

Brochure Builders!



Powerful & Memorable
Community Brochures

The Apartment Guy
Professional Seminars Property Marketing

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Good Brochures Matter!

Why is a good brochure and collateral material so important?

The key is you have to use your marketing efforts to say something worth talking about. Don't waste marketing money with the same old, same old. Present your product in a different and interesting way. Don't play it safe – be memorable, be bold. Make people think about it.

These are the building blocks we will focus on today:

- * Creating a theme and feel for your printed material
- * The elements of a good brochure
- * Brochures that entice more than just inform
- * The different brochure options for different budgets
- * Examples of some of the country's best brochures
- * Other elements to include when redesigning brochure

Designing your Look and Message

A good marketing plan is as important as a business plan, floor plans and any other kind of plan on your property! Having an identity and branding are essential. This is the color scheme, logo, fonts, characters and more that are used in creating an identity for your community. You can't brand something until you know what it is.

Create a Theme and Feel

Are you modern? Classic? Southern Charm? City sophistication? A good value for the money? On the right side of the tracks? Each of these concepts would be presented and marketed differently. There isn't a one-size fits all theme and design for your community. You have to understand what you are trying to sell before you try to package it. You have to create an overall campaign and look and feel for your advertising in order for it to have the impact that you want.



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Speaking To Your Customers - A Defined Audience

Just who do you think you are? What type of audience do you want to attract? It is important to be realistic and know what market you are going after so that you don't waste your community dollars. Ask yourself some essential questions so that you can build your target profile:

- What sort of community are we? (A, B, C – student, senior, etc.)
- What sorts of people live here NOW?
- Do we want to change our target market, or enhance what we have?
- What sort of people are we looking for?
- Do we know our demographic and what those people are like?
- Where do these people work, shop, play?
- How can we reach these people?

What's Your Budget?

Wait a minute, shouldn't we have talked about this first? No, not really. You have to determine what your needs are and then work them into your budget. If you start with what you have to spend, you may make mistakes that cost you far more than your ineffective brochure. Some properties live with a bad brochure for years because there was extra money in the budget and they ordered many more copies than they needed.

Different Types of Brochures

The days where a photocopied page of your floor plan with hand-scrawled pricing and deposits was good enough are long gone. You have to design an attractive property brochure to get your message noticed when the prospect goes home. There are as many different types of brochures as there are types of communities, but we discuss many of the more common and effective next.

Folded brochures or mailers

- * Standard mailer - 8 ½ x 11 folded sheet, printed on each side, card stock
- * Other folded brochure sizes *without* staples or binding

Folder with Inserts

- * Standard folder with 8 X 10 inserts or staggered sizes
- * Custom-sized folders

Bound Material

- * Stapled brochures
- * Saddle-stitching
- * Unique binding

Custom or Die Cut folders or pages

Foil Stamping, raising and other expensive options

Get It All Together

Key Elements In A Good Brochure

- Your community logo
- Your slogan and/or USP
- The text – amenity bullet points and a description
- Property map or site plan
- Concise and clear location map, preferably in color
- All contact information, including fax and e-mail addresses
- Website address for additional or interactive information
- Consider color photographs – a picture speaks a thousand words!
- Floor plans of each unit you offer
- The boilerplate, boring stuff
- Be sure it is USPS mail-able, they have guidelines online
- Don't be afraid to make it cool and cutting edge!



It is a good Idea to look through each of these checkboxes and assemble the elements separately. Then sit down with each pile and get a sense for what all needs to be included in your new brochure.

Your Logo

Okay, duh. But you'd be amazed at the property brochures I have seen that didn't include this basic. Don't have a logo? What is this, 1977? Where have you been?

A quick note. If it is hard for YOU to describe your logo or you wonder what it means, you can't use it. Imagine what your customer thinks?!

Your Slogan and/or USP

Think of some good slogans or taglines from corporations across America. What are some you remember? Why?

