

Elements of *Design*

How to create a winning display ad for self-storage

By Sue Weinman

Every display ad you use to promote your self-storage business should be designed to maximize customer response—that's a given. Unfortunately, few operators understand and use the design elements that best attract prospects' attention. Following are some tips to make winners of your Yellow Pages and other display ads.

Thumbs Up

Take a look at the accompanying ad for The Storage Center of Coopersville. It embodies the aspects of display-ad design every operator should master.

Location

- Since location is often your customer's first priority, make it prominent and easy to decipher. Our example uses the facility location as its headline.
- Always include a map, and make your map large enough to read. Include landmarks if possible; for example, the Storage Center ad notes its location as "Across from Burger King."

Call to Action

- Make a special offer, but don't make it too specific in case you want to change it. An offer like "Wow! A Free Month's Rent!" still leaves options in terms of particulars. (And notice how the example uses reverse color type to attract attention.)
- Use starbursts or boxes like the one that says "Call Manager for Details" to draw the eye and drive inquiries.

Graphics

- Use graphics to differentiate your ad from those of the competition. The photo in our example not only draws

attention, it illustrates excitement about the special offer—with humor.

- Always use photos rather than line drawings, which are old-fashioned. No clip art!
- Only use a picture of your facility if it's unique or necessary for drive-by recognition.
- Use credit-card logos instead of listing the cards you accept by name.

Copy Points

- First and foremost, you want to emphasize the features that separate you from competition. For the Storage Center, those things are security, service and convenience, with details listed in bullet points. Know your competitive advantages and list them in order of importance to customers. Don't assume prospects

Storage in Downtown Coopersville Near I-10 And Main Street



I-10

Summer St

Main St

Cooper St

BK

Third St

354 Third Street
Just West of Main St.
Across from Burger King

The STORAGE CENTER of Coopersville

Online reservations
www.scofcoopersville.com

SECURITY

- Video Surveillance • Sprinklers • Lighted
- On-site Professional Managers
- Fenced • Door Alarms

SERVICE

- Moving Supplies Available • Truck Rentals
- Deliveries Accepted • Climate Controlled

CONVENIENCE

- 24 Hour Computerized Gate Access
- Office Hours: 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. Daily



***Call Manager for Details (123) 456-7899**

will automatically understand your offerings.

- Always include your web address in your ad.
- Always let customers know what's in it for them, such as any special offers or giveaways.
- Include your hours of operation or access.

Thumbs Down

Now let's look at some things you should *never* do in your ad. Take a look at how the Storage Center ad looks on a page with competitors. Note how it stands out as well as why this ad should get a much greater response than the others. All three of the competing ads

have made the same major error: There are no maps or directions to help customers locate the facility. What else have they handled incorrectly?

Westview Enterprises

- The facility name should not be the headline.
- It's not necessary to list all unit sizes. The ad should simply say, "Unit sizes available to fit your needs."
- Line drawings are outdated. If you want to show the convenience of drive-up units, use a photo.

Storage 'R Us

- Text overlaid on graphics is very difficult to read.

- Photos of unit doors are a waste of space, since every storage facility has them!
- Again, the name shouldn't be the headline. The name is only important so customers can find you after making their decision—it isn't critical at first. Furthermore, the name should be graphically represented to match the facility signage (a logo).

Main Street Storage

- Font sizes and types need to be varied. Don't make the mistake of thinking copy in all bold or color will stand out. When it's all the same, nothing pops.
- Avoid green copy on yellow paper—it's too bland. If you need to use green (perhaps it's an important part of your logo), restrict it to the graphic or use white knockout.

In Summary

So let's go over what we've learned about display-ad design:

- Make it easy for customers to find your facility.
- Make your "call to action" or unique features stand out above everything else.
- Use copy points to differentiate your facility from competitors.
- Use eye-catching graphics, and remember that humor sells.
- When in doubt, hire a professional graphic designer with Yellow Pages experience. **ISS**

Sue Weinman, senior account executive, represents the Yellow Pages Division of The Michaels/Wilder Group, an advertising agency that specializes in Yellow Pages, Internet and recruitment advertising. Based in Phoenix, the award-winning firm is celebrating its 16th year of business thanks to a loyal client base that includes hundreds of self-storage owners and managers. For more information, call 800.423.6468; visit www.michaelswilder.com.

The image displays three distinct advertisements for storage facilities. The top-left ad for Westview Enterprises features a red and white color scheme with a large, bold title and a list of unit sizes. The top-right ad for Storage Center of Coopersville uses a blue and white theme, featuring a man's face and a 'FREE MONTH'S RENT' offer. The bottom-left ad for Storage 'R Us shows a photograph of storage units with a list of services and features. The bottom-right ad for Main Street Storage is a green and white text-based ad listing various amenities and contact information.