



Design a flier that sells

The key to an advertisement that sells is simple:
Keep all eyes on the product.

Design a flier that sells a product

Whether you spend a little or a lot, the key to an advertisement that sells is simple: Keep all eyes on the product.

Mr. Wilson was late for the home show, and busy. There were trucks to rent, contracts to sign, furniture to arrange. The new lines hadn't arrived.

Was the flier done yet? At least the flier would be easy: He had beautiful products, one location, a simple message; what could go wrong?

Lots.

The common, throwaway flier is advertising's low man. It is most often used to put an advertiser's message on paper when there's no time and no money. But its allure can be deceptive. Why? Because it's so easy to think *cheap* and miss what's obvious to others—that on that rickety, 10-cent page is nothing less than your company's precious, *irreplacable* image.

Let's see if we can make a flier worthy of that.

Before

PIER SEVEN
PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE
*The Warmth of Wicker
The Strength of Steel*

RENTALS SALES

INDOOR/OUTDOOR FURNITURE AND MORE FOR REMISEL PARTIES AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

BEAUTIFUL, STRONG WICKER FURNITURE FOR INDOOR OR OUTDOOR MODERN LIVING

The beauty and warmth of Hand-woven wicker over a framework of structural steel. Extremely Durable And Strong. The steel is wrapped in Epoxy. Beautiful and almost Maintenance free. Many Styles to choose from, from Antique to Modern. Cushion Pattern And Colors To Complement Your Decor.

To Stockton HWY. 99 To Sacramento
W
S — N
E
DIAMOND PARK ANTELOPE RD. PERKINS BLVD.
X

PIER SEVEN
19661 Antelope Rd.
Elk Grove, Calif. 95624
916-555-8212

ONE BLOCK SOUTH OF PERKINS BLVD. • WWW.PIERSEVEN.NET

Look familiar?

Words everywhere, photos misaligned, a map made of sticks, whew! The problem isn't that this flier is ugly (ugly ads can be effective salesmen, which drives designers nuts) but that the products—the items actually for sale—are smothered in visual chatter. The retailer scrupulously avoided hype and carefully provided his store's location, contact info and even a map, but forgot that *the product must come first!* Once the reader decides he likes the product, he'll find your store.

In real life . . .

If you walked into Mr. Wilson's store, this is what you'd see: a line of beautifully modern, casual furniture. Handsome, isn't it? Surrounded by such nice stuff, it's easy to see how, *in his mind's eye*, Mr. Wilson's readers could see the product as clearly as he.

To an ad designer, reality, incredibly, can be misleading! Why? Because while you can see and touch the product, *the reader experiences nothing except what's on paper (or screen)*. Your goal, therefore, is, through words, pictures and composition, to make your product speak for itself.



Before you begin . . .

Advertising design would be the same as any other kind of design except for two especially distorting influences: our self-consciousness (we tend to see ourselves, while shoppers see the products), and the money at stake. It will pay to consider . . .

No one shops everywhere.

Many people will never buy your product, no matter how obvious its qualities are to you, and nothing shreds money faster than trying to change their minds. The way to profits is to visualize those who *are* interested, and present your product to them.

Maintain your poise.

As people, we share a troublesome tendency to weigh our negatives more heavily than our positives. But comparing ourselves to others usually results in overreaction, which typically takes the form of TALKING LOUDER or *talkingfasterandcrowdingmorein*. Maintain your poise. Mr. Wilson's furniture is excellent; we can sell that. A shopper isn't looking for a store; he's looking for a product.

Be cool.

Your audience is just like you—intelligent and preoccupied. Visualize a business meeting: Dress well. Be prepared. Be clear. Make your point. Be concise. Don't waste their time.

