

Creating Brochures that Sell

by Julie A. Laitin

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Nearly all professionals in the real estate market agree: developers must use brochures and other direct mail vehicles to market their properties. Yet only a small percentage of these marketers create the type of materials that will sell their buildings most effectively.

To create powerful real estate marketing tools, first be certain about what you want to accomplish. Second, stress what sets you apart from the competition. Third, showcase your property in the clearest, most visually appealing brochures possible.

Brochures and direct mail pieces are among the most important marketing tools. They are often a tenant's first introduction to your name and your property. And, they can help accomplish a number of vital objectives:

1. First, they *introduce your property and firm* to potential customers: CFOs of large organizations, office space users, corporate real estate directors and brokers who send these brochures to their clients.
2. Direct mail pieces can *establish an image* for your quality workmanship and superb services. According to John Londsorf, president of Roberts & John Advertising, creating an identity helps position your property, making it more memorable and attractive to prospective lessees.
3. Brochures *inform and educate prospects* about your firm's management capabilities, experience, build-

ing design, materials, features and services, giving customers just enough detail to make them want to know more.

4. These promotional materials *improve recruitment potential*, enhancing your ability to lease more quickly and completely.

5. Brochures *reduce the cost of sales*, helping clients pre-select possible sites and screening out disinterested parties.

6. Brochures *motivate, interest and excite* prospective customers, enticing them out of their offices — and into yours.

Recognizing that brochures can help you accomplish these all-important goals, it is vital to remember that they are only one part of the marketing plan. Without sales calls, follow-up letters and telephone contact, no developer will lease property effectively.

According to Michael Siegel, Executive Vice President of Cushman & Wakefield, "A brochure is the first introduction a client or potential client has to a property. It is an announcement for more to come. But any brochure, regardless of effectiveness, is only as effective as its follow-up."

Nevertheless, getting a foot in the door provides an opportunity to create a positive impression. A successful brochure cannot guarantee results, but a poor one can, and sometimes does, turn away prime candidates.

KEY ELEMENTS CAN MAKE OR BREAK A SALE

Several key elements can make — or break — a sale. It is important to be aware of these elements when creating leasing brochures.

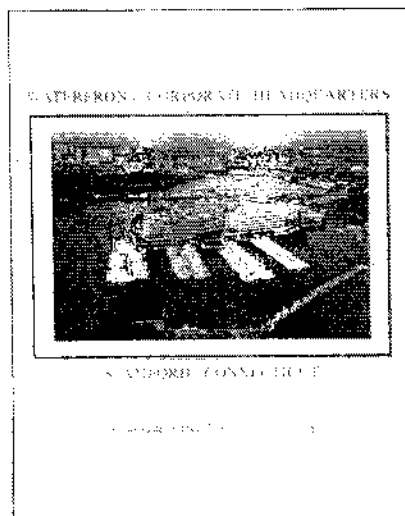


Exhibit 1 (left): Through both its photograph and caption, the cover of this brochure tells you immediately where the complex is and what sets it apart from other properties.

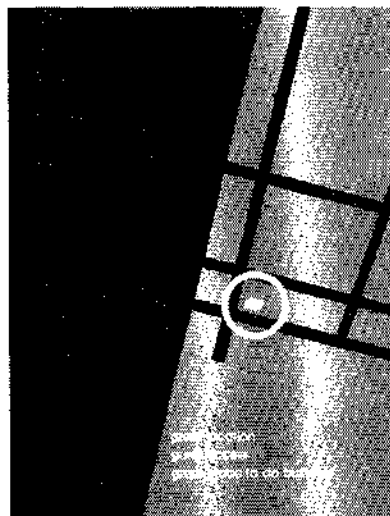
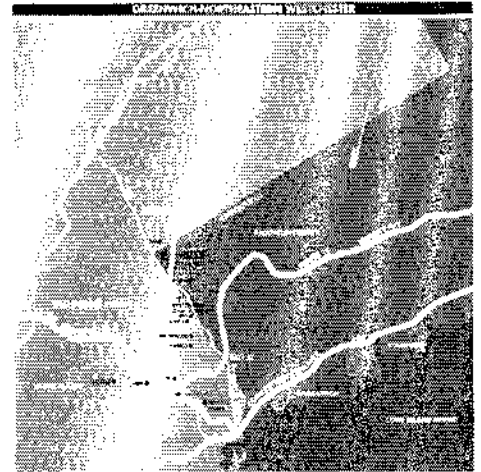
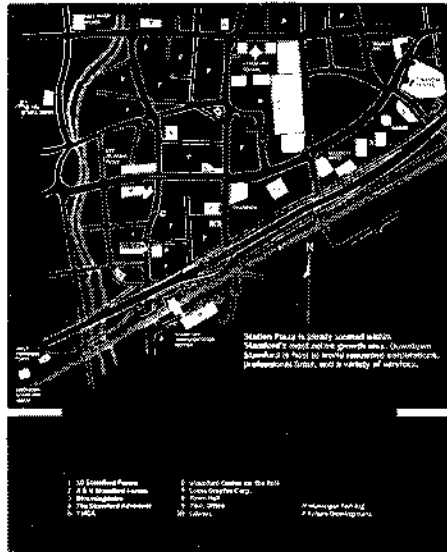