Those are called slogans or taglines. What makes you, you? You're property, I mean. Developing a tagline is a key part of designing a new brochure and your property identity because it sets the tone. Your tagline should be unique – different from other properties and other communities your company manages. A USP is a Unique Selling Proposition, a short, succinct phrase or slogan that means something and leaves an Impression on customers. It is part of your branding and should be memorable, and pull you in.

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Avoid Tired, Old Property Slogans

- ✗ (your city's) ...'s Most Luxurious
- ✗ (your city's) ...'s Best Kept Secret!
- ✗ Expect To Be Impressed
- ✗ We Excel At Exceeding Your Expectations
- ✗ Elite Neighborhood, Prestigious Address
- ✗ Resort-Style Living
- ✗ Everything You'd Expect – Everything You've Dreamed Of

Good Slogans / Taglines

- You're only as comfortable as your surroundings – ours are downright cozy.
- There are reasons why they moved here. Wanna hear them?
- Park in your garage tonight!
- Relax, reflect, rejuvenate.
- Our plans will change yours!
- Get home, quick! Easy approval through SafeRent.
- New washers and dryers – apartment included!
- A palace for a pauper's price!
- A name you haven't heard, a lifestyle you won't forget
- Once discovered, never forgotten
- 2 bedroom, 2 bath – or share if you'd like
- Pet's accepted – about this big!
- Clean. Quiet. Well Maintained. What else do you want?
- Simply serene.
- Big enough to have what you need – small enough to know who you are.
- Right size – right amenities – right location. Just right for you.
- Rent, live, enjoy.
- A better Life, according to Plan. **(Sentinel Real Estate)**
- Where the standard is anything but. **(Echelon Residential)**
- Taking Care of the Way People Live. **(Gables Residential)**

You can have both a tagline and a USP that is something different. A tagline and USP should work in harmony to get your message across. The USP should complement the tagline, such as:

For instance, a good tagline:

“Luxury is Reaching New Heights!”

A good USP to support the tag:

“Boutique high-rise living is coming to Cincinnati”

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Another good tagline:

“A Palace at a Pauper’s Price”

And the USP to support the tag:

“You won’t believe how we stretch your dollars.”

Here is another tagline, come up with a great USP to support it:

“Gracious retirement living on the lakeshore”

Ask yourself some questions when deciding on a good tag line **and** USP

- ? Are you clear on your market niche?
- ? Will your audience immediately understand your tag?
- ? Can it be used effectively in multiple mediums?
- ? Is it short and succinct (less than 12 words, preferably 7)?



A good way to establish a USP is to ask your lessees and current residents what made them lease there. If you hear something a few times – that may be what you want your USP to reflect.

Key Amenity Bullet Points

Select your top community amenities first and list them in order of importance or uniqueness. I always cringe when “business center” is the first listed bullet point. Is that really the key amenity you offer? Then do the same for the apartment interior amenities. Be sure to include the special and unique amenities first and list the ones that people would just expect at the end. Also be sure to steer clear of listing an amenity that simply *isn’t* – “central air conditioning” in Texas should be a given. Listing “window coverings” immediately dates your property. Put them in order of importance, people loose patience. Each market is different and some features may truly be worth shouting about. Use some of the descriptors discussed below, or an Anonym/Synonym dictionary to find creative words that will help sell your amenities

Apartment Words We No Longer “Hear”

Discover, exciting, luxurious, lifestyle, amenities, experience, unmatched, unsurpassed, state-of-the-art, spacious, view, fully-equipped or well-equipped, sparkling, where..., spacious, etc.

Descriptors That People Will “Hear” Not Ignore

Oversized, time-saving, attentive, massive, expansive, generous, accommodating, abundant, worthwhile, sweet, serious, kickin’, outrageous, free, new, stop, at last, and don’t

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The words you use count! Don't use the same old words that everyone else uses, try something different! Don't be afraid to crack open a Thesaurus.

Dumb Phrases to Avoid

Architecturally designed, conveniently located, great location, and 15-minutes to anywhere! You have no idea about commute times!



Remember - You should strive to be clever **and** clear, but **lean more towards clear** than clever!