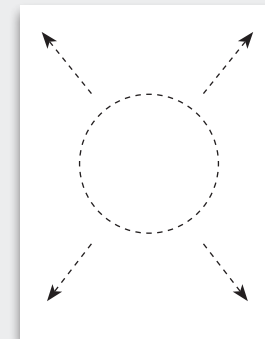
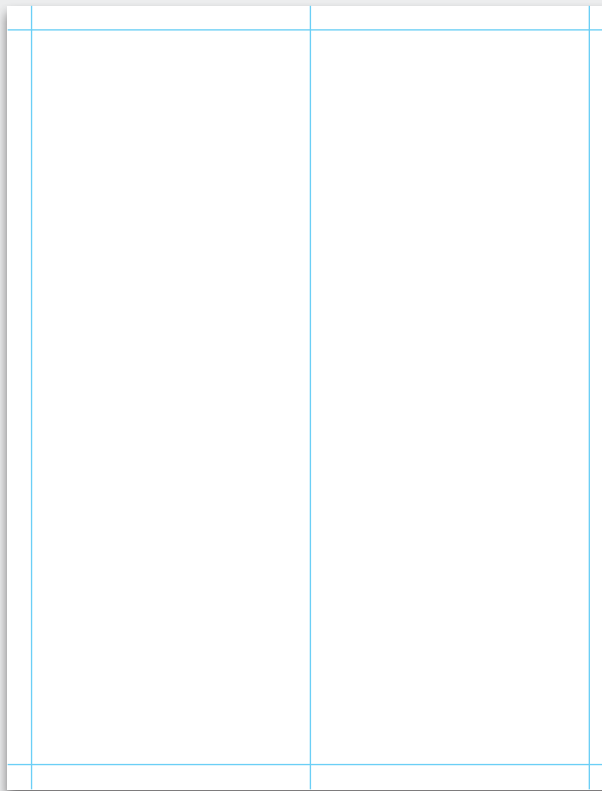


Start by setting a stage

If you think of your paper or screen as a stage—like a theater stage—you’ll be in the right frame of mind. Why? Because a good advertising page *is* a stage, not a spreadsheet, on which you’ll craft drama, tension, impact, interest.

Place guides

Because it will be printed on a desktop, your images can’t touch the edges, or “bleed.” Place border guides wide enough for your printer but no wider—typically a quarter inch or so in—and place a guide on the centerline.



The powerful center

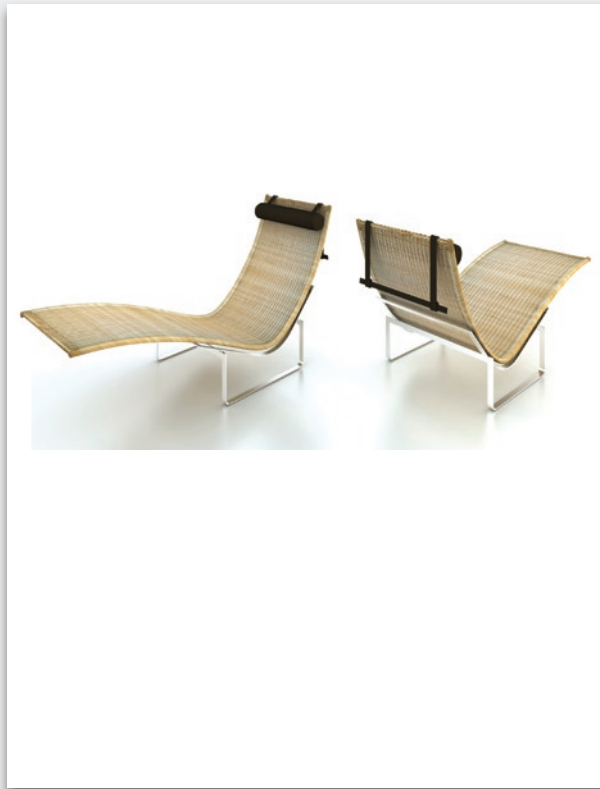
Like center stage, center is the most powerful place in any visual field. (By center, we mean center-ish, not the exact mechanical center.) Remember this as you plan your page, and think “center out,” not “top down.”

Place your product

Place your product on the page in the same way that you'd show it off to your friends: Set it out in the center of things where it can be seen and touched.

Picture your product clearly!

