Designing Impactful Appeals *(without Photography)*

Every nonprofit dreams of having a collection of stunning, professional photography of their mission to choose from when crafting appeals.

Good design engages donors & powerful visuals help draw readers into your story to make a stronger emotional connection.

But we know getting high-quality, authentic photos that represent your mission is difficult. Sometimes, finding any photos that will work seems nearly impossible.

From searching for hours on stock sites for the perfect "vague, but not too vague" image that goes with your story, to getting your teammates to stage a shot – *we've seen it all, & we're here to say...*

"...use these photo-free design strategies to amplify your message with little to no visual assets."

You don't need high-quality photography of your mission to create an impactful design that supports your message & goals!

With the right strategies & tactics you can create a beautiful, donor-capturing appeal – **without needing to hunt down or "fake" any photos.**

If all you have to work with is a logo, brand colors, & maybe a font you like – *use these photo-free design strategies to amplify your message with little to no visual assets.*

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

After working with nonprofits for 20+ years, one common challenge clients bring to us remains the same:

"Unfortunately, we have no current photos to use; We are really counting on AnchorPointe's artistic and marketing skills to help pull this thing together."
- Portland Literacy Council

Why is it such a common need? Nonprofits have to contend with more obstacles to getting 'marketable photos' than most for-profit businesses.

Any of these sound familiar?

• Photographers are an added cost – to have one at a volunteer or fundraising event, etc. is often an unjustified expense.

• You might ask your volunteers & team members to take photos – the results vary in quality & style, making consistency *(& brand-recognition)* difficult.

• You may work with people in need – those served may not want to be photographed, or to do so would be insensitive or inappropriate. Even those with success stories may want to keep their identities anonymous.

• Getting 'consent to be photographed' waivers from people is complicated & time consuming, & can add a layer of potential legal issues.

• Using stock or purchased images can feel disingenuine & lack authenticity.

Barriers to having high-quality photos:

TIME

COST

CONSISTENCY

ANONYMITY

LEGAL WAIVERS

AUTHENTICITY

Whatever your obstacles are to having high-quality photos for marketing purposes, **this PDF is full of demonstrated design strategies & tips** that you can use to enhance your nonprofit's message. *Let's dive in!*

THE FEEL OF YOUR APPEAL

Before getting started on your layout, **decide what emotions you want your appeal design to express.**

Of course, it should match the mood of your appeal copy – but a lot is conveyed to the reader before they begin reading.

Is your goal to create something uplifting, hopeful, & optimistic feeling?

Or do you want to set a more serious, somber tone, coupled with a sense of urgency?

Think about the tone you want, & write down a few descriptive words for what you want people to feel or start to think when they see your appeal.

Use these words as your guide while making each design choice.

Some descriptive words for this postcard impact report might be...

DYNAMIC | INFORMATIVE | EMPOWERING

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

5
Basic Tutor Workshops with

120
participants

6
Awesome Tutor Workshops with

134
participants

GED PROGRAM

Expanded training of
GED Tutors

TRAIN THE TRAINER

Doubled
our pool of certified instructors

How YOU helped make a
BIG DIFFERENCE!
Portland Literacy Council | 2021

PILOT PROGRAMS IN PROGRESS

• **Corrections GED Peer Tutors**
• **Citizenship Peer Tutors**
• **Tutor Roundtable**

2021 ONLINE CONFERENCE

14
Sessions

115
Attendees

18
Presenters

18
hours of online conference videos

Portland Literacy Council 2021 Impact Report Direct Mail Postcard | Designed by AnchorPointe Graphics

COLOR BLOCKING & WHITE SPACE

Begin planning your layout by getting to know a few basic elements of design – *shape, color, & space.*

By creating separate areas on the page with shapes & white space, you can **break up an appeal into more friendly-looking, bite-sized pieces of content.**

Plan a linear layout with columns, rows, & boxes, or a more organic layout with abstract shapes & text boxes.

Alternating sections of light text on a dark background, with darker text on a light background, can help to further split up long blocks of text, which can feel tedious.

Create space for a highlight, like a pull-quote or statistc, by varying the width & placement of your text columns.

Create interesting spaces for text or logos to sit in. You can do this using white space, or with shapes in solid or screened back colors to vary the values & create contrast. **Choose shapes that are complimentary to your branding** – circles, squares, diamonds, triangles, etc.

Use these spaces to highlight key pieces of information – for example, if your appeal includes supporting data or statistics, place them in a blocked space with the body of your appeal letter flowed around it to create a focal point & add movement to your layout.

For a clean, contemporary layout, use wider margins to give your content plenty of 'breathing room' visually – this is a good design solution for shorter appeal letters.

Whether you prefer a structured grid for information to sit in *(like this page)*, or more organic spaces for content to play inside of – color blocking with shapes & utilizing white space are great strategies for developing an interesting & engaging layout without photos.

