

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

WEEK 8

Layout and Business Publications

Learning Outcomes



At end of this week lesson the students should be able to:

1. Show an understanding of basic layout design
2. Explore the principles and elements layout designs
3. Application of corporate identity design

Definition of a layout

According to Gold Rabbit Limited (2024), layout composition is the arrangement of visual elements on a page. There are numerous tools designers use to structure their composition, including the use of grids, emphasis and scale, balance, and hierarchy. A layout refers to the arrangement or organization of visual elements within a design or composition, whether it's for print, digital media, or physical spaces. It involves determining the placement, sizing, spacing, and relationship between various components to achieve a harmonious and effective presentation. Layouts play a crucial role in guiding the viewer's attention, conveying information, and creating visual hierarchy. They can range from simple and minimalist to complex and dynamic, depending on the specific requirements and objectives of the design project. In graphic design, editorial design, web design, and other creative disciplines, thoughtful layout design is essential for creating visually appealing and functional compositions that effectively communicate messages and engage the audience.

Layout in art and design

According to Gold Rabbit Limited (2024), layouts play a vital role in structuring your design and determining how effectively you communicate visually. Employed to help structure a design and guide the viewer to the key information, layout design includes the arrangement of images, text, and spaces, and how they relate to each other. Effective layout design influences how a viewer interprets information and how clearly and easily they absorb a message. In art and design, a layout refers to the arrangement of visual elements within a composition to achieve a desired aesthetic or communicative effect. It involves the strategic placement of elements such as images, text, shapes, colors, and negative space to create a cohesive and balanced design. Layouts serve as the

foundation for various creative projects, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, graphic design, web design, and architectural design.

In art, layout considerations often revolve around principles of composition, such as balance, symmetry, rhythm, contrast, and unity. Artists carefully arrange elements within their artwork to create visually pleasing or thought-provoking compositions that convey their intended message or evoke specific emotions.

In design, layouts are instrumental in communicating information, guiding user interactions, and enhancing visual appeal. Designers employ layout principles to organize content effectively, establish visual hierarchy, and improve usability across a wide range of mediums, including print media, digital interfaces, environmental graphics, and product packaging.

Why is Layout Design so important?

According to Luscombe (2023), the significance of layout design is rooted in its capacity to impact how information is perceived, making it more accessible, engaging, and memorable for the viewer.

Decoding the Significance

The significance of layout design in the realm of visual communication cannot be overstated:

1. **Information Hierarchy:** Layout design establishes an information hierarchy, guiding the viewer's eye to key content and ensuring the most critical information is readily accessible.
2. **Visual Impact:** It determines the visual impact of a design, influencing the overall aesthetic and first impressions.
3. **Storytelling:** Layout design contributes to storytelling by arranging elements in a sequence that conveys a narrative or message.
4. **User Experience:** In digital design, layout affects the user experience by providing intuitive navigation and enhancing the usability of a website or application.
5. **Brand Identity:** Consistent layout design reinforces brand identity by creating a cohesive visual language for a company's materials.

Applications of Layout Design

Layout design finds applications across various design fields, including:

1. **Editorial Design:** Editorial designers use layout design to structure content in newspapers, magazines, and books, ensuring readability and visual appeal.
2. **Web Design:** Web designers apply layout design principles to create user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing websites, optimizing content organization and user interactions.

3. **Advertising:** Layout design plays a vital role in creating visually compelling and memorable advertisements that resonate with the target audience.
4. **Packaging Design:** Designers utilize layout design to communicate product information, branding, and benefits effectively.
5. **Event Marketing:** Event marketers employ layout design in promotional materials, such as flyers and posters, to convey event details and capture attention

Creating Effective Layout Designs

To create effective layout designs, consider these strategies:

1. **Understanding the Audience:** Know your target audience and tailor the layout to their preferences and needs.
2. **Information Hierarchy:** Establish a clear information hierarchy with prominent placement for crucial content.
3. **Grid Systems:** Employ grid systems for alignment and consistency, which help create a structured and visually pleasing layout.
4. **Whitespace:** Use whitespace strategically to create balance and prevent visual clutter.
5. **Typography:** Pay attention to typography choices and use fonts that enhance readability and aesthetics (Luscombe, 2023).