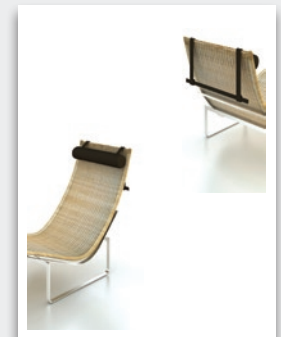
To do this well, you need a photograph. The factory or distributor is often able to furnish a good one; call them. Failing that, you may hire a photographer who specializes in product photography (a different skill from portraiture or nature photography). Keep in mind that if shoppers cannot see your product clearly, *they will not buy it.*



(Right) It is tempting to play with a design in an effort to add one's artistic touch. Resist! In product advertising, *the product is the show*. Don't tilt the photo or distort it in any way. Don't add ruffles and flourishes. Don't make it tiny, thinking a shopper would prefer to read about it. And don't crop it like an art poster, which will just frustrate an interested buyer.



No!



No!

Add a headline

Elucidate! Once your product is on the page, add words to reveal detail and nuance and direct the reader to virtues or uses of the product that are not evident just by looking at it.

We like stuff

Shoppers *enjoy* seeing and experiencing new products. (We like to be thrilled, basically.) You'll write your best headlines if you think of your readers as eager listeners. Think, *What's the first thing I would tell my friends about this product?* Begin with the feature that you find most interesting or exciting. In this case, it's that the soft wicker is beautifully combined with strong, durable steel. If your product is more ordinary—a screwdriver, perhaps, or a set of bath towels—think, *What do I like most about this product?* Explain that.



Use photo colors

Colors eyedroppered from the photo will always coordinate perfectly. Note the small deckhead color matches the chair.

Rule of thumb #1

A short headline is preferable to a long one

In oral conversation we yak on and on with 20 words when one or two would do. As readers, however, we are bored quickly. Shoppers want to like your product, but they won't tolerate much blather. English is a rich, descriptive language; there's usually a perfect word. Finding it will pay off.

Rule of thumb #2

Avoid catchy slogans

Why?

- 1) You won't be able to think one up.
- 2) If you do, it will be corny.

What typestyles?

Wicker&Steel
PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE



Always appropriate: The classics

Understatement, the classic mark of confidence, allows the product to shine. Match headline and deckhead (the line beneath it) in a face that's designed for text. Some of the best: Garamond (above), Caslon, Century, Times, Bembo, Sabon. Classic type complements almost any product. Note that the deckhead is in uppercase.

WICKER&STEEL
PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE



Not so good: Decoratives

Rosewood (above) is a heavily styled typeface—part of a class called *decoratives*—whose presence is a scene stealer. Decoratives are really showy on type specimen sheets, which is why they're tempting to use, but remember that the product, not the type, is the show. Decoratives are better for posters than for product ads.

Wicker&steel.
PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE

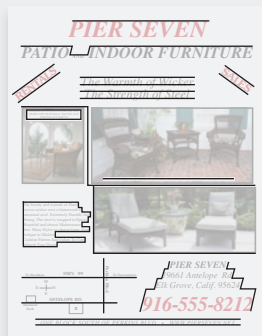


Cool: Styles that express their words

Here, beautiful typestyles reflect their words—in this case, light wicker and heavy steel. This technique is best in understatement; it will fail if the connection feels obvious or artificial, which is likeliest to occur if the type is heavily stylized. It also requires care to pull off; if you're uncertain, we recommend using classics, which are easier.

Add your text

As you write, bear in mind that a shopper will be reading if—but only if—the product and its headline have interested him sufficiently. As you compose your text, therefore, *have confidence that your reader is interested*. Be clear. Keep your poise.



Wicker & steel.
PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE

ANDROMEDA CHAISE \$999

The warmth of wicker and the strength of steel come together in **Wicker & Steel**, a beautiful line of casual furniture in styles from classic to ultramodern. Select wicker is hand-woven over a robust framework of structural steel to make furniture that cradles your body and is practically indestructible. Visit our store soon to see our entire line of furniture for indoor and outdoor living.

Rule of thumb #3

Be kind

It is the reader, not you, who is in the driver's seat. No matter how big you are, nothing will happen unless the reader wants it to happen. *Respect that*. A proper advertisement is a dignified product presentation, not a stick-up.

It is an American fantasy to think a shopper can be compelled to buy a product. As shoppers, we actually sell ourselves.

Help!