Exhibit 2 (right): Offering no details about the property's location or advantages, this brochure could apply to any building at any location.

Exhibit 3 (left): Cluttered and poorly rendered maps not only make visualizing the area difficult, but can tarnish your image.

Exhibit 4 (right): Clean, clear maps give tenants an immediate sense of where your property is located and its access to major roads, airports and railroad stations.



Highlight the location: Not only must the brochure pinpoint your property's exact geographic location, but it must also detail its proximity to major roads, highways, airports and railroad stations.

Since location is key, it should be among the first elements that you highlight in the brochure. Exhibit 1 offers "Waterfront Corporate Headquarters," showing a clear, strong view of the complex and its proximity to the harbor — a plus for corporations seeking a waterfront view. This brochure — like all of the brochures presented in this article — was originally printed in color.

In contrast, Exhibit 2 bears the headline "great location, great access, great place to do business," but it shows a map with no detail. Also, it does not show what the building looks like, where it is located, or what makes it desirable. This headline — an element of a brochure that should reinforce and position the property's advantages with impact — could be applied to any building at any location.

To clarify the property's location and its proximity to important access points, you will need to use:

- Aerial photographs of the region, showing features such as bodies of water, major roads and highways.
- Area location maps, providing an overall orientation of the property in relation to these same features, and to other cities or towns.
- The name of the property as a tool to reinforce its location and image. A new, high-tech structure located at the Merritt Parkway and Route 8 in Connecticut and originally called "899 Bridgeport Avenue" was renamed "Venture Center at Merritt 8." Most marketers agree that names can play an important part in selling the property.

- A street map (especially important in urban locations) showing the property's accessibility to major roads, railroad stations, airports, helipads and the like.

Maps should be clear, clean and uncluttered. Compare Exhibits 3 and 4 above. Exhibit 3 is busy, difficult to read and poorly rendered. Exhibit 4 is easy to use and simply illustrated.

Promote the amenities: What services and facilities does your property offer that the competition does not? Some facilities improve the quality of life for tenants and their employees and therefore are important features:

health club
 tennis, racketball, or volleyball courts
 jogging track
 golf range
 cafeteria
 library

Services provided outside the property are also important. Restaurants, shops, schools, banks, nearby hotels, an abundant labor supply for corporate and clerical services, and even helipads can make the difference between your property and someone else's in the next town.

A new building at 53rd Street and Third Avenue in New York City will offer tenants access to a delivery service, fitness center, barbershop — even shoe shines. "Hines' services help establish a long-term relationship with our clients," explains Steven Swerdow, Marketing Director for Gerald D. Hines Interests, developer of the building. "We believe in keeping our tenants with us — and keeping them happy — in every way we can.

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For Hines, that means going first class — or not at all," Swerdlow says.

Although amenities are critical to sales, what is considered an amenity varies considerably by region. Forrestal Greens, an open suburban complex located in Princeton, New Jersey, for example, offers considerably more outdoor and sports facilities than congested industrial areas would provide. Recognizing the pull of such a region, the promotional brochure features country inns, lush greenery and stresses the complex's "countrified semi-rural setting where you can work or play or raise a family." "These are the important factors for tenants on a campus site like Princeton," says Lee Chersonson, President of the Chersonson Group.

The Hines building at 53rd and Third, on the other hand, stresses the beauty and design of the building itself, convenience to subway lines, nearby restaurants and specialty shops, and proximity to the most prestigious office districts and major corporate headquarters in New York City.

Highlight the building itself: Of course, any brochure must indicate the type of building being leased: Is the building high tech? corporate? a lab facility? a mixed-use building? This will be a critical factor in building selection.

Once prospective tenants know that the building fits their needs, they are concerned with the interior design. Well-executed photographs—airial shots and/or straight-on views—showing the building's shape, environs, finishes, number of stories and parking lots can enhance the sell. If no photographs are available, renderings are suitable if they represent the project as it will be when constructed.

