10 PRINCIPLES OF
EFFECTIVE SIGNAGE

Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances.

A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing circumstances.

Our goal with this communication is to organize the truth associated with effective signage into simple statements of principle that you can use to maake better signage decisions for your business.

The right sign is how great businesses sell more product by getting those passing by to notice their existence. Effective signs make a powerful statement that creates interest in learning more. None of this happens if the sign fails to grab the customer's eye.

Design is what powers signage that gets noticed and acted on. As a result, your sign design is one of the most important factors in an effective marketing campaign. A poorly designed sign will portray your business as unprofessional resulting in customers avoiding your business no matter how nice your website is.

At Design Dynamics, we apply the science of design to the production of visually compelling signage that generates sales. Our belief is that the function of design is to capture the viewer's attention, identify the business, inform, and influence while making efficient use of materials. Design doesn't necessarily mean expensive. It comes down to putting common things together in an uncommon way.

YOUR SIGN IS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION WITH THE BUYING PUBLIC.
It projects your image. If it isn't leaving the lasting impression you want the public to have of you, than let us help. People will judge the inside of your business by how it looks on the outside.

1. GRAB ATTENTION
Your sign must make a potential customer want to stop and see what's inside the business. There needs to be something about the sign that reaches out and commands attention. Ideally, the first read should be a large pictorial graphic or your company logo. If text is your only option, make it dominating.

2. MAKE IT LEGIBLE
Remember that people of all ages are looking through a windshield, in traffic, day and night. They must be able to comprehend your sign quickly and easily if you are going to create an opportunity to serve them.

3. KEEP IT SIMPLE
Choose type with personality and readability. Crowding the sign with too many words or lines of text makes it impossible to read from a distance. Use as few words as possible to keep your signage legible.

4. AVOID CLUTTER
You avoid clutter by keeping 30% to 40% of the sign's face area left as white space. "White-space" is the surface area that is left uncovered by either text or graphics. The proper amount of white space is important for quick readability.

5. CONSIDER COLORS CAREFULLY
The design and the colors of your building should reinforce the design and colors of your sign. Too many colors take away from the quick readability of the sign. Make sure colors are contrasting. Yellow on white is not readable, whereas black on white is very readable.

6. SUITABILITY
Your sign must be attractive and appropriate for your type of business. It should also be noticeably better than your competitor's signage to avoid losing sales to those with a better sign.

7. MAKE IT MEMORABLE
Your sign should make your products, services, and location easy to remember. "Just look for big Al's sign near the intersection of MacArthur and Red Hill."

8. APPEAL TO IMPULSE BUYERS
Many decision makers mistakenly think of a sign as merely a device that identifies the business. What they fail to realize is that 55% of all retail sales are a result of impulse buys. People see, shop and buy. This makes it imperative that the sign quickly communicates what the business sells. If a sign is ineffective, it costs the business owner money everyday.

9. SAVE THE DETAILS FOR THE SALE
Don't attempt to sell them with too much information on the sign – save the details until they are in your business.

10. PLACE IT TO BE SEEN
An attractive, well-designed sign will only be effective if it is placed in a location that optimizes its visibility to passers-by. Make certain your sign can be viewed without obstruction from any source. Drive past your business from all directions to determine the most visible location for your sign.

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BECAUSE YOU HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY

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FONTS AND TYPOGRAPHY

- **Sans serif fonts are best for fast legibility**
- **Use proper kerning (space between letter pairs) and letterspacing (the spacing between the letterforms in a piece of text)**
- **Do not artificially expand or condense type to fit a space**. Use the expanded or condensed version of font from the selected font family.
- **Use no more than two fonts for your sign** Choosing 2 fonts that compliment each other can make your message stand out.

Ag **Ag**

SERIF   SANS SERIF

example of bad kerning

example of bad letterspacing

example of bad font condensing

example of bad font expansion

USE FONTS THAT ARE CLEARLY LEGIBLE WHEN VIEWED FROM A DISTANCE.

The following chart from the United States Sign Council (USSC) will help you to determine what size type is needed for your custom sign.

LETTER HEIGHT	MAXIMUM DISTANCE	BEST DISTANCE
3"	100'	30'
4"	150'	40'
6"	200'	60'
8"	350'	80'
9"	400'	90'
10"	450'	100'
12"	525'	120'
15"	630'	150'
18"	750'	180'
24"	1000'	240'
30"	1250'	300'
36"	1500'	360'
42"	1750'	420'

COLORS

- **Choose colors that have good contrast**
- **Colors with no contrast are difficult to read**
- **Avoid using complementary colors** Although they have contrast, their similar tonal values result in visual competition.
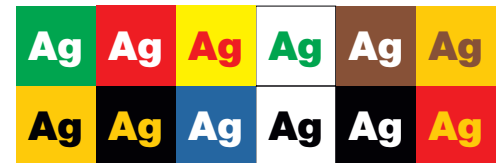
examples of good color contrast

complementary colors visually compete

examples of poor color contrast

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five most common mistakes made in business-sign design:

- ✕ Attempting to be cute, elegant or understated
- ✕ Attempting to blend into the surrounding environment
- ✕ Including too much information
- ✕ Placing the sign too high or in a poor location
- ✕ Under spending

summary

Your sign will do many things for your business, from creating the first impression to being your opening message to potential customers about your products and services.

Signs do this through a combination of size, text, color, construction, placement and more. Keep these 10 signage principles in mind to improve the likelihood of you having a sign that grows sales for your business.