

# Designing for Out of Home

**Good out of home** is both **simple and direct**.

An effective ad distills your message to its most basic form – **a carefully worded idea**. Good outdoor has a single focus, either positioning or selling your product – never both at the same time.

**What is the primary goal of your ad?** To build brand awareness, move product, give directions to a location, generate phone calls/web hits? Determine your priorities in advance and leave out anything less than critical.

**Outdoor is often used to augment a larger media plan, so there is no need to restate your entire branding message**, just to reinforce it. A direct adaptation from a television or print ad to outdoor is unlikely to be successful, unless the ad message and elements used to communicate it are simplified to make them appropriate to the out-of-home environment.



## Here are some pitfalls to avoid when planning your ad:



**Clear product ID:** Beautiful ad...but who's it for? Believe it or not, an auto manufacturer. They haven't shown their product, and their logo only appears as a tiny detail - for example, as the eye of the rubber duck! An ad that doesn't clearly identify the advertiser is not going to be effective.



**Images:** Clean, simple images with uncluttered backgrounds are much easier to decipher at a distance.



**Type:** Plain, clean fonts and type treatments will enhance the legibility of your ad.

- **DON'T** try to be too subtle. Small type, images and logos **DO NOT** work for outdoor. **BIG** and **BOLD** are **ALWAYS** the most effective approach for outdoor design.
- **DON'T** forget that it's **NOT** a print ad. Audiences have a short time to read and absorb your message. Make sure it's simple.
- **DON'T** use type with extreme thick-and-thin lines. The thin areas will disappear from far away. Very ornate or script typefaces, which are hard to read from far away, are not an appropriate choice either.
- **DON'T** track your type too closely. If you don't have room, take something out. Typography that is set too tight will be hard to read from a distance.
- **DON'T** extend or condense your type too drastically. This hinders legibility.
- **DON'T** use complicated images that cannot be "read" quickly. If your audience can't figure out what they're looking at, the ad won't work.
- **DON'T** use an overly complicated background image or pattern. It will distract the eye from the more important information in the foreground.



## Creating a GOOD out of home ad...

Different types of outdoor media can tolerate varying amounts of information, depending upon the length of time the audience will have to read the ad, and the distance from which it will be viewed.

### The following suggestions apply to ALL types of out-of-home media:

- Keep text to a minimum. A good general rule to keep in mind is seven words or less. Many of the most memorable outdoor ads have no words at all!
- Type must be large and heavy enough to be seen at a distance, but not too thick, dark or closed to be read from far away. Upper and lowercase lettering is easier to read than all caps.
- Make sure that there is adequate color contrast with between type and other elements and the background they are placed against, so that objects and text are discernable from a distance.
- Choose large, bold, uncomplicated visuals that are simple enough to be interpreted quickly and/or from far away
- Make sure that the product/service (in the form of logo, product shot or other identifier) being advertised is a prominent element in your design.
- If you are using more than one media form in your campaign, use similar designs for each so that your ad will be internalized “automatically” upon multiple viewings.
- Make use of ALL your space. Don’t crowd your ad, but use available “negative space” to make the few elements you are using as big and bold as possible.
- The best outdoor ads use just three elements - comprised of information and/or imagery - or less.
- Research shows that the use of humor improves an ad’s rate of recall (keep it simple, though!).
- Giving your ad an air of mystery or intrigue is another way to increase recall and make your audience want to know more about your product. However, in the end it must be crystal clear what is being advertised! Tease-and-reveal campaigns can create intrigue, along with playing with your brand’s image, as long as ultimately your product can be identified without too much difficulty.
- When location allows, extensions, neon, special lighting, 3D props and other embellishments can really help your ad jump “outside the box”.
- Out-of-home is seen in a dynamic atmosphere. Some of the most successful out-of-home campaigns have capitalized on that fact by making reference to their specific location.



## For outdoor (billboards, 30-sheets, 8-sheets):

- These ads will be viewed for the shortest time, and from the greatest distance, and should be the most easily read. The simpler you can make them, the more effective they will be.



## For transit exteriors (bus and rail sides, heads and rears):

- Like outdoor, these ads have short exposure periods. Make sure that your message is short, simple and clear enough to be immediately understood by your audience, even when the vehicle is in motion.



## For wrapped buses, trains and fullbacks:

- Keep in mind the physical features of the bus or train. While the dimensional aspect of this kind of display is part of its allure, it presents another reason for clean, easily understood text and images, and an awareness and understanding of the bus/train features is essential to planning your ad.
- In some cases, it may be desirable to use bus or rail car features in your design (creating a car using bus wheels, placing something in the windows, etc.).
- Bus and train dimensions differ in different markets. Contact your account executive for specifics of the bus or train model before planning your design.



## For rail platform posters, urban panels, phone kiosks and bus shelters:

- These media forms are visible to two audiences: people waiting for transportation and those passing by in cars, in trains or on foot. For this reason, they arguably offer a more extended exposure period to some viewers and allow for slightly more copy.
- One good way to address both audiences at the same time is to make the main message and product prominent enough to be read and understood by passerby, while keeping in mind that secondary information will only be seen by those waiting for a bus or train.



## For station dominations:

- Station dominations feature the use of all the available ad space in a rail station or terminal. They offer an undiluted ad “environment”. They also represent an opportunity to create an “experience” for your audience. Station dominations can be an opportunity to present a series of ideas or more complex concepts as ads are viewed consecutively.
- The most successful station dominations usually have a unified theme of some kind. Utilize at least some of the same design elements throughout the station so that it is clear that a single product is being promoted (and, of course, make it clear what that product is).



## For transit interiors (bus and rail):

- These media forms allow more detailed information to be displayed. They are visible to a “captive audience” of rail and bus passengers, at a closer range. While they are seen for longer than other media forms, this is not license to make them too busy or cluttered. The fewer words, ideas and images that you can show, the more effective your ad will be.
- Interior cards are good for promoting more specific information, such as a telephone number, address or website.