

Business stationery

Your stationery is one of the most visible aspects of your business. You'll want it to project your image, but there are legal requirements, too.

Your brand is the heart of your business, so make sure everything – business cards, letterheaded paper, compliment slips, invoices and envelopes, as well as flyers and posters – projects your business image.

Think about:

- what sort of impression you want to create
- whether you want a logo designed
- which typefaces and colours you want to use.

If image is important, consider using a professional designer (see **page 176**). Similarly, cheap stationery may be fine for your purposes, but if you want to present a high-quality business image, you may need to choose heavier stock, high-quality stationery.

Tech tip

You can create your company stationery yourself in Microsoft Publisher. The professionally designed templates make it easy for you to fill in your own information and customise, so you're not starting from a blank piece of paper.

Working with your printer

Talk to your printer and you can cut down the costs of your business stationery.

- Confirm specifications and schedules accurately from the outset. Try to stick to standard paper sizes.
- Ask your artwork designer to communicate directly with the printer where possible to eliminate technical problems and amendment charges.
- Allow the printer to use their nearest recommended equivalent to the paper that you require. Most printers will have contract deals with paper merchants, which will save money.
- Be aware that, although pockets, flaps and special finishes add value to a printed job, they will normally require a specialist finishing operation and will inevitably add cost.
- Ensure that you have thoroughly read and signed the proofs to indicate your approval. Mistakes can be very costly.

By **Maurice Wheatcroft** of Hartington Fine Arts.

For 'Design jargon busted', see **page 177**.

What to include on your stationery

You'll want to include your company name, address, all telephone numbers, fax number, email and web address. You may want to include mobile phone numbers on business cards.

If you're a **sole trader** and choose something other than your own name for your business, you must include your own name and the business address on all letters, orders and receipts.

If you're a **limited company**, you must show the name of the company, the country

of registration, the company registration number, the address of the registered office and its place of business if different. There is no need to list the names of the company directors, but if you do, you must include all of them.

A **partnership** must state the address of the principal office on letters, orders, invoices and receipts, and also the names of all partners (or where a list of partners can be seen).

If you're **registered for VAT**, your invoices must state your VAT registration number.



Picture it

Can you really get away with your own digital camera and a helpful teenage son? Or do you need professional help to get your business image sharp?

Images matter. How many times have you scanned a company's marketing materials or website and formed a judgement of them from the images they've included? Do they look professional? Do they look friendly? What's their office like? Do they seem like the sort of people you could do business with? Photographs are a way you can immediately get potential customers interested in you and what you offer.

Now that everyone's mobile phone takes photographs, is that all you need? Hmm... judging by some of the materials we've seen, not necessarily. Booking a photographer for a day can be a wise investment if you plan in advance so that you get a variety of shots that can be used in different ways in the future.

- **Headshots** – head and shoulders shots of key personnel that you can use on websites and for press enquiries
- **Product shots** – for sales materials
- **Lifestyle shots** – for use in promotional materials or on your website. These images convey aspirations and the 'feel' you want to be associated with your product or service.

A professional photographer can also advise you on whether you need digital images, prints or transparencies, depending on how you want to use the photographs.

Plan carefully. Do you need to tidy your reception area or do you want the world to see that tired old spider plant? If you've got outdoor images in mind, you can't rely on the weather to be kind, so is there an alternative indoor backdrop?

Ask other companies for recommendations for photographers as well as looking in *Yellow Pages*. The internet also makes it easy to find and look at various photographers' portfolios to find one whose work you like.

New companies can also make use of 'stock' images – images held by photolibraries. Costs can be very affordable depending on which rights you buy – website use, print use...

Tip: Make sure the images you buy are royalty-free so you don't have to pay every time you use them, and model released – the person in the picture has given permission for it to be used.

See **page 86** for a list of photolibraries.

Write it

It's no good producing the loveliest-looking sales material if it's so full of jargon no-one has a clue what you're talking about.

"This congruency interfaces with market synergy to produce significant ROI..." What?

Other aspects of English that affect readability are: sentence length, word length and how the words are presented. The **Plain English Campaign** website has a series of free guides covering all aspects of writing and design and also offer a document testing and editing service: www.plainenglish.co.uk



The RNIB **See It Right** pack gives advice on producing readable copy for people with visual impairments. It gives advice for both printed materials and your website. The pack can be ordered through www.rnib.org.uk or call the RNIB on **020 7388 1266**.

There is more about website usability and accessibility on **page 151**.