Turning Bids into Newspapers

How do newspapers successfully compete for readers every day? Through typography - communicating through the printed word – or in other words, layout.

> *MatchPoint helps organisations win bids, proposals and tenders. We harvest and build best practice, and provide our clients with expert resources, skills coaching and more effective ways to win. This tip will help make winning easier.*

Respect Reading Gravity - Which of these articles do you think would be easier to read?

1.

2.

If you picked article 1 – you're right! Article 2 may look nicer but the reader's understanding doubles with the layout of article 1, because it's easier to read.

Why? The eye naturally falls to the top left, the "Primary Optical Area", then moves across and down the page. If you put the headline in the middle of the page, as in article 2, you force the reader against the natural reading gravity and decrease comprehension. Layout that conforms to the natural reading flow is more acceptable to readers. Make it difficult and they might not read it.

Careful with colour - Should you use black text or blue text? Sure, blue looks more attractive than boring black, but it's harder to read.

In tests, 7 out of 10 people who read a passage of black text had a good understanding of the message. With the same article printed in coloured text, comprehension fell as low as 1 in 10. So if you're trying to persuade, use black.

Shading can be shady - Background shading can distract the reader from the main text – so if you use it, use it sparingly.

Don't use the same colour for the text and the tint. The reader may find it difficult distinguishing between the words and background. The ideal tint for impact and understanding is 10% or less.

Left, right or justified? - Most word processors give you 4 options for aligning text. Each will impact comprehension because it affects the reading flow:

1. Aligned right - is hard on the reader, forcing the eye to jump to a different spot every line
2. Centred - is fine for titles and headlines, but not for text because it disrupts reading as each line has a different length and start point, making it confusing for the eye

3. Justified text (stretched to left and right alignment) - disrupts reading rhythm because the spacing of words changes
4. Aligned left - is best as it gives the reader both rhythm and reference.

The moral of the story? - It's the words that are important. Don't focus on creating an 'out-there' design to attract attention to your proposal if it's going to interfere with getting your message across. Next time you have to write a proposal, pick up a newspaper and remember these hints.