"Our properties stress our high quality finishes, services and detailing," says Hines' Swerdlow. Among Hines' marketing tools is a plaque with sample squares of stone, granite, marble and other finishes used outside and inside the building.

Owen J. Brown, Vice President, Leasing and Development, for Trizec Properties, Inc., agrees. "We feel our interior marbling is so indicative of our quality that we used a photograph showing the color and quality on the brochure cover, foil-stamping the building's name over it."

Photographs and/or renderings of the interior also give potential clients a feeling of what the inside of the building looks like. Atriums, marbled lobbies, water wells, wood paneling and artwork all lend the feeling of luxury and appeal to a property.

One word of caution for all visuals: regardless of whether you use photos or renderings, they must be of the highest caliber. Poor renderings, fuzzy photos, or photos clearly taken from a model can corrode your image and destroy the best-intentioned piece.

Exhibits 5 and 6 below show what happens when poor artwork is used. The rendering in Exhibit 5 provides very little sense of the elegance and beauty of the building. In fact, it actually focuses attention on the people, rather than on the building's interior.

Rather than presenting a clear, sharp view of the complex, the brochure shown in Exhibit 6 offers a hazy picture that appears out of focus — detracting from the contemporary view that should have been projected. Worse yet, what little copy is provided inside this brochure is set in reverse (white type on a black background), which is slower and more difficult to read than black type on a white background.

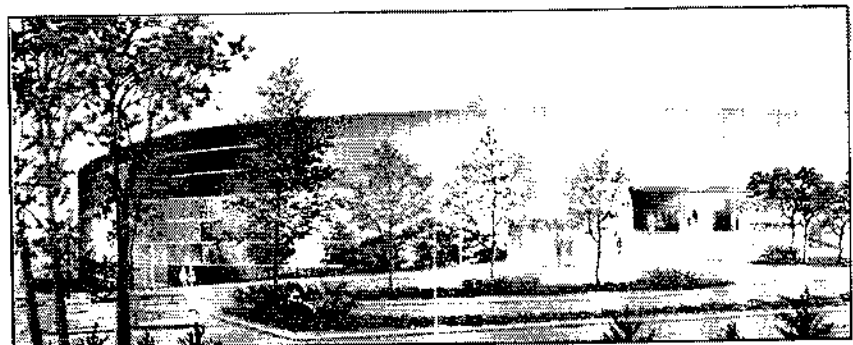
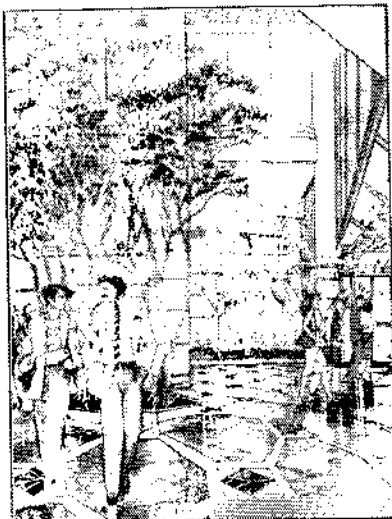


Exhibit 5 (left): Poorly executed renderings can turn off potential tenants and stop them from considering your site.

Exhibit 6 (above): This rendering, which looks hazy and out of focus, detracts from the sleek, contemporary image that should have been projected.



Exhibit 7: Crisp, clear, inviting photographs like these make your property come alive.

By contrast, the brochure in Exhibit 7 presents beautiful photos of both the exterior and interior, featuring a highly appealing building in a beautiful setting. These photos are all clear with sharp contrasts in a crisp, clean format.

For some developers, renderings of future buildings are not adequate. Gerald Hines, for example, constructs intricate and highly detailed models complete with people and taxis. The model is then photographed for the brochure. Models may also be used to help customers visualize the structure in its setting.

Floor plan and site plan: Both the amount of floor space available and its configuration are important to customers. Tenants also look at window design, window mullion spacing, core areas, bay dimensions, exterior dimensions and how the floor subdivides. Give details in the brochure itself, or plan separate pull-out inserts in the back flap of the folder. These can be used as sales tools by the broker and/or space planner in mapping out a tenant's move.

In providing such plans, you should revise the architect's drawings so that they can be easily understood by the average office space user. Besides showing clear and simplified drawings of floor plans, some developers even have specialists who design customized plans for different office specifications, as shown in Exhibit 8.