Celebrating the Impact of Layout Design

The impact of layout design in the realm of visual communication is profound:

1. **Effective Information Delivery:** Layout design ensures that information is delivered in a structured and comprehensible manner, making it accessible to the viewer.
2. **Visual Appeal:** It influences the visual appeal of designs, creating a memorable and engaging experience for the audience.
3. **Storytelling:** Layout design is instrumental in conveying narratives, whether in editorial content, product presentations, or brand stories.
4. **User Experience:** In the digital world, it enhances the user experience by providing clarity and ease of navigation.
5. **Brand Consistency:** Consistent layout design reinforces brand identity, ensuring that materials maintain a cohesive and recognizable visual language (Luscombe, 2023).

Layout Design Across Diverse Industries

Layout design is pervasive in various industries:

1. **Education:** Educational materials, from textbooks to online courses, rely on layout design to present information effectively.
2. **Healthcare:** Layout design is essential for patient information materials, ensuring clarity and comprehension.
3. **Entertainment:** The entertainment industry utilizes layout design in promotional materials, event programs, and visual storytelling.
4. **Retail:** In the retail sector, layout design influences the presentation of products in physical stores and online marketplaces.
5. **Technology:** Technology companies employ layout design for user interfaces, creating user-friendly and visually appealing applications and websites (Luscombe, 2023).

The Future of Layout Design

As design and technology continue to evolve, the future of layout design holds exciting possibilities:

1. **Responsive Design:** Layout design will continue to adapt to various devices and screen sizes, ensuring an optimal user experience.
2. **User-Centric Design:** The emphasis on user-centric design will lead to highly intuitive layouts prioritizing user needs.
3. **Sustainability:** Sustainable design practices may influence layout design, promoting eco-friendly and resource-efficient layouts (Luscombe, 2023).

Principles & Elements of Layout Design

Design is about creating harmony among the elements and having them come together in a final product that is unequivocally outstanding.

Purpose and Audience

Approach page layout the same way that you do writing: determine your audience, define your purpose, and communicate your message. When you are writing, present information in a logical order, so do the same when you lay out the page.

Organizing Information

Photographs, pull-quotes, decks, and headlines help you tell the story. Other elements such as subheads, boxes, rules, and white space help you organize the story.

For example, if you laid out three short articles on the same page, you would use rules, white space, and headlines to show readers that the articles were separate, not related.

A good layout improves readability by arranging text and graphics in a logical order.

Every time you place a textual or graphic element on the page, you are making a rhetorical decision, and where you place that element depends on its relationship to the other pieces.

When you're writing, you organize sentences and paragraphs in a logical sequence so that readers will understand your message. You should approach layout the same way.

Just remember that page design is a flexible process. There are no hard and fast rules, just guidelines. Keep good communication with readers as your top priority, and you will make the right design choices.

Getting Their Attention

In today's media-intensive culture, people often decide that reading an ad, brochure, or newsletter is not worth their time, so even if your publication is important, it may end up in the wastebasket. An unusual design, however, can spark their interest. Even the most sophisticated readers get bored with staid designs.

According to White (1982), readers often look through magazines from back to front (and newsletters are specialized magazines), so you should use a hook to capture people's attention.

A hook is anything that contrasts against the uniformity of the text such as a photo, graphic, masthead, or a pull-quote hanging in a column of white space. Everything from the text to the paper it's printed on affects whether or not your publication is read with interest, so be creative.

We just have one word of caution. Readability: An effective page layout improves reader comprehension, so you have to balance the imaginative elements with the functional elements. In other words, a splashy graphic laid out at an unexpected angle is eye-catching, but three columns of centered text is a nuisance.

Good page design balances function with form, consistency with contrast, and places successful communication with the reader above all other considerations. Think of layout as a jigsaw puzzle. Every piece fits together to make the whole.

Balance

Balance is another word for concerns about symmetry and asymmetry. Symmetry provides stability and rest for the eye, while asymmetry creates tension and visual interest. Finding ways to create balance often depends on the piece.