A Text Description That Paints a Picture

You want to make an impact with the text description of your property. This isn't the place to list amenities, that is what the Key Amenity Bullet Points are for (see above). Keep in mind that not every prospect will bother to read this, so it shouldn't have crucial details that are only available here. Simply, it's the fluff of your brochure but it is still vital and valuable. The best way to show people the advantages of your community or service is to appeal to emotions – fluid and descriptive text does that. Here is an excellent example of a text description that does exactly what it should:

In this city where monumental skyscrapers rule supreme, 3333 Allen Parkway is the crowning glory of Houston's urban revitalization. 33 stories of exquisite and spacious homes, this building captivates its residents with its' powerful location, romantic views and unequalled access to the city's urban pulse points. Gently tracing the bends and bluffs of Buffalo Bayou, Allen Parkway is loved by Houstonians because it drives through the heart of Houston's heritage and paves the way to its future. This beautiful drive from River Oaks to Downtown showcases Houston's breathtaking skyline from its most majestic perspective and serves as the city's central park. This is simply an invigorating address to call home.



Property Map / Site Plan

The property map or site plan needs to coordinate with everything else, and be included in the property brochure space permitting. It should be relatively simple, in color and easy to use for pinpointing available apartment homes.

All Contact Information

Let the client, the prospect, decide how they prefer to contact you – via e-mail, an 800 toll-free number, a local phone number or even your fax. Your street address should be clear and easy to find, and use a nearby cross-street or intersection.

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Location Map with Community Amenities

Have a color, graphically interesting location map that indicates where you are in the larger city. Orient north at the top, include major freeways and landmarks and a map scale in miles. Keep in mind that you are selling your neighborhood to your potential prospects. Many apartment dwellers are coming from outside of your city, or at least from another part of town. Have a location map that extols these virtues just as you would any other feature!



Your web address

A prospect will likely visit your website after they have visited if they didn't beforehand. Your brochure should encourage this by listing your web address and even a quick summary of what features the website may offer. You can mention your interactive floor plans, the ability to reserve and apply for an apartment "virtually", mention your virtual tours of models or amenities, and so much more! We spend so much money on developing websites for properties, your printed property brochure is a great way to drive consumers to see it.

Color Photographs and Graphics

Many brochures today include color photographs. Often clip art, but sometimes actually the property. These are cool and are considered to be "lifestyle" photos. A problem can arise, however, if the models are not generally representing a multicultural clientele. This means, if you don't have a rainbow coalition in the pictures, it's better not to use them. Some companies, especially Gables, have gotten around this by using cool stick figure designs that represent people.



Every well-run community has a digital camera these days – use them for more than just move-outs and parking lot damage! Include pictures in your e-mails, on your business cards, in marketing flyers and more! Throw out the Polaroid.

The Boring Stuff

You need to include the Equal Housing Opportunity logo, the little house you see all of the time. It is also a good idea to include phrases such as "prices may change without notice", "square footages are approximate" and "offer not available in Alaska, Hawaii or US Territories." No, scratch that last one. If you have in-house counsel at your management company, it never hurts to run the brochure design by them for input. Just don't take any design ideas from your attorney.

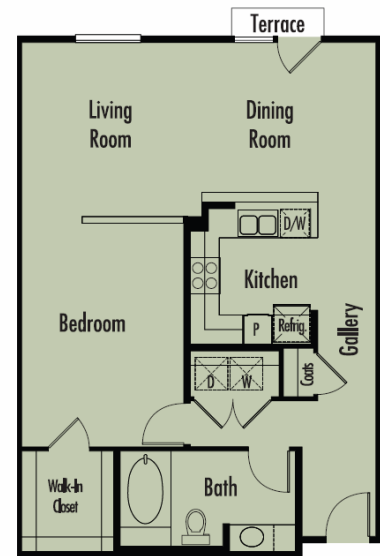


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The Floor Plans

The best way to incorporate floor plans is for them to be single sheets, that can be tucked into your brochure. This way, you only reprint the ones you need when you need them. Also, a brochure with three or more floor plans tends to look crowded and the floor plans themselves tend to look small – not the feeling we wish to convey to our prospects. A floor plan blown up to fit on one page just looks bigger!

