



# Business Graphics

mike quon  
& graphic design:usa



**b u s i n e s s**

**g r a p h i c s**



**mike quon**

**& graphic design:usa**



PBC International, Inc.



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aubrey balkind  
ceo, frankfurt balkind partners

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## **preface**

gordon d. kaye  
co-publisher/editor, graphic design:usa

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mike quon  
president, mike quon design office, inc.

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## **Foreword**

Overload. Overload. We are buried daily by more information than we can process. How do we cope with this barrage? Instead of processing much of the information, we make messages disappear; we simply don't see them or hear them; we zap TV commercials, we toss out mail unopened; or we take only a bite out of any whole piece.

Audiences no longer categorize these competing bits of information, giving each its own share of attention.

Now corporate communications, daily newspapers, monthly magazines and TV shows wage war on the same playing field for our limited attention.

So how can corporate communications meet this challenge?

To convey their message, corporations must fight the competition with their own weapons, fusing entertainment with substance. After all, the most successful communicator in our society is the entertainment industry. From it we need to learn how to involve and, yes, seduce our audiences.

Corporate communications must talk in a voice and style that shuns "corporateese," that actually says something and says it clearly. All too often, companies haven't quite worked out what they want to say; they use buzz words to obfuscate their



messages, and they leave readers staring blankly at the end of a sentence. Today's readers move on...fast.

We must remember that corporate communications always speaks to *people*, whether they are security analysts, employees, or governments. They are people first, and they respond powerfully to emotional appeals, not just rational messages. Humor, whimsy, pathos...used appropriately, make a corporate message more human so that it is absorbed, internalized and remembered.

Designers must become communicators. Design cannot concern itself solely with layout or decoration. It first has to get involved with the concept and then make the text work harder to deliver its message. It must entice people onto the page and be structured so that today's skimming readers can enter a document at any point and understand how that piece fits into the whole. And all this must be driven by a corporate strategy that is understandable, meaningful and compelling to the company's diverse audiences.

All this is a tall task. Designers who create true communications are critically important contributors to a corporation's success.

## **Preface**

As editor and publisher of the monthly national news magazine, *Graphic Design: usa*, I wanted—fully, enthusiastically, energetically—to be involved in this *Business Graphics* project.

I believe this is an important book for two reasons.

The first reason is that graphic design is coming of age as a discipline because the best practitioners of it are increasingly market driven and marketing savvy, and because corporate and institutional clients have come to recognize that design is not merely a frill or a decoration, but an integral part of (a) the planning, development, and marketing of products and services, and (b) the projection of a corporate image and attitude that can transcend the information overload we all live with.

This phenomenon—this marriage of design and marketing, if you will—has been latecoming to corporate literature because of its past tendency to take the safe, predictable, repetitive route. But, in our editorial staff's opinion (*Graphic Design: usa* reviews more annual reports and corporate literature than anyone, anywhere), the floodgates have opened and, arguably, the best, smartest, most targeted corporate graphics work ever done is being done right now. As the selections in this book demonstrate, the "marriage" is bearing fruit, resulting in powerful and directed communications in support of corporate needs, policies and goals.

The second reason this book is important is that it will help set straight a nascent misconception. There is a "buzz" these days that the deep penetration of the computer into graphic design—and the paving of the information superhighway—is making design-for-print an increasingly irrelevant backwater.

This does not reflect reality. It is true that the Macintosh is dramatically changing the role of the creator of artwork—placing designers in the center of the creative and production processes, and allowing easier preparation of art and information for a variety of media output such as multimedia, video, interactive, CD-ROM. But to conclude that print will not be an important—indeed, the dominant—medium well into the next millennium for business and corporate communications is a “techie” pipe dream, unsupported by fact, by experience, by common sense, or by human nature. Each of these digital mediums is finding limited, niche uses, but none seriously threatens the broad-based, easy accessibility, user-friendly relevance of print. And, in almost every case, literature complements or coexists with these other pieces.

Print will continue to be the staple for most projects and the staple for most working graphic designers for as far as the eye can see.

Likewise, it is just plain wrong to conclude that the availability of digital delivery suddenly and inherently renders ink-on-paper impotent. As the bold, innovative, exciting, stimulating works shown in this book make clear, corporate literature can be as imaginative as the mind of a great designer. Mark Twain in his prime, upon learning that he had been referred to in a newspaper article as “the late Mark Twain,” retorted that “reports of my demise are greatly exaggerated.” One need only explore *Business Graphics* to know—intellectually and emotionally—that reports of print’s demise are similarly greatly exaggerated.

**“Business  
is too  
important  
to be  
left to  
businessmen.”**

*john kenneth galbraith*

The background of the page is a complex, abstract graphic design. It features a large, faint clock face with pink hands and hour markers. Overlaid on this are various thick, vibrant pink and light green lines that swirl, intersect, and radiate across the page. Some of these lines resemble stylized lightning bolts or dynamic motion paths. The overall effect is one of high energy and modern, high-tech aesthetics.

## Introduction

From the moment the morning news begins, we're  
bombarded by corporate design and promotion.

It's telecast from the 30-second TV spot, shines from the  
pages of glossy brochures and magazines, jumps off our  
mail, attaches itself to packages and shouts from billboards.

As the information superhighway clamors more and more  
for our attention — so will high-tech corporate graphics.

In the looming visual landscape of printed materials, it is  
increasingly important for businesses to distinguish  
themselves from their competition.



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Corporate design is working harder than ever before, with more innovation and persuasion, to reach visually inundated and discriminating audiences – to inform, entertain and impress.

**Business Graphics** takes a look at some of today's best design in corporate literature – brochures, annual reports, sales literature and collateral (*promotional material*) – to show how this traditionally conservative arena of communications is breaking old rules of design and growing modern. Many designers are pushing their corporate clients past clichés and toward the cutting edge. Even the most conservative industries, such as investment firms and insurance companies, are experimenting with new design ideas to reach their more diversified audience. The Black & Decker Corporation, among others, has realized the potential of cool, clean design to further enhance its status in the corporate world.

The corporate client demands more than just a pleasing and reassuring image. They are looking to the graphic

**“...the tendency  
to become safe,  
overly conservative,  
and to analyze every  
situation takes the  
spontaneity out of the  
design process.  
It’s hard to lead when  
you’re looking over  
your shoulder.”**

**ron dumas**



**“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”**

**Albert Einstein**



designer to play a larger role in selling a product, service or image. They want more than just a photograph of a CEO. They are looking to the designer for marketing, technical and high-impact graphic support – to produce compelling corporate literature. It has an important job to do, and it has to do it in a matter of seconds. The material must involve the reader. It lets us know through images just who the company is. We can be struck by the sense of confidence of a brochure or annual report. In today's competitive environment, each piece must have impact. If a brochure doesn't immediately grab the reader, it will not be read.

Bold, daring artwork, powerful photography, unique graphics and clever editorial join in stimulating corporate design. Design is supposed to be beyond style, but the short-lived nature of print graphics makes them especially vulnerable to trends and fads. There seems to be no one corporate style. The trend is toward complete freedom. In the current

**Elbert Hubbard** (early public relations wizard)

**"The man who does not advertise is a dead one,  
whether he knows it or not. Life is too short for you  
to hide yourself away mantled in your own modesty."**