GET CREATIVE WITH YOUR LOGO

Maybe the only graphic you have to work with in your branding toolkit right now is your logo – *how else can you utilize it, aside from featuring it at the top of your appeal letter?*

If your logo is the only graphic on the page, it's going to naturally become a focal point. Think strategically about logo placement, so it helps to **call attention to the most important piece of your appeal.**

For an effective appeal placement, try dropping it down to the bottom of the page sitting close to the P.S. line or personalized ask.

If your logo includes a logomark that can be used separately, explore all the ways you can use it as a visual element.

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS TO TRY...

⚓ Place your logomark to one side, partially off the page, with the text of the letter flowed around it to create an organic edge.

⚓ Place it large & screened back, like a watermark, so text can be placed over it.

⚓ Create a header block using your logo & contact information to give an appeal letter a more official "letterhead" feel.

AnchorPointe
GRAPHICS | PRINT | MARKETING

P.S. This area down here is seperated by our logo above, & the logomark graphic to the side. Isolated spaces like these help to create focal points for key information!
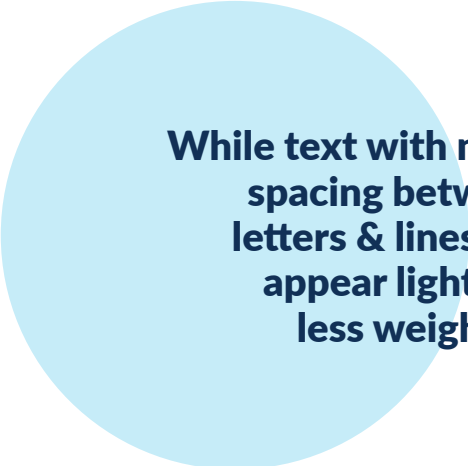
TYPOGRAPHY

Remember, the text you use in your appeal is a visual tool.
The fonts & text styles you choose can help set the tone of your story & put emphasis on the most important parts.

Adjust the "color" of text blocks by changing the letter spacing, line spacing, & weight of the typeface. The closer together the letters & lines are, the more dense the text block becomes & the darker its "color" appears on the page.

Aquam quam alia nonsed eum rehenda nderehenimus dernatistis dolupti testist verum iligenist, comnis si ut omni unto inctiae. Ut qui con poresto maximus. Icabor arum imus expe sitio. Ficitassum quatem nemollupta natatur aut qui nis min rero debis eos ut officidunte conem conet fugiate ndigent otatus. Asperchicae labor ad est, sitationem re pelectis parum ea doloreperion. Elitaten duciandit volorum enihitiis eostisit volupta tustiasse nesequatae.

Tighter-set text with lines that are closer together will appear more visually heavy on a page...

While text with more spacing between letters & lines will appear lighter & less weighted.

Agnimpor ra dollecta quae commodi ape non eost fugiam fugia porumquam illabor eptate suntenda dent, nonseque coressimus exceris eos inciis mo mil il im aut expelique minvent anditiusanis ad ent vellit est, velesequisin etur susdaer ferspienis doloritaque quis doluptas dissin comniassitis venestr umendam simi, ipiciam que od utempel laccust et mos.

Altering the alignment of text blocks also changes their look & feel.
For most letter formats, or pieces with more than a few lines of text, stick to a left-aligned text format for easier reading. If you force-justify the right edge, you'll create a more linear & geometric layout. Or leave the right edge jagged for a more casual & organic appearance.

TYPOGRAPHY (CONT'D)

The fonts you choose can provide many options for varying styles & weights. Changing the style of specific text not only calls attention to it, but also helps to break up the visual monotony of a block of text.

VARY YOUR TEXT STYLES.

Use big, all-caps text, or choose a display font for headlines & subtitles. Set text in contrasting colors to further differentiate between sections & add visual interest. Vary the color, size, weight & italics to create visual texture, patterns, shapes, & accents within the text.

Oftentimes, these styles cause us to read text in a different tone – for example if something is **bolded** we put an emphasis on it when we read it. *And if something is set in italics, we give it a softer voice. (Or maybe read it as the author's inner thoughts.)*

COLOR IMPACTS MOOD.

Remember the ***descriptive words*** you wrote down to help you develop the feel & mood of your appeal piece? ***Without photo assets to help convey emotion, color is our strongest design tool to help express mood in a layout.***

Choose & utilize accent colors that work with your brand's color palette & ***fits the specific message of the piece you are designing for.***

"...color is our strongest design tool to help express mood in a layout."

CREATE A *Graphic* **WITH TEXT**

CREATE TEXT-BASED GRAPHICS.

Design a stand-alone typography 'graphic' using a display or decorative typeface & words that emphasize the message of your appeal.

This is an effective way to highlight critical or impactful information that will catch even the quickest eyes - ***statistics & direct quotations work especially well for this.***

YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES.

The next time you sit down to create an appeal *(or impact report, or donor acquisition, or event invitation...)* & start to lament the lack of available photos at your disposal, **we hope you remember these strategies & feel more confident that you can create something fantastic –** *even without photos!*

LOOKING
FOR MORE?

Get hands-on help with design & layout by scheduling a consultation with us today!

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503.619.3000
info@anchorpointegraphics.com
AnchorPointeGraphics.com