In a newsletter, for instance, a horizontal rule running along the top of the page contrasts against the vertical columns of text, adding an element of asymmetry to the page.

Alignment

Unify the appearance of your publication by aligning the elements on individual pages and creating strong page-to-page alignments, as well.

In newsletters, for example, align the tops of photographs with the x-height (the top of the small case letters in a line of text) in the adjacent column, and give headlines the same alignment from page to page.

Alignment ties all the elements on a page together and unifies the publication as a whole.

Repetition

Repetition of key elements (logo, box, rules, graphics etc.) from page to page unifies the appearance of your publication.

In a newsletter, for example, you might place the company logo at the bottom of every page, or in a brochure you might repeat a small graphic element in a variety of places. However, repetition without variety becomes monotonous, so use a photo or graphic to add interest to a page. The repetitive elements create visual coherence, while the occasional incongruous element creates contrast, the visual spice.

Emphasis

Use a hook to get the reader's attention. Anything from an interesting photo or graphic to a pull-quote isolated in a column of white space can catch the reader's eye.

When we communicate orally, we emphasize ideas by changing our tone of voice. In layout, a hook serves the same purpose. It tells the reader that something is important. Emphasis can be created in different ways. Text in a large point size, for example, shouts at the reader: "I'm important! Read me now."

You're only limited by your imagination.

Proximity

Place related information in proximity, and separate unrelated information with white space, rules, and borders.

By first grouping related information and then separating the groups with white space, rules, or borders, you organize information and make the reader's job easier.

Elements of Layout

The Style Sheet

The style sheet is one of the best features of electronic publishing. Attributes such as typeface, type size, and leading can be predefined, making the job of formatting your project quick and easy. Once styles are defined, you can instantly apply different attributes to a single word, several paragraphs, or an entire publication. Defining your style sheet in advance saves you time and effort later.

The style sheet has many advantages. If, for example, the body text of your newsletter is laid out in Helvetica, you can change it to Times Roman with a single mouse click. If you hadn't originally tagged the body text as Helvetica, you would have to change each text block individually.

However, before you begin defining styles for your publication, you should do the following:

- Specify the page dimensions.
- Assign the number of pages.
- Set the width of the margins.

In PageMaker or Adobe InDesign this is done through the Document Set-up window. First, open the File pull-down menu and select New, which will open Document Set-up. Set your document parameters. Having completed this task, you're ready to define styles for your publication.

Grids: Organizing Your Layout

Non printing vertical and horizontal blue lines form a grid on the electronic page, creating an underlying structure for your layout. PageMaker's or InDesign's Master Page feature, found on the Window pull-down menu, makes the creation of a grid incredibly easy.

Margins and columns form the base of the grid, but you can intersect an unlimited number of vertical and horizontal blue lines across the columns to align headings, text, rules, and graphics with precision. To drag and drop a blue line, just click on the ruler surrounding the page.

Business publications

What is corporate identity design?

According to Verma (2016-2022), The corporate design showcases the visual identity of the corporate. It includes all the visual assets of the company like name, logo, brand colors, brand visuals, tagline, etc. that help differentiate the company from others visually. Corporate identity design, often referred to simply as corporate branding, encompasses the visual elements and design strategies used to establish and communicate the identity of a company or organization. It goes beyond just a logo and extends to various visual elements that represent the company's values, mission, and personality consistently across all communication channels. The following is a breakdown of what corporate identity design typically involves:

1. **Logo Design:** The logo is a central element of corporate identity design. It serves as the visual representation of the company and is often the first point of contact for customers. A well-designed logo should be memorable, versatile, and reflective of the company's brand identity.
2. **Color Palette:** Corporate identity design establishes a consistent color palette that reflects the company's brand personality and values. Colors evoke emotions and associations, so choosing the right colors is essential for conveying the desired message and creating a cohesive visual identity.
3. **Typography:** Typography plays a crucial role in corporate identity design by defining the fonts and typefaces used in various communication materials. Consistent typography helps reinforce brand recognition and maintain a cohesive brand image across different platforms and media.
4. **Visual Elements:** Beyond the logo, corporate identity design may include other visual elements such as icons, patterns, illustrations, or photography styles that further enhance the brand's visual identity and contribute to a unified brand experience.
5. **Brand Guidelines:** Brand guidelines document the rules and specifications for using the company's visual identity elements consistently. They outline guidelines for logo usage, color usage, typography, imagery, and other brand elements to ensure brand consistency across all communication channels and touchpoints.