When business success is at stake, making an ad can give your tummy big butterflies. You may find it helpful to visualize your friends and imagine showing your product to them. Why? Because that's who we are—people just like you. A good sale will be a relaxed, win-win transaction.

Design simply

Willy-nilly layout (above left) is not only unattractive, but it's difficult to do—there are too many decisions to make! The makeover is simple, horizontal lines—head, deckhead, photo, text—right down the page. Easy! What makes it so clear is that the lines run edge to edge; your eye isn't stopping, zigging, zagging and backing up as it moves around the page.

Add your logo

Present yourself last, and small. Two reasons: You are the last link in the sale—remember, we shop for products, not stores—and small says *confident*.

Full stop

The lower-right corner is the exit point of the page and an excellent place to put your logo, where it works like a punctuation point and brings the reader to a stop. A small logo is more authoritative than a big one; real power always appears effortless. In this case, the surrounding white field adds to its visibility, although the reader will not be aware of that. Add contact information below the logo or at least in the vicinity.

Note how the flier is divided into four easily digested pieces—headline, photo, text and store name—which together make a clear, coherent statement.



Here's an easy way to make a logotype:

Pier Seven

Type your name

PierSeven

Remove the word space

PierSeven

Tighten the letter spacing

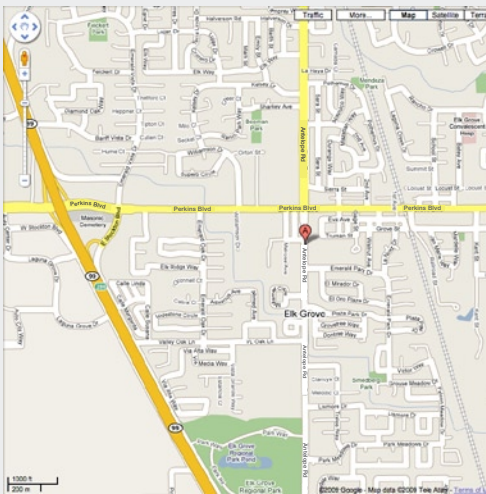
PierSeven

Color

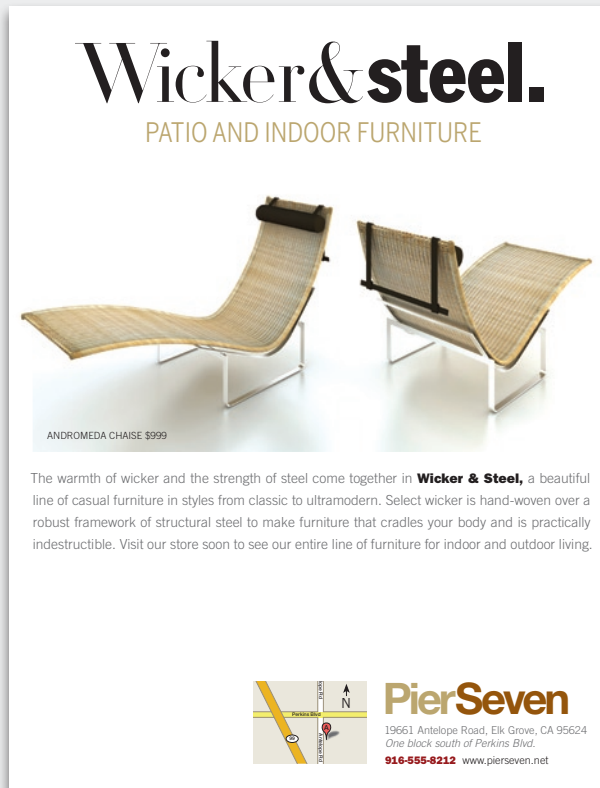
Add a map

A map is an underused asset. Especially thoughtful of shoppers are maps of labyrinthine parking garages, one-way streets, off-the-beaten-path entryways, things like that. Start with a Google map, then modify.

