information.

The lettering or type style you choose also influences the readability of your brochure. Use both lower and upper case type. People are used to reading a mixture of lower and upper case type in books and magazines. Avoid using flowery or ornamental styles of type. These can be very difficult to read. The style that is most often used and recommended is the Roman face style of type.

Type size is just as important as type style. Do not make it too small or too large because it will be harder to read. The sizes that are most often used are 10 point or 12 point type. Check with your local printer or typesetter for examples of different sizes. One final word on type: be consistent in the size and style you choose to use.

Be careful when choosing paper. Avoid glossy or shiny paper because they tend to reflect light which makes them hard to read. Bright colors also should be avoided. Colors such as bright red or bright yellow make it hard to concentrate on what you are reading.

Finally, carefully select ink colors. Certain ink colors are difficult to read, especially in combination with a clashing paper color. Try out any unusual com-

binations to test their legibility BEFORE you make final decisions.

Principle 4 – Unity

“United We Stand - Divided We Fall” is one of the most famous sayings of all time. It especially applies to brochures. Each brochure needs to have one unifying theme that is carried throughout the brochure.

All the different parts of your brochure need to be tied or united with your brochure theme. For example, your community is putting on a community pride week. The theme is “Central City Is Your Kind Of Town.” All information to be used in the brochure must deal with why “Central City Is Your Kind Of Town.” What is so special about Central City? What does it have to offer that other cities in the area do not? All information should be city oriented. The message is not oriented to an individual business or service unless it is an example of your theme.

Principle 5 – Flow

Have you ever been lost in an unfamiliar city or state? The same thing can happen to someone with a brochure that does not flow smoothly. Flow is the ease with which the information moves from point to point and section to section in an orderly and logical manner.

Brochure layout can influence the flow of the information. You need to be very careful about arranging the information to insure proper flow. One way to do this is to make sure that your information is arranged from left to right and from top to bottom, just like a book.

Principle 6 – Attention Getters

One of the most frustrating things in life is to try to talk to someone who is ignoring you. Getting a person’s attention and keeping it is the most important part of communication. This is especially true of a one-way form of communication like brochures. The reader cannot ask questions or interact with the brochure as they could with another person. Because of this limitation, it is extremely important that your brochure is able to get and hold someone’s attention. This is why your brochure needs to have some strong attention getters like humor, color, catchy phrases, and unique photos or drawings and questions.

The most important place for a strong attention getter is on the front cover. The front cover of your brochure serves three very important functions:

- 1) It is the initial point of attraction.
- 2) It identifies you to the reader.
- 3) It gives the theme of your brochure to the reader.

Since it is the initial point of attraction, your cover needs to be creative and attractive. If people do not like it, they are not going to pick it up and read it. Put your strongest attention getter on the front cover.

The cover should also identify who you are. A person should not have to read the entire brochure to find out who is producing it. Through your attention getter and your identification, your reader should have some idea of the services you provide.

Finally, your front cover needs to give the reader an idea of what the rest of your brochure is about. This will help your readers decide from the beginning if they want to read the rest of it.

For example, you may run a charter boat service. You decide on a theme of “We work hard so you don’t have to.” The front cover might look like this:

1) Attention getter - Working Hard For You. Working Hard in bold-faced print.	[WORKING]
	[HARD]
	[FOR YOU!]
2) A picture showing your people at work with customers.	[picture of service]
	[provided]
3) The name of your service.	[Joe’s Charter Boat]
	[Service]

You can also use attention getters throughout the brochure to keep the reader’s attention. There are many things that can be used to get attention. Which one you choose will depend on the topic of your brochure and on your personal preference. The most commonly used attention getters are catchy phrases, questions, and appealing pictures.

Catchy phrases and/or questions are good for raising people’s curiosity or for getting them to picture themselves participating in the activity. They need to be very positive, suggestive, and activity-oriented.

You want to use these kinds of phrases or questions to make people think “I want to try this” or “Let’s go there for our next trip or vacation.” These kinds of phrases or questions are used in commercials and ads all the time. An example would be something like this: Canoe the fast lane: Au Sable River! An example of a question might be: “Looking for a relaxing weekend get away? Lake Of The Four Hills, What relaxation is *really* all about!”