6. **Stationery Design:** Corporate identity design often extends to stationery items such as business cards, letterheads, envelopes, and presentation templates. Consistent branding across these materials helps reinforce the company's professionalism and credibility.
7. **Marketing Collateral:** Marketing collateral such as brochures, flyers, posters, and banners should also adhere to the company's corporate identity guidelines. Consistent branding across marketing materials helps reinforce brand recognition and build brand loyalty among customers.
8. **Digital Presence:** Corporate identity design extends to the company's digital presence, including website design, social media profiles, email templates, and digital advertisements. Consistent branding across digital platforms helps create a cohesive brand experience for online audiences.

Application of corporate identity design

The application of corporate identity design is pervasive across various aspects of a company's operations and interactions with its stakeholders. Here's an analysis of how corporate identity design is applied in different areas:

1. **Brand Recognition and Differentiation:** Corporate identity design helps companies stand out in crowded markets by creating distinctive visual elements such as logos, colors, and typography. Consistent application of these elements across all communication channels, including marketing materials, products, and digital platforms, enhances brand recognition and differentiation.
2. **Brand Consistency:** Consistency is key in corporate identity design. By establishing clear brand guidelines and ensuring adherence to them across all touchpoints, companies maintain a cohesive brand image and reinforce brand recognition. Consistent application of visual elements, messaging, and tone of voice builds trust and credibility with customers and stakeholders.
3. **Customer Experience:** Corporate identity design plays a crucial role in shaping the overall customer experience. From the moment customers encounter the company's logo and branding to their interactions with products, packaging, and customer service, the application of corporate identity design influences how customers perceive and engage with the brand.

4. **Employee Engagement and Pride:** Corporate identity design extends to internal stakeholders, including employees. When employees feel aligned with the company's brand identity and values, they become brand ambassadors who embody the brand's personality and culture. Consistent application of corporate identity design in internal communications, employee uniforms, and office decor fosters a sense of pride and belonging among employees.
5. **Marketing and Communication:** Corporate identity design is central to marketing and communication efforts. It guides the creation of marketing collateral, advertising campaigns, social media content, and other communication materials. Consistent branding ensures that all marketing efforts are aligned with the company's brand identity and messaging, maximizing their impact and effectiveness.
6. **Product and Packaging Design:** Corporate identity design influences product design and packaging to ensure that they reflect the brand's identity and values. From product logos and labels to packaging materials and colors, the application of corporate identity design enhances product visibility, recognition, and appeal to customers.
7. **Digital Presence and User Experience:** In today's digital age, corporate identity design extends to the company's online presence, including website design, mobile apps, social media profiles, and email communications. Consistent branding across digital platforms creates a seamless user experience and reinforces brand recognition and trust among online audiences.
8. **Corporate Events and Sponsorships:** Corporate identity design is applied to corporate events, conferences, trade shows, and sponsorships to ensure that they align with the company's brand image and values. Consistent branding at such events reinforces brand visibility and association with positive experiences and engagements.

Further Reading



What is Corporate Identity?

Corporate identity is how a company presents itself to the public (including both internal and external audiences). It is how the company looks, behaves, and communicates.

It helps the company to get recognized and differentiated in the market space and among its internal stakeholders (including all the employees, investors, and partners of the company) and external stakeholders (including the customers, consumers, media, etc.)

Elements of Corporate Identity

There are 3 major elements of corporate identity –

- Corporate communication,
- Corporate design, and
- Corporate behaviour.

Corporate Communications

Corporate communications is how the company interacts and passes on all the information to the internal and external audiences to develop a favourable point of view and a uniform image of the company on all channels.

In simple terms – it is what the corporate communicates.

