



The amazing shrinking page

We're shrinking again. There's another round of web reduction afoot in the industry and—like it or not—you may not have much say about cutting the width of your pages.

As most newspapers go to a narrower page, that narrower paper becomes the industry standard—and the wider page you're using now will cost you even more than it does at present.

Even if we reduce our page width, we can still give our readers a quality, comfortable product. The key lies in strong attention to typography—especially body text.

Some suggestions:

KEEP COUNT. Typographers tell us that optimum line length is somewhere between 39 and 52 characters. All characters, punctuation and spaces count as one unit. In newspaper columns, we tend to average closer to 30 characters per line, already well below the optimum. Reducing column width will bring the average down to about 27. So, we have some adjusting to do.

TIGHTEN UP. We could reduce gutter size on inside pages but this seems counterproductive: It would create a more crammed look and could make these pages even more difficult to read and navigate.

LOOSEN UP. Consider going to five columns on open pages—especially page 1, the sports front and

10p8

Go placidly among the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and every-

Narrowing a column of text by only one pica can create telling results. There are only two lines of poor word spacing in the 10p8 column, seven in the 9p8 column

the opinion page. You may think this creates a less newsy look but I'm not convinced that's the case. It will certainly be more easy to read.

CREATE A RAIL. If you're concerned about five-column measure being too wide, consider running a narrow rail column on the left side of open pages. In that column on page 1, you could place digests,

9p8

Go placidly among the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the

teasers, an index, contact information, the UPC code—even your mail label placed vertically at the top or bottom. With the rail, you can still run five narrower columns in the "live" area of the page and those columns will appear more newsy.

GET A NEW FACE. Look for a different type face for your body text. Some newer fonts are more condensed yet still very readable. Check them out.

TWEAK THE TEXT. This can be very dangerous and must be done carefully, but you can test your text at a bit of a smaller horizontal scale. Don't allow anything less than 95% Also, check your settings for tracking and for spacing between words. A tweak there may make the text more readable.

THINK THE UNTHINKABLE. Consider setting your type flush left. No, it's not the norm—but it can make reading faster and easier, especially with the narrow columns that a web reduction will necessitate. Give it a look. Try it in front of a focus group or two. You have nothing to lose.

AVOID THE EASY. Reducing the size of your text type would be the easy—but unwise—way to go. Smaller text makes your newspaper more difficult to read and doesn't place the needs of readers first.

A reduction in web width doesn't mean you have to reduce the quality of your text. It may not be easy to make your typography work. But then, nothing worthwhile is easy.

FREE DESIGN EVALUATION

Ed offers a complete design evaluation of your newspaper—at no charge and with no obligation—to readers of his monthly column.

Click on the **FREEBIE** link on Ed's web site at www.henningerconsulting.com

Find out more about Ed's book! Check out the details on **Henninger on Design** by visiting www.henningerconsulting.com

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

Offering comprehensive newspaper design services including redesigns, workshops, design training and design evaluations.

www.henningerconsulting.com
edh@henningerconsulting.com
803-327-3322