

## Self-guided Online Course Leader's Guide for "Introduction to Magazine Design"

We are excited for your team to participate in this self-guided online course. In addition to the six recorded sessions and reading material on our website, your group has the opportunity to take the course to another level through discussion questions and assignments.

### Session 1: Typography

- Discussion: What emotional response do you have when the same word is presented in different fonts? How can typography support the overall theme message of your publication? Should your typography be consistent across all your issues?
- Assignment: Refer to the images and instructions on pages 28 and 29 of the e-book *Introduction to Magazine Design*. Submit a PDF showing your work.

### Session 2: Words and images

- Discussion: Why does your target audience need your new magazine? What need will your publication fill that existing similar publications do not? What impact do you seek to have on your target audience? How will you evaluate if your publication is successful? Which magazine publications have you seen that draw your admiration for their design? What exactly do you admire about their design? Are there any ideas or inspiration that you would like to implement in your publication?
- Assignment:
  1. Find a well-designed two-page spread and number the elements on the page in order of dominance, or hierarchy. Number one should be the element that attracts your eye first, two is second, three is third, etc. Remember that the largest element is not always the first element in the hierarchy, although it often is.
    - Article title
    - Subhead Photo or illustration Deck
    - Body copy blocks
    - Initial cap or drop cap
    - Photo or illustration
    - Other (please describe)

Understanding hierarchy is essential to understanding the relationships between words and images on the page.

2. Try the exercise again with a spread that you feel is poorly designed. If you have trouble deciding which elements are dominant because they carry equal "weight" on the page, that may shed light on why the design is weak or ineffective.

### **Session 3: Designing the spread**

- Discussion: What are the first steps in designing the page for a magazine? When you flip through a magazine, where do you turn to first and why?
- Assignment: Design a spread: To begin, familiarize yourself with Master Pages. In the Document Set Up dialogue box, select “Facing Pages” and type in your page size. Then add a .125 inch (3.175 mm) bleed. Establish your margins. All of these elements are determined in Document Set Up. Click OK. You can add pages later after you’ve set up your grid.

Place your grid lines on the Master Pages so they will not shift as you work your layout. Add folios (page numbers and magazine name or website URL) to both Master Pages. If there are any other elements that you want to appear consistently on every page, add them here. Return to the page layout mode (leaving the Master Pages) and place your elements anywhere on the page: photo or illustration, title, subtitle, deck, byline, and edited article. (If possible, it is best to flow in an article that has been edited.)

Choose two (or at most three) fonts that capture the feeling of the article. Adjust the scale of your design elements to determine which should be read first in your hierarchy. Generally, you should start with the image or the title. Play with scale and placement of these elements until they start to work together in a special way. Don’t be afraid to try something extreme to see what can happen on your page. If it doesn’t work, you can always click “undo.”

Try making the elements really large or very small. Try layering them on top of each other, or turning the title at an angle. Don’t limit yourself and don’t expect that you will know how the layout should work before you begin. It’s a process. Sometimes merely moving things around in unusual ways can cause “happy accidents” to occur—and an exciting layout emerges.

Some people sketch ideas in a sketchbook. Do whatever it takes to get your creative juices flowing.

### **Session 4: Photography for publications**

- Discussion: Of the principles you learned this week, what publications have you seen that successfully implement those principles in their magazine’s photos? What principles do you think you can apply to your magazine?
- Assignment: Since the invention of the smartphone, taking photos is easier than ever. However, taking a great photo is as difficult as it ever was! But, because of new technology and ease of use, everyone is able to practice, practice, practice. Practice is the key to great photography.

The first challenge is for you to see your everyday photo-taking as an opportunity to hone your skills. If you take 10 photos in a day, try to make half of them more creative by implementing some of the ideas in this chapter. For example, format your shot using the

rule of thirds, set it up with different lighting, or either get down on the ground or stand on a chair to achieve a more dramatic angle. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

## **Session 5: Designing the magazine cover**

- Discussion: Is there a publication whose cover piqued your curiosity to read it? What aspect of the cover attracted you to it? What can you change in your publication's cover to make it more attractive?
- Assignment:
  1. Choose a photo from your photography assignment that you find the most interesting or evocative.
  2. Choose a title that you might use on a future cover or that goes well with the photo. Shorter titles are often easier to design into your cover.
  3. Add a subhead
  4. Add 3-6 cover blurbs, 2-5 words each
  5. If you have a tagline, eyebrow line, or caption, include those as well.

As you design, define your hierarchy. Remember, not every element can be dominant—you must choose. Will the photo dominate or will it be “pushed back” by a large, powerful type treatment? Carefully design your cover blurbs to enhance the overall cover composition. Take risks. Try some things you normally wouldn't try. Even if they don't work, you might come upon some surprises that change the direction of your design. Let it happen!

## **Session 6: Magazine redesign**

- Discussion: What five or more words best describe your magazine and reflect its voice and why? What was your favorite part of the course and what was your main take away from the course?
- Assignment: Redesigning a magazine is a major decision requiring months of planning and implementation. This assignment will help you decide whether a redesign is worth those many months of work, and if it will help you get your message out to more people.

Since a redesign is a comprehensive decision that effects all disciplines—design, editorial, and management—it cannot be just a design decision. Include your editor, art director, and business manager as you complete this assignment. This will help get your entire team behind the idea and ready to work together toward a common goal.

Sometimes team members find it hard to let go of a magazine's current identity. Try to be sensitive when discussing the options. The goal should be to help the reader and gain more readers. If your team is too attached to the current version of the magazine, it might be helpful to involve objective people who understand your mission and want you to succeed.

Is it time for a redesign? Consider the following questions and check all that apply to your situation.

- You have had the same design for at least five years.
- You want to reach a new or broader audience.
- Your design, logo, and brand are outdated.
- You have strayed from your magazine's original structure after tweaking the design here and there over the years. As a result, it no longer appears as a cohesive whole.
- Your circulation is stagnant or numbers are decreasing because your publication no longer meets the needs of your readers; they are going elsewhere (print or online) for their content.
- You want to change the name of your magazine to better reflect your mission and to speak to your audience.
- Your design is not memorable, easy to identify, or functional.
- Subscribers or fans of your publication seem to want to receive it, but aren't reading it (according to survey results).
- You have re-evaluated or shifted the focus of your content.

If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, you should seriously consider a redesign. If you answered yes to five or more of the questions, you should schedule your redesign launch date and assemble a team to get the process started.