It includes:

- **Internal communication:** It includes policies & procedures, team communications, internal newsletters, and everything that relates to communication with the internal audience.
- **Paid Communication:** It consists of the communication messages released through paid media like advertisements, sponsorships, events, etc.
- **Media relations:** All earned-media communication, like public relations, news, etc. come under media relations.
- **Investor relations:** It includes all messages communicated to the investors in the company.

Corporate design

The corporate design showcases the visual identity of the corporate. It includes all the visual assets of the company like name, logo, brand colours, brand visuals, tagline, etc. that help differentiate the company from others visually.

Major components of the corporate design are:

- **Logos:** It is the original mark that represents the company or its products. It acts as an instant recognition for a company.
- **Colours:** Brand colours include a palette of official colours that represent the brand. Generally, only these colours are used in brand assets.
- **Fonts:** Usually, a corporate has a list of approved typography that are used in its communication messages.
- **Website:** A website is how the corporate represents itself in the digital world. It's just like a brand outlet but in the digital world.
- **Internal Design:** The interior of the office is also a part of corporate identity. It reveals a lot about the company, like the way the organization works, its work-culture, etc.

Corporate Behavior

In the truest sense, corporate behaviour is the behaviour of the company. It includes the ethical code of conduct and corporate social responsibility, which brings out the core values and the company's philosophy.

Technically, corporate behaviour is how the company acts as a single body in different situations triggered by political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors.

Most of the times, corporate behaviour is triggered by social media responsibility. For example, Starbucks aims to hire 10000 refugees globally by 2022 to fulfil its social responsibility.

Corporate Identity vs Brand Identity

Unlike popular belief, corporate identity and brand identity are not the same.

- **Brand Identity** speaks of a specific product's quality, ethics, and focus. It gives rise to a brand image off a specific offering.
- **Corporate Identity** speaks of the company's ethics, values, and focus, which created the product. It gives rise to a corporate image of the parent company.

For example- Unilever has many brands under it, including Dove. Dove's identity is the brand identity, and Unilever's is the corporate identity.

Importance of Corporate Identity

A strong identity is important to shape people's thoughts and opinions positively about the company.

Here are some points to highlight the importance of corporate identity:

- **Helps to Differentiate:** A well planned corporate strategy helps the business to differentiate itself in the market it is in.
- **Creates Awareness:** A corporate identity communicates the company's promise to both internal and external audiences.
- **Elevates Market Presence:** A strong corporate identity showcases the company to be more trustable, which boosts its market presence.
- **Builds Reputation:** A consistent corporate identity, along with good service increases the trust of the customers in the company, building its reputation over time.
- **Builds Customer Loyalty:** Maintaining a consistent corporate identity following the company's values, principals, and objectives helps the customers to connect and develop loyalty towards the business.

Source: Verma, Parth (August 2, 2023), What Is Corporate Identity? – Importance, Elements, & Examples, <https://www.feedough.com/what-is-corporate-identity/> Feedough

Summary



A layout refers to the arrangement or organization of visual elements within a design or composition, whether it's for print, digital media, or physical spaces. It involves determining the placement, sizing, spacing, and relationship between various components to achieve a harmonious and effective presentation. By applying the anatomy

of typography in your design process, you can create typographic compositions that are not only visually appealing but also highly readable, engaging, and effective in communicating your message to your audience.

In design, layouts are instrumental in communicating information, guiding user interactions, and enhancing visual appeal. Designers employ layout principles to organize content effectively, establish visual hierarchy, and improve usability across a wide range of mediums, including print media, digital interfaces, environmental graphics, and product packaging. In both art and design, the layout serves as a critical aspect of the creative process, influencing how viewers perceive and engage with the final work.

Corporate identity design is about creating a visual identity that effectively communicates the company's values, personality, and offerings to its target audience. It helps establish brand recognition, build trust and credibility, and differentiate the company from competitors in the marketplace.

The application of corporate identity design is multifaceted and extends across various aspects of a company's operations, marketing efforts, customer interactions, and internal culture. Consistent application of visual elements, messaging, and values reinforces brand recognition, differentiation, and trust, ultimately contributing to the overall success and reputation of the company.

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