Newsletter Archives

Backgrounds: Often Seen First

When creating visual messages, we often concentrate our efforts on the text and select the background as an afterthought. Of course, the design should always be secondary to the content, but keep in mind that people often notice graphics before text. This is especially important in digital signage, where the viewer is some distance away from the display and you have only seconds to grab their attention. Many times, your background may be the first thing to catch their eye.

Your backgrounds should be considered in terms of what they can add to your messaging strategy. They aren't independent of the visual rules that apply to content design.

Consider these questions and suggestions when choosing your background:

- Will this background draw attention to my message?
  - Consider your audience and choose backgrounds to appeal and attract.
  - Draw your viewers in with bright colors and rich designs.
- Will my background overpower the content?
  - Keep in mind that light text should be on darker backgrounds and vise versa.
  - If your bulletin has inserted graphics, you may want to keep the background simple.
- Will this be seen in concert with other content (other bulletins, videos, crawls, audio, etc.)?
  - Consider the complete visual layout and what clashes or complements.
  - Don't clutter side-by-side content with "busy" designs. Mix and match for balance.
- Does the background contain graphics that work with my message?
  - Background designs can suggest themes or moods.
  - For example - don't use a dark, sober background to announce a Spring Fling.
- Should my bulletin(s) follow a color scheme?
  - Use background sets that work together for quality presentation.
  - See our article on Continuity in Communications.

Remember to keep your content fresh by infusing your background library with new selections periodically. Staying abreast of current design trends popular with your audience in magazines and on Web sites can be a great resource for background ideas.

A good tip is to have a printed library of your backgrounds that you can reference. If possible, categorize them and cross-reference for quick, easy selection.

Don't think of your background as a backdrop, but as the foundation of your message.

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