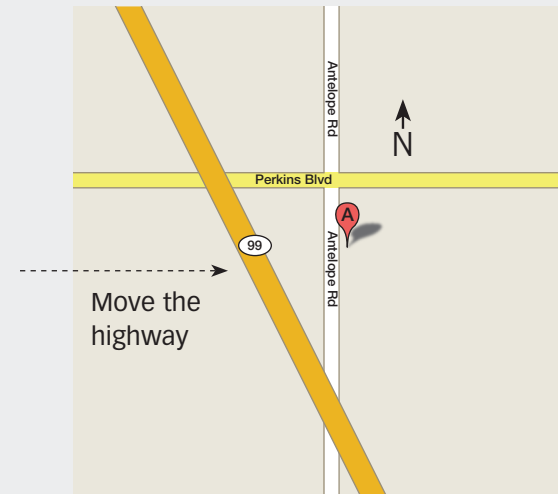
Too big, too detailed



Google maps are excellent, but for a tiny space they're too detailed. To simplify, import a screen image of your Google map, then trace new roads over Google's. Skip all but the main streets, then (in this case) move an important but distant highway . . .



Delete streets, move the highway



. . . closer to the store (above). To draw local detail not on the map (an alley or office park, for example), follow Google's style of white roads on light neutral background. Match Google's colors with the eyedropper tool. Crop tightly to fit (left).

Have more products?

Tight budgets usually mean doing more with less, so your flier may need to show more products. There are two good ways to do this. The first is shown below—put one product center stage, and make your other products *much* smaller . . .



Clear hierarchy

One big photo and a row of small photos yields clear visual hierarchy, which aids understanding. Key is that the sizes are boldly different; small differences create only ambiguity and clutter, as you'll remember from the busy original (left). Note the map has been moved to the end of the row, sustaining the horizontal theme.



Crop uniformly

Photos of like objects in a row should be cropped so that the objects are the same size, or as close as possible. Judge size by the bulk of the object, not details like legs and other small parts.

←----- Logo moves to align with the photo.

More products

The second way is to make your products *the same size* and group them center stage. Now the group, not a single product, is the focal point. Reward the reader by providing names and prices right on the photos.



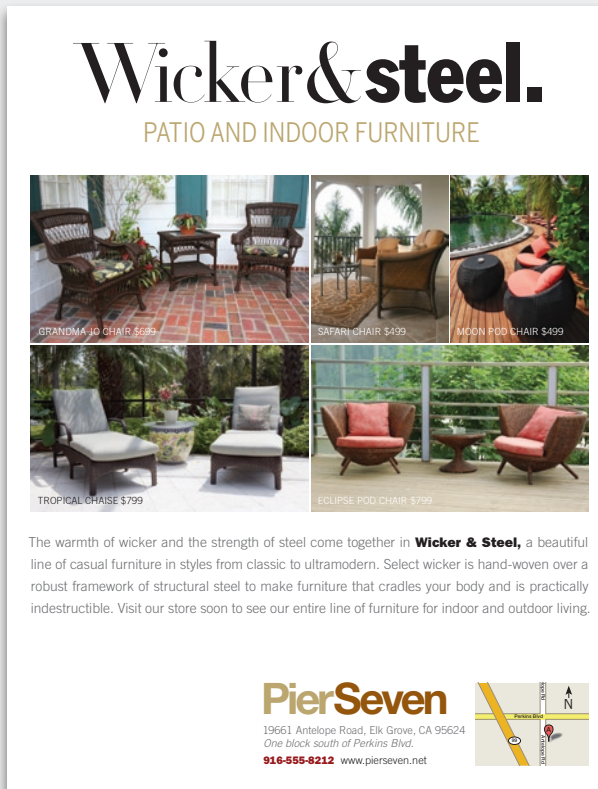
Misaligned, zigzaggy



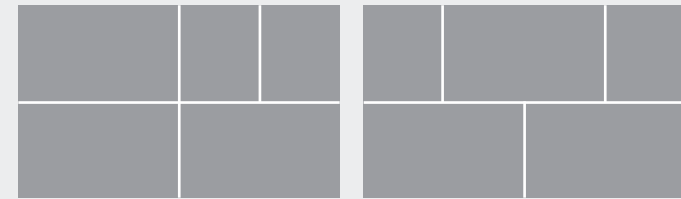
Straight and clear

Same-size photos

A crisp block of photos becomes a multi-image focal point. Key to this technique is that *all the furniture be the same size, or almost, so crop with that in mind. Arrange so that the outside chairs face inward, if possible.*



Map remains small to sustain the hierarchy.



