

Taking Up Space

Taking Up Space is an occasional column written on graphic design issues by Brian Grebow, BG Communications.

Pull quotes, breakouts, readouts, pullouts, quoteouts, and shootouts (?)

Okay, so most of them are all the same thing, but do you know how to use them?

First, for the uninformed, these graphic-design devices are short, intriguing, stimulating or challenging statements displayed prominently near text to emphasize ideas. They will probably be read first as the page is scanned. Sometimes a deliberate quotation, they are always taken from the text. Here are some guidelines and ideas for creating and using pull quotes or whatever you want to call them.

- Pull quotes are always in a large, contrasting and adjacent text. For example, a pull quote could be in a sans serif (like Arial, without tails) typeface next to text that is in serif (like Times Roman, with tails along the bottom of the type). One suggestion is to make the type for the pull quote a variation of the headline or subhead type, for example, using Arial Bold for headlines and the pull quote in Arial Condensed.
- Try experimenting with various sizes and weights to see what works well. In general, try to make the type size of the pull quote at least twice as big as the type next to it; a three to one size ratio is even better.
- Got a yen to make the pull quote more decorative? Try inserting a line above and below the quote. Perhaps you could use a screen of grey or a colour behind it.
- Where is the best place to put pull quotes? My suggestion is to align them with the columns. Try to avoid too many text wraps or hyphenated words in the quote. You might want to place a tall thin quote between two narrow columns, especially if the type has a high contrast and sufficient type size.

- When you are placing them, watch out for how they affect the words on either side, especially when it comes to smaller syllables and hyphenation.
- Place pull quotes within paragraphs. If you put them at in the beginning or end of the paragraph, the quote might be confused with a headline or subhead. You might want also to try putting the quote outside the text area in an unused clear margin. This would draw the reader into the text.
- Information in a pull quote should not repeat information from the paragraph in which they are placed. Readers might become confused, thinking they've read the same sentence twice.
- Try making the pull quote a little fancier by adding a raised or drop capital in the beginning.
- Another placement idea for a three-column page is to place the pull quote across two columns. If you do that, place them near the top of the page so they are not missed.
- Don't confuse pull quotes with sidebars. Sidebars are longer and placed differently.
- Make sure you leave ample white space around the pull quote so the reader can clearly differentiate between text and quote.
So now, go forth, and make that text interesting...and don't worry about shootouts!

