

A little bit about **formatting** your marketing documents

When it comes to writing, the words are the most important, of course.

But how you format your documents also makes a real difference. Well-formatted documents look professional and are easier to read.

Font or Typeface

I generally suggest a quality sans-serif typeface. And my current favorite is Open Sans. You may already have this on your computer. If not, you can get it as a Google Font here: <http://fonts.google.com>. It's free. Download it and install on your computer. If you don't know exactly how to do that, just ask Google for step-by-step instructions. I also like Verdana, and Helvetica. But not a big fan of Arial (which is the default on most computers. And I don't suggest a serif font such as Times New Roman. If you love serif fonts there are many nicer ones!

Line spacing (also known as leading)

Usually, the default space between lines is a little close. In Microsoft Word you can adjust the line spacing like so.

1. Select the text where you want to increase the spacing.
2. Go to the Format menu and choose paragraph
3. Near the bottom right you'll see Line Spacing where the default is "single." Change that to "multiple" and then choose 1.2, 1.3 or 1.4 line spacing (depending on the document and what seems to look best).

This document is formatted at 1.3, which is my default.

Bolding

A document with all black/gray text lacks visual interest. Nothing draws the eye. So readers are literally pushed away from the text. It is not inviting to read.

One way to create visual interest is by **using bolding in select areas of the text**. See what I did?

When writing marketing documents, I like to bold most of the first sentences of most paragraphs. It helps if your first sentences are not too long! Since the first sentence of any paragraph is the most important, with the key idea for that paragraph, a reader can go through your document, just scan the bolding, and get about 80% of the meaning. This is a version of the 80/20 rule.

Paragraph Spacing

Usually we put spaces between paragraphs in marketing documents. But this space is usually bigger than it needs to be. So, again, in the Format > Paragraph menu you can select all your text and under the Spacing section, you can put in 10pt or 12pt. Then, every time you do a paragraph return, a 10pt or 12pt space is inserted automatically. If you want to create a new paragraph without a space, simply press the shift key when you hit the return or enter key.

Subheadings

It's a good idea to insert subheadings in your document to delineate different sections. You can make these headings stand out in a few ways:

1. Make the font a couple points larger than the body text of the document.
2. Make the subheading bold.
3. Make the subheading italic (optional).
4. Make the subheading in colored text.
5. In general use lower case for the text, except for the first letter.

All of this formatting makes your subheading stand out, as well as making them readable. By the way, I do not recommend using underlining for subheads.

Fitting your text on your document

Let's say you have a document that you want to be two pages long, but the text is either too long or too short. You can do this to fit the text on your page:

1. Adjust the size of your font. I generally don't recommend smaller than 11pt or larger than 16 pt.
2. Make the space between paragraphs smaller or sometimes larger.
3. Adjust the height of your page borders. Go to Format > Document and simply make the page's top and bottom borders smaller (usually you don't want to make them bigger).

Page Numbering

If you have a long document, such as an article, I suggest you number the pages. Simply go to the Insert > Page Numbers menu and select the format you want. You can put the numbers at the top or bottom, at the center, right or left of the page. I prefer bottom right. You can adjust the size of the page number by clicking on it and then selecting your font size from the Font menu.

Improve your formatting and you'll improve your readership.

Cheers, Robert