Half width, same size

You don't notice at a glance, but two of the photos are exactly half width. The key is *exactly*, which creates an intentional, not ambiguous, look. Stack the photos in horizontal and vertical segments (above left); avoid a "brick wall" arrangement (above right), which introduces zigzags. And remember that even at half width, the furniture must be the same size as in the other photos.



Article resources



Typefaces

- 1 [HTF Didot](#) | 84 pt
- 2 [Franklin Gothic Condensed](#) | 84 pt
- 3 [Benton Sans Condensed Book](#) | 27 pt
- 4 (a-b) [ITC Franklin Gothic Heavy](#)
a) 14 pt, b) 11pt
- 5 [Helvetica Neue Bold](#) | 44 pt
- 6 (a-c) [Trade Gothic Light](#) | a) 11 pt
b) 14/22 pt, c) 10 pt
- 7 [Trade Gothic Oblique](#) | 11 pt

Images

- 8 (www.maps.google.com)

Images: iStockphoto

- 9 ([6175780](#))
- 10 ([542325](#))
- 11 ([7220638](#))
- 12 ([3173386](#))
- 13 ([3172210](#))
- 14 ([2682001](#))

Colors

- 15** C0 M0 Y0 K100
- 16** C20 M25 Y60 K10
- 17** C0 M0 Y0 K70
- 18** C9 M57 Y100 K41
- 19** C25 M100 Y100 K25

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Gaye McWade Associate publisher
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For the current table of contents, [click here](#). To save time and paper, a paper-saver format of this article, suitable for one- or two-sided printing, is provided on the following pages.

For presentation format

[Print: \(Specify pages 1–15\)](#)



Print

Format: Landscape
Page Size: Fit to Page

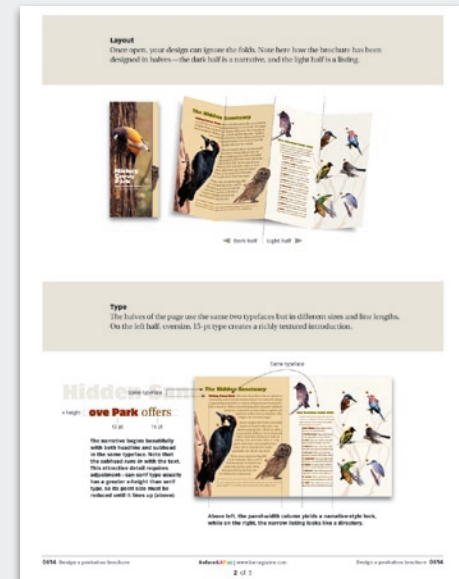


Save

Presentation format or
Paper-saver format

For paper-saver format

[Print: \(Specify pages 17–24\)](#)





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Before

PIER SEVEN
PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE

RENTALS **SALES**

*The Warmth of Wicker
The Strength of Steel*

The Warm and inviting PIER SEVEN patio and indoor furniture line is made of the finest wicker and steel. Shipping, Pickups, and Returns are available. All orders are shipped and delivered to your door. Delivery and assembly services are available. Call today to schedule your delivery and assembly. We'll make your outdoor living space the envy of the neighborhood.

PIER SEVEN
19661 Antelope Rd.
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916-555-8212
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ONE BLOCK SOUTH OF PERKINS BLD. • WWW.PIERSEVEN.NET

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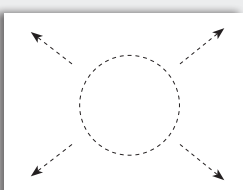
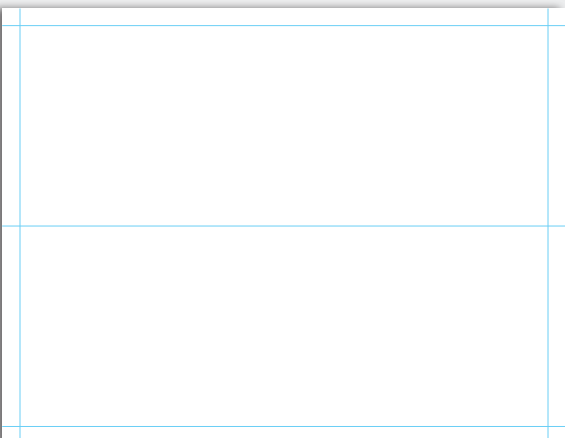