Whenever possible, make your phrases or questions personal. Use words such as "you" or "yours." Aim these phrases or questions at specific needs of your audience. This will help them see that you can help fill their need and give them added incentive to try your service. A good way to build action into your phrasing or questions is to use active words so that people can imagine what you are telling them about (energetic paddling, heart pounding experience, a tranquil afternoon).

An appealing picture can make your reader feel a part of the activity. These kinds of pictures need to show the activity close-up, with people taking part. Be careful not to use items in your pictures that could date them. Do not use things that will change with the styles of the day or that soon might be obsolete.

Step 6 - Format

Your brochure's shape, size, and general style, make up its format. It is the layout of your information. It influences the flow of your information. It will influence how brief, simple, and readable it will be. Basically, every step and principle that has been described so far either is influenced by, or has an influence on, your brochure's format. In short, format is your brochure.

There are five points to consider when deciding on your format: size, shape, paper color, paper type, and folding.

A brochure's *size* is influenced by the amount of information that needs to be communicated and its purpose. The effect of the amount of information is fairly obvious. The more you need to communicate, the larger your brochure will be. To keep your brochure as brief, as simple, and as readable as possible, it is absolutely necessary to keep the amount of information to a minimum. The size of your brochure then will be as small as possible. This is necessary because it is easier to use and read a brochure that is not so big that it takes two people to use it. The use of the brochure also has an affect on its size. If you are sending it home with visitors, then your brochure can be fairly large. If people are going to carry it with them, you may want it to be pocket-sized.

When considering the shape of your brochure, try to be as creative as possible within your limitations. If it has to fit into someone's pocket, there is not a lot you can do with it. If you do not have any limitations such as this, then be creative. Try to make it look like the topic of the brochure. For example, if you were doing a brochure on birds, you could shape your brochure like a bird house or a bag of bird seed.

Paper color and type are important. Pick colors that relate to your theme but avoid dark colors. Make sure the paper is heavy enough to stand up to the abuse it

will receive at its place of distribution. For example, if your brochure is outside, it will have to withstand the weather.

Finally, folding is an important consideration. Using too many folds can break up the flow of your information and make it very difficult for people to read it. The most common way to fold a brochure is to fold it into thirds, creating a six panel brochure. However, be creative in your folding. Try out different styles of folding and then pick the one you think is best. Look at other brochures for ideas or ask your printer for examples.

Publication Tips

Now you know what you want to say and what you want your brochure to look like. But you are not finished! You still need to get it printed. Here are a few ideas to help.

- 1) Set your cost and time limits.
- 2) Talk to several printers to get your best written price estimate.
- 3) Check on type setting and paper cost.
- 4) Keep in constant contact with your printer throughout the printing process to:
 - oversee the production of your layout.
 - make decisions covering the selection of the pictures and artwork to be used.
 - keep up with any necessary changes or revisions that need to be made.
 - organize and schedule printing time.

Remember, this is *YOUR* brochure! Investing time in the production process will assure that your brochure comes out as you want it.

Resources in the Community

Unless you have lots of experience producing brochures, you will probably need some help in developing your final product. Here is a list of resources that you can go to to get help:

- 1) A local graphic designer.
- 2) A local printer.
- 3) A local University or college.
- 4) Other organizations with brochures already in print.
- 5) A local library for books on how to make brochures.
- 6) Local high school graphics classes.
- 7) Newspapers.
- 8) Industries with graphic departments that may donate time and assistance.
- 9) Art stores.

Conclusion

If you have learned nothing else from this bulletin, remember this: your brochure represents *YOU!* Make it good and make it count! Remember a good brochure is:

- 1) Audience targeted.
- 2) Has clearly stated goals and objectives.
- 3) Distributed where your audience will get it.
- 4) Theme oriented.
- 5) Brief.
- 6) Simple.
- 7) Readable.
- 8) United in purpose and content.

9) Flows easily.

10) Has a well thought-out format.

Finally, if you do not oversee the production of your brochure, and it does not turn out like you wanted, you are responsible. Therefore, get involved with the production of your brochure from the word **GO**. Remember, your image is worth it! Good Luck!

Other Sources of Information

Levine, Mindy M., and Susan Frank, 1984. **In Print**. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.



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