



Information for Law Firms On Stationery



USING STATIONERY AND PRINTED MATERIALS TO PROMOTE YOUR FIRM

Your brochures, leaflets, and branded office stationery present the outward image of your firm. The way in which they are produced, the format of your logo, the images you choose and the colours you use, all make a statement about your firm.

One of the most important things about your printed materials is that they should show consistency in the use of your logo, quality and the information given.

Your Logo

Your logo is the symbol, words or visual repeated across all of your firm's materials to identify them as originating from your firm. If you already have a logo and you are not particularly happy with it, or it represents your firm 10 years ago, it is worthwhile having a designer look at it and quote for redesigning it to suit your firm today.

A logo needs to be clear and identifiable as a symbol

A logo needs to stand out and to have its own identity from copy and other visuals.

A logo needs to reflect your firm and its standing

The style of logo you choose, incorporating such matters as font and colour, will communicate a great deal about your firm - traditional, modern, commercial etc.

Your logo needs to be used consistently on all of the firm's materials

It is vital that your logo is not redesigned except when necessary and its correct format, proportion and colour should be adhered to. Firms frequently have a guide outlining how their logo must appear if used, identifying colour options, sizes, etc.

Logos should be practical and easy to use

Logos need to be capable of being used everywhere. You will need to be able to reduce or enlarge your logo to fit business cards, brochures, leaflets, websites and office signs. You also need to be aware of colours and ensure that your logo will work equally effectively in one-colour, two-colour and four-colour versions.

Important Disclaimer – Please Note

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ENSURING YOU COMPLY WITH ADVERTISING REGULATIONS

When organising stationery, brochures and other printed materials - solicitors need to ensure that everything complies with the Solicitors (Advertising) Regulations 2002 and with subsequent practice notes. These rules can be accessed on the Society's website at: <http://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/Regulations/Solicitor-Advertising/>

Printed materials cannot contain cartoons, dramatic or emotive words or pictures, nor can they refer to calamitous events such as a train or bus crash. Regulation 9 also prohibits reference to a solicitor's willingness to make home or hospital visits - as this can be interpreted as a form of 'ambulance chasing'.

The regulations lay down broad fundamentals and, as such, should be carefully read. In particular they prohibit advertisements which:

- Are likely to bring the profession into disrepute,
- Are in bad taste,
- Reflect unfavourably on other solicitors,
- Assert that a solicitor has specialist knowledge superior to other solicitors,
- Are false or misleading,
- Are contrary to public policy.

Regulation (4)(a)(viii) bans advertisements which refer to claims or possible claims for damages for personal injuries, the outcome of such claims or the provision of services by solicitors in conjunction with such claims.

Regulation 4(a)(ix) prohibits advertisements which "solicit, encourage or offer any inducement" to make such claims.

Regulation 4(b) specifies that advertisements generally shall not include more than:
the solicitor's name, address, telephone and fax numbers, place of business and location of information provided by the solicitor that is accessible electronically; particulars of the solicitor's qualifications and legal expertise; factual information on the legal services and areas of law to which the services relate; particulars of charges; and any other information permitted by Regulation 5 of these regulations

Regulation 5 contains a list of the "other information" permitted by the regulations, such as hours of business, job descriptions, membership of organisations, reference to other clients (with that client's consent) and other miscellaneous information.

Regulations 6 and 7 deal with where advertisements may and may not be published. Solicitors are not permitted to advertise on any form of transport, such as on buses, and in any inappropriate locations, such as near death notices, in a hospital, in a doctor's surgery, a funeral home - or anywhere of a similar character.

Regulation 9(a) is also important to note. It forbids the inclusion of any words or phrases which suggest that legal services relating to contentious business will be provided at no cost or at a reduced cost – such as "no foal no fee".

Regulation 13(a) provides that an unsolicited approach may not be made where it is likely to bring the profession into disrepute. Regulation 13(b) provides that approaches may not be made in inappropriate locations.

ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS OF PRINTED MATERIALS

An important aspect of producing printed materials is to have an understanding why one item is good and another not. Whether you like the design of a particular piece of printed material is subjective. However, there are aspects of all printed materials that can be viewed objectively to determine whether they achieve what you intended. When you look at the material in question, there are a number of questions you can ask.