An overview of the building's location, showing the "footprint" or general outline of the building, entrances and adjoining parking areas, is also an important brochure element. This is especially true if it shows a highly desirable benefit such as sawtoothing for the maximum number of outside offices.

Elevators: The number of elevators you provide is important information to include in a brochure because tenants will want to know how quickly and efficiently their employees will travel.

Security and HVAC systems: A property's security system is a major tenant benefit; installing state-of-the-art technology and equipment is becoming increasingly important. So too, is personal protection; special lighting, guards in key locations, alarm systems and bullet-proof glass can make tenants feel more comfortable and secure. Tell prospective tenants everything you can about security and protection systems.

The economy and cost-saving measures you install for HVAC systems, as well as your flexibility of design, should also be highlighted as building advantages.

Electrical/telecommunications capabilities: In an era of increasing reliance on innovative systems, shared tenant services (services which might be too costly for one company to underwrite) can be an enormous boon — and a prime reason for a prospect to consider your property over your competition's.

Promote your expertise: Tenants like to know they are dealing with an experienced, creative and successful developer. If you are well-known in the area, with other successful buildings, detail this experience, perhaps even showing other buildings you have completed.

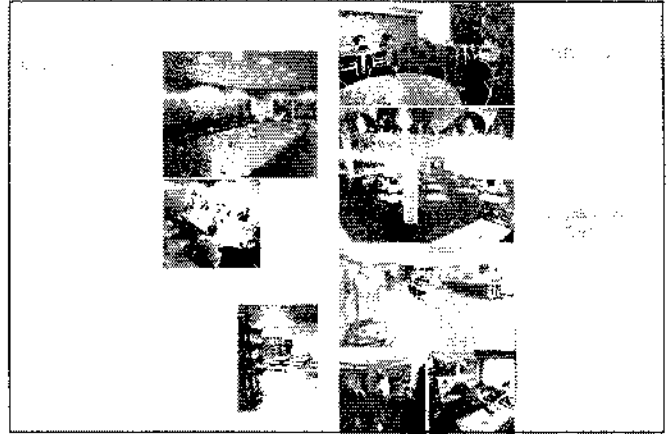
Also, if a lease has been signed with a major corporation before the building has been completed, mention the firm in your brochure. Like all people, prospective customers want to know they are in good company. As other property becomes leased, send out flyers telling brokers about the leading companies who will be tenants. These can also be included in the back flap of your brochure.

Include management information: Include information on the building management in the direct mail piece, especially if it has an unusually good reputation.

Similarly, if the developer is employing a world-class architect or one who has a strong reputation in the locality, call attention to names and experience.

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Exhibit 8: Subheads lead readers through the copy and let them know at first glance what benefits and advantages you offer.



What to omit: Rent, concessions, terms — anything that will date the brochure and tie the developer into one fee structure should be omitted. These items should be negotiated on a client-by-client basis. Also, any information not directly related to the project can diminish your impact.

COPY AND DESIGN TECHNIQUES

Once you have outlined the elements to be included in the brochure, you are then ready to write and design it — your showcase piece. This showcase piece is what sets professionals apart from the crowd and what makes a good property appear superb.

Here are some rules to follow that will give your leasing brochure power and impact:

1. *Keep it simple.* A powerful headline, benefit-oriented sub-headlines and body copy, good strong visuals, and clear, straightforward writing are the keys to success. Don't be too technical. Remember that readers are consumers: people who want a good-looking building in a convenient location with the services they need.

2. *Create a headline that positions the property and its main selling point up front.* Don't wait for people to get these points inside the brochure or they may never get far enough to find out more.

"Executive Offices on a Corporate Campus," for example, or "Waterfront Corporate Headquarters" tell us immediately something about the environment surrounding the property and what makes it unique.

3. *Provide clean, uncluttered visuals.* Sharp photographs, professional renderings, simple maps and floor plans create a professional image and give tenants a feeling of confidence in you and your property. Too many or poor quality illustrations will destroy the effectiveness of even the best written brochure.

4. *Write clearly and simply.* Copy should be easy to read, with short, crisp words and sentences. The tone

should be personal and warm; words should be simple and direct. Remember that you are creating an overall feeling — not an architect's blueprint. Readers are busy people who want the facts quickly, without having to work to understand what advantages the property will provide.

5. *Offer the benefits.* Remember that your brochure is a sales piece and must be designed to enhance and persuade. A string of facts and figures is not an effective way to sell. Always explain the advantages and benefits of every fact and figure.

