

"Nobody does a better job of showing how to use design to build relationships than Roger C. Parker!"

Jay Conrad Levinson
author, *Guerrilla Marketing*

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Roger C. Parker's

Guerrilla Marketing & Design

Put subheads to work!

Use subheads to convert "skimmers" into readers

First the bad news: you're likely to be far more interested in the contents of your carefully written brochure, newsletter or proposal than your readers.

Most of your readers are likely to give your publication just a quick glance, *quickly skimming each page* to see if there's anything worth reading. If nothing catches their eyes, your message is likely to be put aside "until later"—which usually means "never."

Why subheads?

Now the good news: subheads make it easy to convert skimmers into readers. Subheads are "mini-headlines" inserted within newsletter articles or sections of your report. Subheads make your newsletters and reports easier to read by breaking them into bite-sized chunks.

Subheads "advertise" the contents of the paragraphs that follow. They attract the skimmer's interest and tease him into reading on. Each subhead provides an entry point into your message, giving

skimmers reasons to begin reading—even if they begin reading in the middle of your publication.

Subheads also add visual interest to your message by adding white space and typographic interest.

Formatting subheads

To succeed, subheads must be easy to locate and easy to read. Here are some of the best ways to add impact to your subheads:

Typographic contrast. Subheads must appear noticeably different from adjacent text. One easy technique is to combine subheads set in a bold sans serif typeface (like Arial, Helvetica or Frutiger) with body copy set in a serif typeface (like Garamond, Minion or Times Roman).

White space. Space above subheads makes them easy to locate. There should be more space above a subhead (i.e., between a subhead and the preceding paragraph) than between the subhead and the text it introduces. White space above a subhead clearly indicates a break with the preceding topic and the introduction of a new idea.

Insert a subhead every time you introduce a new idea or topic.

Short. Subheads should be short and to the point. Avoid full (i.e., subject-verb-noun) sentences. Instead, select a few carefully chosen keywords that summarize the content that follows.

Subhead alignment

Subhead alignment depends on text alignment. Choose *flush-left subhead alignment* if you are using flush-left/ragged-right text. (You're reading flush-left/ragged-right text.)

Center subheads when they appear in columns of justified text. Justified text is characterized by lines of equal length.

How many?

Insert a subhead every time you introduce a new idea or topic. In general, newsletters look best when articles are broken up with subheads every three or four paragraphs.

Common mistakes

The following are some frequently encountered problems.

Underlining. Never underline subheads. Underlining makes words harder to read instead of easier to read. Underlining obscures the word shapes that readers depend on for easy reading.

Ambiguous relations. Avoid subheads that "float" between the previous para-

graph and the text they introduce.

Subheads should appear closely related to the paragraphs they introduce.

Colored text. Colored type often looks better on screen than it does when printed. Subheads printed in color are often harder to read than the same subheads printed in black. *The smaller the type, the harder it is to read colored text!*

Excessive capitalization. Never set subheads entirely in uppercase, or capitalized, text. Subheads set entirely in uppercase text are significantly harder to read than subheads set in both uppercase and lowercase type.

Restrict capitals to the first letter of the first word of the subhead and proper nouns.

To learn more...

To learn more about effective publication design, visit my web site, www.GMarketingDesign.com or call 603-742-9673.

Find out about my new teleclass: "How to Promote Your Business with a One-Page Newsletter."

Jay Conrad Levinson, author of the GUERRILLA MARKETING series, the world's best-selling marketing book series calls the one-page newsletter "the quintessential Guerrilla Marketing tool."



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