



Captions: Break up the gang

This may be the best photo page you've ever designed. You've done more than a few in your time but this page carries you to another level.

The photos are prize winners.

The structure is sound.

The spacing helps to set off each of the photos while maintaining the integrity of the group.

They're tightly edited and properly sized.

The frames are carefully selected.

The headline type face you've chosen for the caption is just right for the tenor of the page.

Even the typography in the caption is matched with care.

And yet the page fails.

Readers have trouble making sense of it. They just don't have the patience to figure out the design.

You're making your readers work too hard—by creating a "ganged" caption. Instead of placing a separate caption below each photo, you assembled one caption that takes readers to every photo.

By doing so, you're forcing your readers to begin "...at left..." and go to the photo (hoping to make sense

of the caption) then return to the caption (hoping to make sense of the photo) then go to the next photo (hoping to make sense of the caption) then back to the caption. And on and on.

Of course, each time your readers go from caption to photo, their odds of finding the correct photo are even, at best. And every time they return to the caption, they have to swim around for a moment or two to find where they left off.

Put together more than a half-dozen photos on a typical photo page and the ganged caption becomes a reader nightmare.

And a reference to the photo "...at left..." fails if there's more than one photo placed to the left of the caption.

What's the best way to fix a ganged caption?

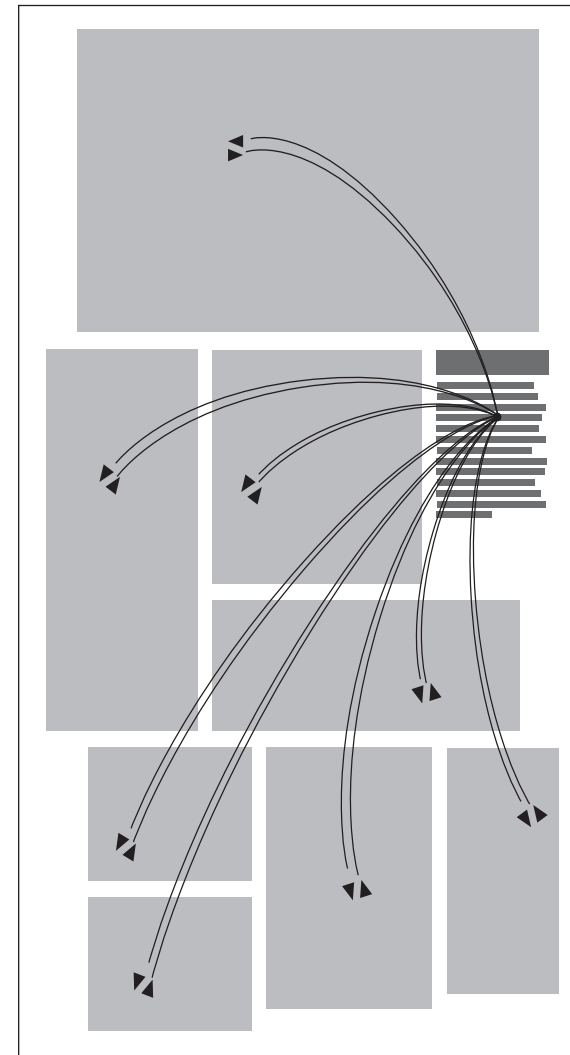
Kill it.

Instead, use the caption space to write a copy block that tells the story behind the photos.

And then go back...rework the page...placing a caption below every photo.

Can you still create a stunning page? Absolutely.

And underlying all of its visual power will be a page that is much improved—because it places the reader first.



Going from a ganged caption to each photo and back creates a "route map" of round trips like those of a major airline.

Check out Ed Henninger's recently released e-book on newspaper design!

'**Henninger on Design** is a winner because it condenses all the fundamentals, the rules, the options and the how-to's of newspaper design into a manual that's easy on the eye and mind, and downright fun to use.'

Ken Blum | Black Ink Publishers' Auxiliary

Find out more about **Henninger on Design** by visiting Ed's web site: www.henningerconsulting.com

ED HENNINGER is an independent newspaper consultant and Director of Henninger Consulting.

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