Business Cards & Stationery

- Do they look professional, serious, authoritative, trustworthy – what impression do they give of the organisation?
- Do the different elements look well balanced on the paper and do they look neat and tidy?
- What is the quality of print and production?
- Do they reflect the profile of the organisation they represent?

Brochures & Leaflets

- Are they appropriate for the audience to whom they are directed? Can you tell by looking at them to whom they are directed?
- Do the pages have a balance to them with regard to the quantity of text and images?
- Are the pictures used appropriate, well-positioned and well-set?
- Do the contents and style of text work well with the design?
- Is the text accurate and spelling correct?
- Do the colours create the right atmosphere?
- Is there a message in the use of colour?
- Does the paper used contribute or detract from the item?
- Is the item a cohesive production?
- Who is the item aimed at?
- Is the impression they give appropriate for the firm?
- Is the item appropriate for a solicitor's firm?

Take the time to review your firm's printed materials and ask the above questions about each individual piece.

In addition, collect together all of your printed materials and set them out on a desk or table next to each other. Viewing the whole group, ask yourself:

- Are they recognisable as coming from one organisation?
- Are they consistent with regard to quality, feel and impression?
- Is their use of colour consistent or complementary with each other?
- Do they all sit comfortably together?

All of your printed materials should sit well together and demonstrate a family resemblance. This does not mean that one design fits all, it means that you need to have a visual theme across all of them. If your printed materials do not sit well together, make sure that when you come to reprint you have them redesigned to do so.

GETTING DESIGN WORK DONE

Before launching into the nuts and bolts of producing printed materials, it is useful to consider how you can pick a designer who will be able to produce appropriate designs for your firm.

The first thing to do is to invite a couple of local designers to show you their portfolios and discuss your needs. Get them to explain how previous briefs worked and how their design met the requirements of the brief. Seeing what a designer has produced for other organisations will give you an insight into the tone and feel of their work and, though your requirements will be quite different, this will help you judge how their approach might suit your firm.

Asking Designers to Pitch for Your Business

It is accepted practice to invite two or three designers to put together a pitch for the work you have in mind. However, there are a few points to note:

- The value of the project or longer-term work needs to be substantial enough to make it worthwhile for the designer. Coming up with ideas and making them work is approximately 80 per cent of the design process.
- Some designers may charge for conceptualising; others may do it pro bono in order to get the full job.
- Some designers may not be prepared to pitch against others.
- It is not generally a good idea to ask more than three designers to pitch.
- Pitches will not usually reduce eventual cost but they facilitate better preparation.
- Designers will probably not cover all text features or visual elements in mock ups they produce. These only give an indication of what the finalised work will look like.

Getting a Quote for a Job

It is important to ask designers about how much they will charge and to explore the total cost of getting the planned job done. One useful exercise in this regard is to go through their portfolio and ask for an indication of what items cost.

Designers often calculate their costs according to an hourly rate (e.g. €30 - €90 per hour) and often, designers will ask you what budget you have. You could give them a rough figure or state you still need to finalise the budget and ask them to put together a quote.

In all likelihood they will not be able to give you a quote on the spot but having discussed your requirements, ask them their thoughts on possible approaches and ask them to quote on these. The quote should include:

- Design cost (and any variation according to different sizes, etc.) including the number of proofs and corrections included in the price as this can change the final cost radically.
- Any illustration or photographic costs and opinions such as purchasing stock photography, using existing shots, etc.
- A print cost.

USING BROCHURES TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

It is useful to draw a distinction between brochures and leaflets. Brochures tend to be general publications about the firm or legal services whereas leaflets are publications produced for a particular purpose such as a promotion.

Brochures generally contain information about the firm, the services the firm offers, the people, the firm's philosophy and approach to clients. They are the printed embodiment of your firm's approach and have the following objectives.

Brochures are used to maintain or create an image of the firm through:

- Their design and appearance.
- The presentation of information about the services the firm offers and the people in the firm.

Brochures are used to promote loyalty amongst existing or first time clients because:

- The quality of a brochure can confirm a client's decision to choose your firm
- Brochures can provide a point of reference for clients and give them useful information about the firm.
- They provide an opportunity to communicate with clients, i.e. when a new brochure is distributed.