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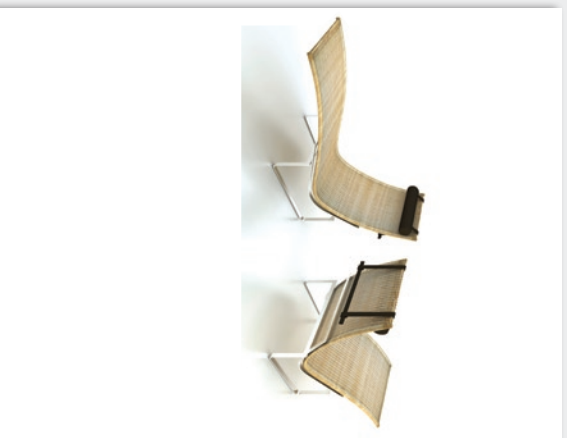
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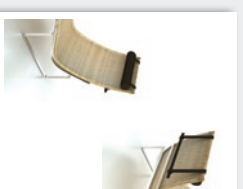
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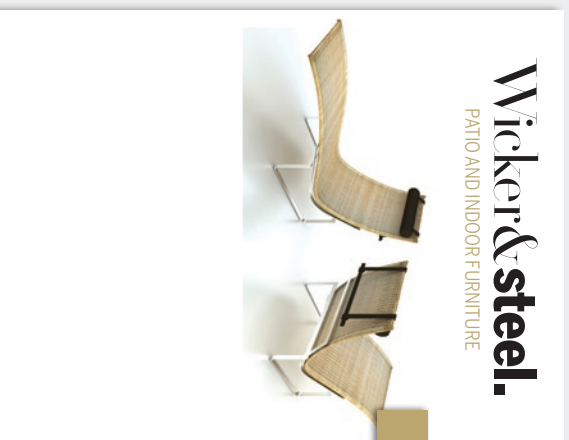
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Pier Seven

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PierSeven

Remove the word space

PierSeven

Tighten the letter spacing

PierSeven

Color

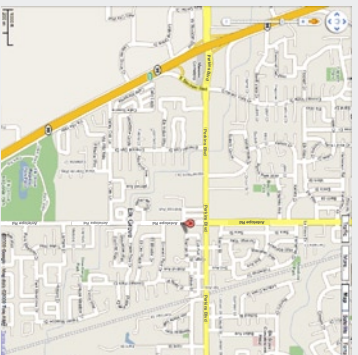
Full stop

The lower-right corner is the exit point of the page and an excellent place to put your logo, where it works like a punctuation point and brings the reader to a stop. A small logo is more authoritative than a big one; real power always appears effortless. In this case, the surrounding white field adds to its visibility, although the reader will not be aware of that. Add contact information below the logo or at least in the vicinity.

Note how the flier is divided into four easily digested pieces—headline, photo, text and store name—which together make a clear, coherent statement.

Add a map

A map is an underused asset. Especially thoughtful of shoppers are maps of labyrinthine parking garages, one-way streets, off-the-beaten-path entryways, things like that. Start with a Google map, then modify.



Google maps are excellent, but for a tiny space they're too detailed. To simplify, import a screen image of your Google map, then trace new roads over Google's. Skip all but the main streets; then (in this case) move an important but distant highway . . .

Too big, too detailed

Wicker & Steel

PATIO AND INDOOR FURNITURE



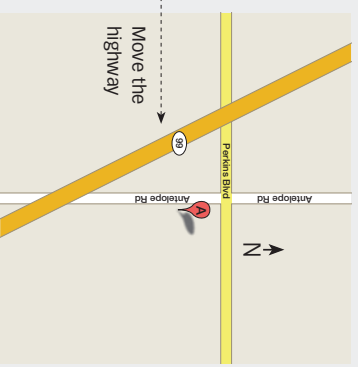
AMERICAN CHAIR \$99

The warmth of wicker and the strength of steel come together in **Wicker & Steel**, a beautiful line of casual furniture in styles from classic to ultramodern. Select wicker is hand-woven over a robust framework of structural steel to make furniture that cradles your body and is practically indestructible. Visit our store soon to see our entire line of furniture for indoor and outdoor living.