6. *Use subheadlines to lead readers through the copy.* Large blocks of copy with nothing to break them up are difficult to read. Highlight the most important facts with subheads so that readers know at first glance what benefits you offer (see Exhibit 8).

7. *Choose simple, easy-to-use formats.* Four-page or saddle-stitched booklets are usually easy to read, easy to handle and easy to work with. (To increase their flexibility and shelf-life, include a flap on the back page for inserts and updates.)

Generally, more elaborate formats, such as stacked brochures within a folder, are more cumbersome and difficult to handle.

The easier you make it for a potential tenant to see, look through, read and remember your name and property, the more likely it is that you will lease your building successfully.

8. *Use die cuts sparingly.* While die cuts, which are special slits, shapes or "peep holes" cut into the brochure, can sometimes create greater impact, in most cases the result does not warrant the expense. Many brochures use die cuts inefficiently and ineffectively, and unless there is a good reason to use them (for example, providing slits to allow for a business card), put your money into something more profitable.

OTHER DIRECT MAIL VEHICLES

Flyers: While not as elaborate as brochures, flyers are considerably less expensive, require less turnaround time than full-fledged brochures and offer the most timely information. Although some flyers are printed in four colors, most are offset printed in two, or even one color (see Exhibit 9).

Since the vast majority of flyers are aimed at brokers, the information they provide often includes more specific "nuts and bolts" data such as available rentable square feet and usable square feet. The broker is more concerned with the technical details than the tenant who needs to know the availabilities and capabilities of the property in less technical terms.

Since the cost is relatively low, flyers are used to keep a developer's name and services in front of brokers on a regular basis. They are also sent out:

- to announce the project, once the approval is in and the site is finalized
- to announce the groundbreaking
- when the steel is up
- when the skin is on
- when the building is completed
- to announce new tenants

Newsletters: Most developers use newsletters to reach both brokers and tenants. For brokers, newsletters offer information about the costs, services and advantages of a property as well as giving them insight into the development company, its organization and management.

For tenants, newsletters provide a feeling of communication and cooperation between the developer and the tenants and among the tenants themselves, updating them on new neighbors, new services and other news.

If you are sending a newsletter to brokers, include whatever market research and statistics you have: the amount of space available in a particular area, "hot markets" for commercial rentals, rental weights in various markets, amenities and services that people in particular areas are looking for, plus other relevant facts.

Developers use newsletters to help bring their names and images to mind — on a regular basis. These marketers feel that the more they reinforce their firms' services and advantages, the more likely they are to be considered first when customers are seeking new office space. Putting your message in an effective medium, newsletters bring results well worth the investment.

If you decide to use a newsletter, make sure it reflects your image and philosophy with well-written copy, good design and good paper stock.

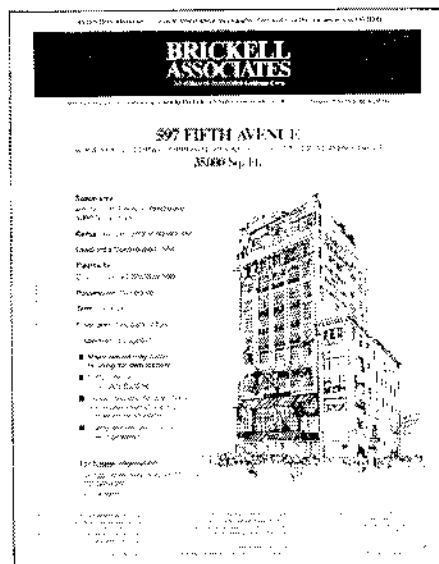


Exhibit 9: Flyers, which are less expensive and require less turn-around time than brochures, should be sent out on a regular basis to keep brokers apprised of new developments.

CONCLUSION

Direct mail materials, including brochures, flyers and newsletters, are a fundamental part of every developer's marketing plan. Well-executed, they can help invite potential customers to sample your wares. Poorly implemented, however, they may discourage customers from even considering your property.

While these marketing materials cannot by themselves sell a property, used together with other marketing tools they yield much greater results than the sum of their individual parts.

Obviously, you can create materials in as many different shapes, colors and sizes as there are buildings. You can invest your money in many different ways and achieve many different levels of quality.

Regardless of what materials and quality you choose, make sure your brochures are well-planned and considered. Know what you want to accomplish, whom you want to reach and how, what distinguishes your property from the competition, and what image you must convey to lease the property first, fast and most successfully.

Only by staying on top of the property and being informed about every aspect of its marketing goals can you utilize all the tools and ammunition needed to create the most powerful, effective and result-producing brochures money can buy. **REI**