If you are limited by budget to a one-page or “mailer” type brochure and you have more than three floor plans, chances are you are going to have to pick and choose. You don’t want to clutter the space or leave out any of the other elements in a good brochure. Look at your budget and see if you can squeeze the money out somewhere, or plan to use just a handful of your more common floor plans.



Be careful when using floor plans that are “furnished”, with graphics that indicate typical furniture. These have a tendency to look dated and can sometimes restrict the way a prospect views the floor plan. I am a huge fan of the new functionalities on websites where you can cut and paste and place furniture inside the floor plans, but static icons on your printed floor plans are a bit tough to work with.

Make it “Mailable” (USPS-ready)

If you have decided to create a brochure that is also a mailer, you need to make sure some simple United States Postal Service regulations are met. Chances are your printer will already have this, but your graphic designer may not. They can access the regulations on the USPS website, www.usps.gov.

Don’t Be Afraid To Make It Cool and Cutting-Edge

Edge Marketing – mix attitude, thought and emotion for maximum impact. Make people remember your message – make them smile, laugh or contemplate. These are the campaigns that work. So many property’s have fallen into the trap of blah, blah – thinking they have to be dull in order to appeal to everyone. You wind up appealing to nobody when you go down this route.

Jot down the name of a few of the sample brochures that you see today that you like. Keep in mind your budget, your needs and your community. Contact me or these communities for a sample for yourself and then get cracking on YOUR new brochure.



You Have The Elements, Now Let's Get It Done!

Color Choice

It is easy to say you'd like to have something printed in burgundy or navy blue – but the thing is, there are infinite color choices and you aren't likely to get what you wanted unless you pick it! The easiest is to view a Pantone Process color guide. This is a bound little book that looks like a fan, with hundreds of pages that look just like paint swatches. Each page contains a variation on a popular color. Choose the ones you like best, and have a back up to use as an accent if needed. Your printer and graphic designer each have Pantone books for you to look through. Don't have one? Go to Lowe's and look at paint and narrow it down to a few, then your graphic designer can spec the Pantone code that matches.

Paper Quality

Paper is categorized by color, "weight" and "finish". Your graphic designer will likely point you in the right direction and spec a type of paper – meaning the final printed piece will appear on the type, weight, color and finish of paper that you specify. This is the route to go! Don't just let your printer decide – chances are you will get whatever was a good deal or whatever they have left over from a big job.

Choosing a Graphic Designer

This can be tough as there are many avenues to choose from. You can deal with a professional graphic design firm that is independent from a printer, you can deal with a larger printer's in-house graphic designer, take a leap of faith by working with a student, or even design many of the elements yourself by using simple graphic design programs. Your choice depends largely on your budget and faith! As with your printer, you need to get good cost estimates up front. Be leery of anyone charging by the hour, you want a quote for the job.

Getting Your Print Estimate

You shouldn't be limited to the companies or services just in your market area or city. We live in a global economy, so get prices from various printers! You will be surprised at how much variance there can be in a print estimate. Shop around for the best deal, turnaround time and payment terms.

Proofs

Just like with advertising, a color proof of your job before it goes to press is essential. You need to ask for a proof, take enough time to "proof" the proof and return it with your approval. Just a word of caution, if a printer or advertising vendor tells you they won't provide a proof unless it is paid for, don't work with them.

The Print Job

Go to the print run to see how it is coming off the press! The main advantage to printing locally, you can maintain quality control yourself. No more sweating it out until the boxes of printed material arrive at your doorstep in shrinkwrap. You can catch formatting errors, color problems, misalignment and more by attending the first print run and interacting with your printer.