PierSeven
10651 Mission Blvd., El Cerrito, CA 94504
ONE STOP SOURCE FOR PIERVINE BUILT
916.555.5212 www.pierseven.net

Delete streets, move the highway



. . . closer to the store (above). To draw local detail not on the map (an alley or office park, for example), follow Google's style of white roads on light neutral background. Match Google's colors with the eyedropper tool. Crop tightly to fit (left).

Have more products?

Tight budgets usually mean doing more with less, so your flier may need to show more products. There are two good ways to do this. The first is shown below—put one product center stage, and make your other products *much* smaller . . .

Clear hierarchy

One big photo and a row of small photos yields clear visual hierarchy, which aids understanding. Key is that the sizes are boldly different; small differences create only ambiguity and clutter, as you'll remember from the busy original (left). Note the map has been moved to the end of the row, sustaining the horizontal theme.



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Crop uniformly
Photos of like objects in a row should be cropped so that the objects are the same size, or as close as possible. Judge size by the bulk of the object, not details like legs and other small parts.

Logo moves to align with the photo.

More products

The second way is to make your products *the same size* and group them center stage. Now the group, not a single product, is the focal point. Reward the reader by providing names and prices right on the photos.



Misaligned, zigzagsy

Straight and clear



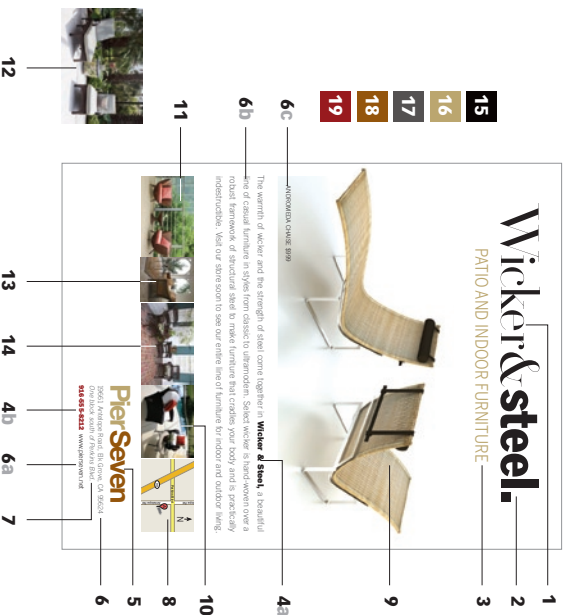
Half width, same size

You don't notice at a glance, but two of the photos are exactly half width. The key is *exactly*, which creates an intentional, not ambiguous, look. Stack the photos in horizontal and vertical segments (above left); avoid a "brick wall" arrangement (above right), which introduces zigzags. And remember that even at half width, the furniture must be the same size as in the other photos.



Map remains small to sustain the hierarchy.

Article resources



15

16

17

18

19

6c

6b

11

12

13

14

4b

6a

7

12

13

14

4b

6a

7

Typefaces

- 1 [HITF Didot](#) | 84 pt
- 2 [Franklin Gothic Condensed](#) | 84 pt
- 3 [Benton Sans Condensed Book](#) | 27 pt
- 4 (a–b) [ITC Franklin Gothic Heavy](#)
a) 14 pt, b) 11 pt
- 5 [Helvetica Neue Bold](#) | 44 pt
- 6 (a–c) [Trade Gothic Light](#) | a) 11 pt
b) 14/22 pt, c) 10 pt
- 7 [Trade Gothic Oblique](#) | 11 pt

Colors

- 15 C0 M0 Y0 K100
- 16 C20 M25 Y60 K10
- 17 C0 M0 Y0 K70
- 18 C9 M57 Y100 K41
- 19 C25 M100 Y100 K25

Images

8 (www.maps.google.com)

Images: iStockphoto

9 (6175780)

10 (542325)

11 (7220638)

12 (3173386)

13 (3172210)

14 (2682001)

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