

Creating Effective Outdoor Posters



While there are no hard and fast "rules" when designing for the outdoor medium, there are a few basic guidelines that should be considered to ensure success. Like all other forms of advertising, good outdoor design depends upon legibility and impact, but you only have a few seconds to reach out and grab the motorist or pedestrian, so it requires special design talents.

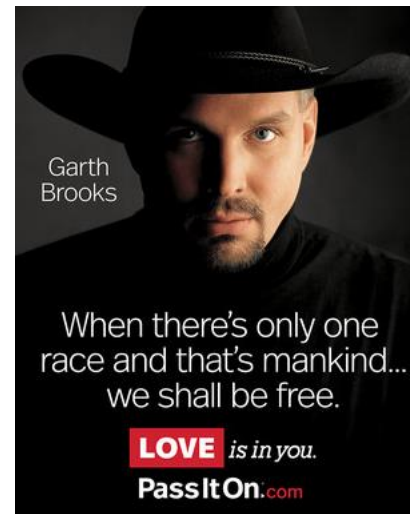
Outdoor advertising presents limitless options and approaches for creative design. There are dozens of sizes and shapes, endless locations and boundless opportunities for designing effective outdoor advertising.

The Creative Challenge

Designing outdoor advertising is visual storytelling. The expression of an idea can surprise viewers with words or excite them with pictures. Through the use of humor or drama, outdoor designs can influence consumer decisions and sell products. However, designing for the outdoor medium is a challenging communication task that requires the expression of a concept with clarity and focus. When outdoor advertising is well designed, it will entertain and intrigue consumers with arresting impact.

Basic Rules for Design

The outdoor viewing audience is mostly mobile. People travel swiftly in vehicles or walk at a brisk pace while they perform the activities of daily life. Mobility limits the potential viewing time of an outdoor message to only a few seconds. Because of limited exposure time, outdoor designs require a disciplined and succinct creative approach. However, high frequency is a fundamental strength of the medium and repeated exposures will ensure that a message is absorbed and retained over time.



Guidelines for Legibility

- Color - The spectrum of full color, vividly and faithfully reproduced, is one of outdoor advertising's distinct advantages. Designs bursting with brilliant color can evoke emotional responses that will inspire lasting impressions. Color weighs heavily on the success of a campaign.
- Research demonstrates that high color contrast can improve out-of-home advertising recall by 38%. Choose colors with high contrast in both hue and value. Contrasting colors are easy to see from great distances, while colors with low contrast will blend together and make the message harder to interpret.
- Typestyle - Fonts selected for outdoor designs must be easy to read from variable distances. Adequate spacing between letters, words and lines is important to enhance visibility. The relative size of letter characters is also an important consideration.

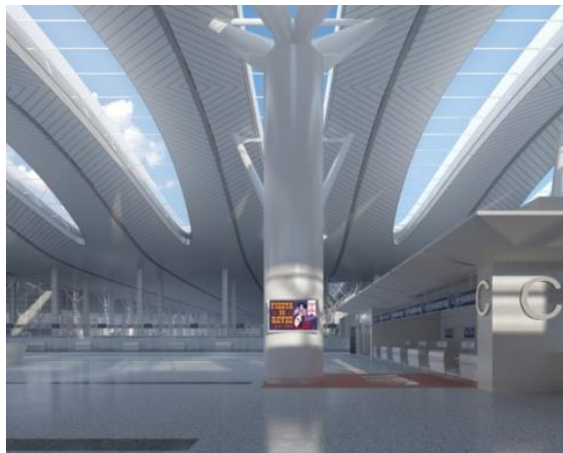


Eats flies. Dates a pig.
Hollywood star.

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If you want to see how your ad will look on a billboard, the Outdoor Advertising Association has a “Mockup Generator Tool” which allows you to view billboard, street furniture and transit creative in the environment in which it will be seen. Using this tool, you can zoom in and out to see the work at a range of distances. Go to: [OOH Mockup Generator Tool](#).



Location, Location, Location

Outdoor advertising conveys the right message, to the right audience, at the right time, in the right place.

Understanding the dynamics of the marketplace is essential for designing effective outdoor campaigns. Finding the relevant and hidden relationships between the message and the environment makes the advertising smart.

Although many outdoor panels have a horizontal format, some displays are vertical. The physical orientation of an outdoor unit will significantly affect the placement of design elements such as product identity and the headline. Orientation will also affect the overall balance of a design.

It is important to remember that geography, demography and the orientation of a display are all necessary considerations when designing for the outdoor medium.

Recency & Consistency

Outdoor advertising is a frequency medium that provides multiple exposures to a message throughout the full duration a campaign period. Recency is another important factor. Defined in the book, "When Ads Work" recency reminds people who are already in the marketplace that a nearby brand, store or service is a good choice.

Consistent and repeated exposure to an outdoor message over an extended period of time will maintain high levels of advertising awareness and recall. To avoid memory decline, multiple design executions for a campaign can be implemented simultaneously or introduced at appropriate intervals during the campaign period.

Designs That Stand Out

The following design tips were provided by Lamar Outdoor Advertising, one of the largest billboard companies in the U.S.

Outdoor ads should be straight forward and to the point. Go with one idea. In many cases, outdoor ads are used to help your audience get somewhere or suggest what they should be doing. Resist the urge to pack a lot of information onto a poster. If you keep the message simple, you'll get a better response. Because your audience is mobile, exposure time is typically four to five seconds. So say it loud and say it clear, but try to say it in seven words or less.



Fonts selected for OOH designs must be easy to read from variable distances. Use large, legible typefaces. Fonts with thin strokes or ornate script will be difficult to read, so stay away from those. Adequate spacing between letters, words and lines will enhance visibility.



Another tip: words comprised of both upper and lower case characters is generally easier to read than all upper case. Click here to view a [Download Letter Height Guide »](#)

Designing for Digital

The same design tips (keep it simple, readable fonts and contrasting colors) apply when designing for digital billboards but there are a few more suggestions:

- Avoid using a solid white background on Digital because it doesn't carry the same vibrancy that it does on vinyl.
- White is a mixture of color vs. an absence of color, therefore it has a tendency to look subdued or muddy.
- Take advantage of the flexibility that Digital out-of-home advertising offers. Change your message weekly, daily or even hourly.
- Design with a creative strategy that tells a story or communicates numerous details using multiple design layouts.

If you are going to launch a paid ad campaign, the ad agency you are working with will handle the production and purchasing/placement details. If it is a PSA campaign then your PSA distributor will be able to help you with any questions on production and placement. For additional assistance on designing your outdoor messages, go to a guide prepared by Larmar Outdoor. [Download OOH Design Tips »](#)