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Once You Have It

Proof it again. Be sure everything is exactly as you wanted. Don't accept a hand-truck worth of brochures that you feel "stuck" with. Also, take care where your printed material is stored! I have seen properties through away hundreds of dollars worth of brochures, business cards, stationary and more just because it was stored incorrectly. Take into account heat, sun exposure, moisture, and dust. Also be sure to devise some sort of shelf system so all of the material is stored lying down – never on end, standing up.

Great Brochure! Now What Else?

An essential element to branding your community is to coordinate the look and design of everything – from your fax cover sheets to your "leasing office parking" signs. Everything needs to be looked at to carry your new look to the world.

Below are some commonly overlooked tools that you can redesign or add along with your new community brochure, a few of which are discussed further:

- Community Websites
- E-mail Signatures
- E-mailable, CD-ROM / DVD brochures
- Direct mail / postcards and letters
- Flyer's for marketing and outreach
- Fax Cover Sheets
- Stationary
- Printed thank you cards
- Business cards
- A price sheet (**on your stationary**)

... anything that leaves your office is potentially a marketing piece – make sure it LOOKS like one!

Community Website

Keep in mind that property websites have morphed into more of a retention / service tool than as a prospect-generation tool. This is primarily due to the competition online – it is very difficult for an individual property or even a property management firm to pay for the premium placement it takes to get a property website "seen" online. These keywords and premium positions are purchased by any of the 7 major Internet search sites or local locators, meaning your site will likely be on the second or third page of search results. What does that mean – nobody will find it. So the majority of people visiting a community's site tend to be current residents searching for how to submit a maintenance request, what other apartments may be available, what sorts of resident referrals are being offered and more.

Overall, a property website should be of the same look and feel as your community brochure and all printed material. Most good community brochures now direct prospects online for additional details and functionality – be sure this is as seamless as possible. Do some research online to find some great sites if you are planning to redo yours.

Some great property websites to check out for ideas and inspiration:

- * www.1600glenarm.com
- * www.capitolnyc.com
- * www.1200postoak.com
- * www.thecalaishouston.com
- * www.masscourtdc.com
- * www.thepalisadesapts.net
- * www.skylasvegas.com

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There are also many great corporate identity websites to draw ideas from:

- * www.colonialprop.com
- * www.camdenliving.com
- * www.postproperties.com
- * www.southernmanagement.com
- * www.thinkkaplan.com
- * www.zomusa.com

Graphical E-mail Signatures

You may have developed an awesome website and some great new printed material, but not all that many people will get to see it! A great way to incorporate these new design elements into an everyday communication medium is to create a graphical e-mail signature. Much like a “mini website”, this is inserted at the bottom of your e-mails in a template format. It is usually “hot-linked”, meaning if someone clicks on it they will be redirected to your website or to send you an e-mail. These are affordable, professional and very today.

E-mailable Brochures or E-Brochures on CD-ROM / DVD

A great tool that has recently become very popular is an e-mailable electronic brochure. Many times, this is a large image file that looks much like a website, but usually without the flash or html activity. Be sure to inquire you're your web designer if they can create this as well. An inexpensive alternative is to have your brochure saved as an Adobe PDF file, meaning anyone can send or receive it and the graphics and fonts will remain intact, as they were intended to look. This is a great tool since it can be sent immediately.

Some of your advertising vendors such as Apartment Guide or Apartments.com will provide the content created for their site burned onto a CD-ROM that can be mailed out to clients, at an extra charge of course. With Broadband access increasing by leaps and bounds, this is becoming less necessary but it still worth looking into.

Apartment Guide actually created the “e-mmerical” concept a few years ago, before Broadband was common. These files are much like short videos or commercials about your property. Even though these are traditionally seen through ApartmentGuide.com, you can save these files to your computer and mail them out to prospects who saw you on some other resource.

Direct Mail / Postcards

Using direct mail to bring in your targeted renter is not a bad idea as long as it is done well and thoughtfully. The best way to get started is to pick one or two communities with your direct target resident – your true competition. Start out mailing to those two communities only and use a call tracking service to gauge the effectiveness, and a call to action on the card. A call to action is something that gets a prospect to respond to the card, such as a special deal or offer only

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valid with the card *and* for a specified time. The two best postcard specialty companies are listed on the Resources page 14 in this handout.