Brochures are used to increase work from existing clients through:

- Reminding clients of the firm's services.
- Maintaining an open dialogue with clients.

Brochures are used to gain new clients by:

- Presenting the firm to them.
- Informing them about the firm's services.
- Giving the firm credibility and presence.

General Characteristics of Brochures

The visual impact of a brochure is of enormous importance. The visuals need to match the firm's image and appeal to the target audience. Depending on the way in which you want to present your firm and the services you offer, you may opt for a single brochure covering all areas, or a series of brochures covering each of the different services the firm offers. Brochures generally fit within the following:

- They can be any number of sizes, e.g. A4, A5, DL, and formats, e.g. square, landscape or portrait.
- Brochures are generally designed and set out by graphic designers.
- High quality paper, usually quite thick, is usually used for printing on.
- An important function of a brochure is to reflect the type of firm, its ethos and how it serves the clients.
- Brochures are usually distributed to existing clients, new clients or potential clients.
- They contain information about the firm that will be relevant to the client.
- They are written in short sections often with pictures or space around them.
- Brochures are usually provided free of charge to recipients.
- Brochures will often contain photographs and / or illustrations.

CREATING A BROCHURE

When producing brochures, it is recommended that you use a graphic designer and copywriter. They will work from the brief you give them. The steps to producing a brochure are outlined as follows:

Prepare a Brief

The brief is the key to achieving a brochure that correctly reflects your firm and the image you want to give your clients and potential clients.

Creating a brief is fairly straightforward and the list below indicates what needs to be included in it:

- A background to the firm.
- A background to the people working in the firm.
- An outline of the specific services that your firm provides.
- An outline, with examples, of the firm's logo and any other advertising or brochures produced in the past.
- Examples of the firm's existing or past brochures and any mission statements.
- An outline of the target audience and client base and an explanation of the purpose of the brochure and the information needs of the target audience.
- Technical information such as the print run and the budget.
- An indication of how eye-catching or design-led you want the brochure to be.
- A list of descriptive words indicating the image and impression you would like the brochure to give, i.e. business-like, fun, professional, young, trustworthy, caring, efficient, local, international, etc.
- Any specifications that need to be taken into account, i.e. the use of a particular font, accreditation logos, etc.
- Whether it is envisaged one brochure will be sufficient or if a family of brochures is required.
- Whether you will want to use the design for other marketing materials.

If you have worked with a designer before, unless you are radically changing your approach, they will already have some idea of what you like and you can abbreviate the brief to a certain extent. However, it is a useful exercise to work through and gather the information listed as it will help clarify your intentions and communicate them to the designer.

The brief will give the designer and copywriter enough to come up with some visuals and copy ideas that can be discussed. When they have collated some ideas they will present them to you.

Depending on the chain of approval and management set-up in the firm, you might choose to see them alone or have them present to the firm's management team. If you have asked a number of designers to pitch for the work this may be logistically difficult and it may be better to have them present to you for you to circulate.

If you see a brochure or leaflet that you admire and you feel has elements you would like integrated into your firm's brochure, it is a good idea to show this to the designer and identify why you like it and what you like about it. This will help the designer gain some insight into what you want.

Discuss Ideas and Concepts Proposed

After having ideas presented to you by the designer it is usually a good idea to present these to others in the firm to gain their comments.

If you have a choice of concepts and you know which you prefer, have a thought-out argument with regard to your choice. Many people just present to others the design concepts they are happy with. Take detailed notes of any comments or suggestions made and discuss these with the chosen designer.

Finalise and Agree Copy

Once you have agreed the concept, the most important thing to do is finalise and agree the copy. Depending on how you choose to approach it, you or the copywriter, will have produced initial copy to go into the brochure.

You now need to ensure that this copy is accurate and comprehensive. The copy also needs to be agreed in principle by the relevant people in the firm (if necessary). Having done this, the copy should be given to the designer.

Finalise Design Work

Any photographs and illustrations that are being used should be discussed in detail so that the designer can commission or source them.

The Proofing Process

Proof 1

The first proof will show how the copy fits and works with the design. It might be too long, too short or the meaning might not flow once it is set out. The illustrations or photos might not look quite right and adjustments may be needed. After discussing any changes with the designer a second proof should be produced.

