

Help your advertiser to understand that **the rules are different** for page 1.

Page 1 ads —four rules to keep them clean

Get the best
designer on staff
to handle
the work

HENNINGER
ON DESIGN

I'm an editorial guy. I came up through the newsroom. That's where my heart lies.

However, I accept reality and I understand that page 1 ads are a part of newspapering today.

But as a designer—and especially as a consultant—I do have some serious problems with the way most page 1 ads look. For the most part, they are overwritten, overdesigned and sloppy. And that assessment may be kind. It is ironic that we take the most important page of our newspaper, page 1, and place on that canvas some of the ugliest work we do.

No, I'm not an expert in advertising. But I know a thing or two about design. I've brought this issue before publishers and advertising directors—and they agree with my position.

They also agree with some of the remedies I've developed.

My four rules for page 1 ads are simple—and they're easy to put into place at your paper:

1. WE DESIGN THE AD. Yes, your advertiser certainly has a right to tell us what he'd like to see. And we should factor that into the design. But if the advertiser wants his ad on page 1, we must help him understand that the rules are different



Which ad
would you
rather have on
page 1 of your
newspaper?

for that page. No, we shouldn't be arrogant about it—but we should be firm. We also must be sure to give page 1 ad design to the best design person we have on staff. If that person happens to be in editorial, let's find a way to apply that designer's skills with typography and color to the page 1 ads.

2. TWENTY-FIVE WORDS OR LESS. Most page 1 ads tend to be smaller than average ad sizes on inside pages. Yet we tend to let advertisers cram as much as possible into a 1-column-by-2 inch ad. The result: type that's so small that it can't be read easily. If the type is too small to read, we have not served the advertiser well—and we have frustrated readers who may be interested.

3. ONE IMAGE. Advertisers also will feel tempted to place multiple images in a page one ad. A photo of the store and a leading product. Credit card logos. Mug shots. It all becomes too much—and certainly no image can be dominant in that situation. Let's use just one image. Let's use it with some size. Let's use it in color. But just one.

4. YOUR ADVERTISER PAYS A PREMIUM. Remind him that he's getting page 1 space and more design attention. Remind him that his ad will be seen by the greatest percentage of your readers. Remind him that you are committed to making sure that his ad sends the best message to readers about him, his business, his product or service. And then ask him to pay for all of your attention and care.

Most of your advertisers appreciate the value of what you do for them. They know that their advertising buck is an investment in their business and in themselves. They see advertising as a tool to generate more revenue. They understand it's more than an expense.

And if your advertiser can appreciate that your newspaper's rules for page 1 advertising were created in an effort to improve your service to him, he will be more than willing to go along.

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