Start out slow, pick one community that has a similar resident profile, amenity line-up and in your general neighborhood and try mailing to that community first.

- Include a location map on the postcard
- Don't be too busy or overly wordy
- Use Good photographs
- Mention your website or direct address for more info
- Have a Call to action or some sort of expiration!
- Use it like a coupon, to aid in tracking and for sense of urgency
- Consider a call-tracking service on the card such as CallSource or Who's Calling

Sales Letters

Another avenue to consider with direct mail is a written sales letter to your prospective resident. A sales letter is a great way to introduce yourself to potential residents if you don't want to spend money producing a postcard. Not just a form letter, but a personalized introduction to yourself and your community. Some key points in putting together a sales letter...

- It's only junk mail if you approach it that way
- Each letter should be customized and unique – form letters ARE junk
- Keep focused on your reader – don't use industry terms the reader may not understand
- List the features as well as benefits to amenities you offer
- Don't use stale, tired words or slogans
- Reinforce your other marketing initiatives – especially the web
- Use your USP and focus on it in your letter

Download a handout on good sales letters at www.theapartmentguy.net/salesletter.pdf

Flyers / Handouts

Many apartment communities make the mistake of using their expensive and detailed community brochure in their outreach marketing to major corporations or locator and real estate offices. Don't waste them, they likely make it into the trash can in minutes. It is best to create one page color flyers that keep your look and feel, but "sum it up" for the intended audience.

- Short and sweet
- Color is key!
- Include multiple photographs
- A location map

Download some good flyer samples at www.theapartmentguy.net/locatorflyer.pdf and www.theapartmentguy.net/corporateflyer.pdf

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Brochure Design & Collateral Materials

Creativity For Rent – 877.313.3743 or www.creativityforrent.com

Force Communications – 303.295.3845 or www.ideeforcecommunications.com

The Phillips Agency – 713.862.4100 or www.thephillipsagency.com

G & G Advertising – 505.843.8113 or www.gng.net

Direct Mail / Postcards

Modern Postcard – cheap and effective post cards – www.modernpostcard.com

ApartmentCards – more expensive but specifically for apartments, targeted mailing lists also available – www.apartmentcards.com

Website Design / E-mail Signatures / Enhancements / Etc.

Keystone Resources – custom websites and graphical e-mail signatures from only \$150!

www.keystone-resources.com

Electronic Leasing Toolkit – all sorts of great materials and web applications –

www.electronicleasingtoolkit.com

Creativity For Rent – owned by an industry veteran and with great designs for every budget – www.creativityforrent.com

KinsleyDale.com – A great company for basic and affordable property websites. –

www.kinsleydale.com

Your Apartment Planner – great source for including interactive furniture icons in your floor plans on corporate websites – www.yourapartmentplanner.com

Resite Information Technology – To handle online rent payments, interactive newsletters, online maintenance requests, surveys and more - www.residenthub.com or 866.534.3350

Payment Service Network – To set up an online rent payment system for your residents, credit card or checking/debit – www.paymentservicenetwork.com or 877.390.7368

Sites for Ideas and Inspiration

Sales & Marketing Magic – www.smmonline.com

Ad Cracker – www.adcracker.com

Marketing Professional – www.marketingprofs.com

KnowThis for marketing resources - www.knowthis.com

Helpful Reference Books.

The Word Menu, Stephen Glazier – Random House /Webster

21st Century Synonym/Antonym Finder – Barbara Ann Kipfer - Dell

Describers Dictionary – David Grambs – Dimension

FrontPage 2003 for Dummies – Asha Dornfest - Wiley

Desktop Publishing & Design for Dummies – Roger Parker - Wiley

Please visit www.theapartmentguy.net for advice, great promotional ideas, product knowledge workbooks, helpful handouts and a preferred vendor directory!



Need more? Feel free to contact me:

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