Proof 2

It is a good idea to circulate this proof to your colleagues for comment. Now is the time that you need to get sign-off on the copy (or make changes) by anyone else involved. Pass any comments or changes to the designer.

Proof 3

This should be the final proof and again, it is a good idea to pass this to anyone involved such as your colleagues, informing them that this is their last chance to make changes to the copy. Again, pass any changes to the designer.

Sign-off

The designer will now give you a final proof to sign-off before he sends it off for production and print. You should not be editing or making changes after this, as it will add to the cost.

Reproduction

Although the process of printing has changed considerably it is useful to know how the older method worked. Reproduction is where any pictures are scanned into the artwork at high resolution and films made that will be used to produce the plates for the printers. Most printers have their own repro capability in-house, or the artwork files may be sent out to a repro house to have scans put in and films made. The designer will manage this.

Colour Proofs

There are various types of colour proofs which can be viewed as a guide once the final artwork has been sent to the printer or repro house.

'Cromalins' are proofs made up using the final film on special paper. They are produced to check four-colour work (i.e. from CMYK films). It is a good idea to see them, even though they are the most expensive type of colour proof.

They enable you to check there have been no glitches after final film has been output from the designer's submitted files, i.e. that the images are in the right place at the appropriate resolution, the correct fonts have been used and the final printed version will look how you imagine.

It is always a good idea for the designer to check the colour proofs. They will ask you to sign off the proof prior to "passing for press". You should not be editing or making changes at this stage, it is purely a technical checking process.

Printing Your Brochure

Before signing off the final colour proof, it is worthwhile double-checking the size of the print run and what paper will be used. Then, 'pass for press' and have it printed.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Brochure

When you first see your printed brochures they will, it is hoped, not be any great surprise as you will have seen several proofs of them. However, now that you have them in your hands it is a good idea to find out what those in the firm and some of your clients think of them.

At the beginning of this section there is a list of questions that you can ask to help you evaluate brochures and printed materials. This list can easily be used to create a questionnaire for the staff to give their views.

Then, obviously, you must try to establish how well the brochure was received by clients. Ask clients you meet or you could invite a number of clients to take part in a panel. Meetings of the panel should then be held in the early evening on a regular basis to discuss their view of the way your firm presents itself, and whether they have any comments about your brochures, etc. Alternatively, you might choose to send a questionnaire with some of the brochures you send to clients.

LEAFLETS

Leaflets can be used to promote loyalty amongst existing clients by:

- Giving them useful information about firm.
- Providing an opportunity to communicate with them, e.g. sending out a leaflet about a new service or offer.

Leaflets can be used to increase work from existing clients through:

- Reminding clients of the firm's services and telling them about new services.
- Maintaining an open line to clients.

Leaflets can be used to maintain or create an image of the firm through:

- Its design and appearance.
- The presentation of information about the services the firm offers and any special offers or promotions.

Leaflets can be used to promote a service to gain new clients by:

- Describing the service.
- Outlining an offer or incentive to use the service.

General Characteristics of Leaflets

Leaflets generally follow the firm's established design style but they may have their own theme that is relevant to the offer or service being promoted:

- Leaflets tend to be A5 or DL (folded to fit a standard envelope).
- Leaflets are often printed on less heavy paper than brochures.
- They should reflect the image or position of the firm.
- They are distributed to clients and non-clients.
- They can be used for a wide range of reasons such as for direct mail promotions, to publicise a seminar, etc.
- They contain information about the firm that will be relevant to the client.
- They are written in short sections, often with pictures or space around them.
- They will usually be distributed to a target audience either as part of a mailshot or as an insert in the media.
- They will usually have a finite life linked to the promotion or offer.

Creating a Leaflet

Follow the steps outlined for creating a brochure. The only major difference is that there will be an offer, a call to action such as 'telephone now', and a sales message.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Leaflet

If you use the leaflet for a direct mail promotion or other promotion, did it generate a response? Seek the opinion of the staff. Ask clients for their reactions – again, you might want to ask a panel of clients for their views. Was it the offer, the presentation of the offer, or the way in which it was distributed? There are a number of factors that might affect the result of a promotion.