

ED HENNINGER has been an independent newspaper consultant since 1989 and is the Director of Henninger Consulting in Rock Hill, SC. He is universally recognized as the world's leading design consultant for community newspapers.

He recently completed redesigns of The Journal in Tupelo, MS; The Daily Times in Maryville, TN; the San Francisco Catholic in San Francisco, CA; the Shellbrook Chronicle in Shellbrook, Saskatchewan; and the Daily Herald in Roanoke Rapids, NC.

He is now at work with newspapers and magazines in Saskatchewan, North Carolina, Nebraska, Tennessee, Virginia and Texas.

The Southampton Press, one of Ed's redesign clients, recently was named the Best Community Newspaper in the nation by the National Newspaper Association. From the judges: "Spectacular package of information—news, features, photos, ads—all excellently produced. Clean, fresh design, layout throughout. Great No. 1 in a strong field."

The Western Catholic Reporter, a Henninger Consulting client, was recently named the best designed church paper in all of Canada by Canadian Church Press. The judge said The Western Catholic Reporter had "a sophisticated presentation of news through images, design and typography. Every page is a surprise, interesting in its treatment, complex in design, yet easy to read." The Western Catholic Reporter, he said, is "a paper to be proud of."

Ed recently developed the Francis A. Henninger Grant Program with the goal of making newspaper design services affordable for every newspaper—especially those with limited circulation, revenue and staff size. It's Ed's effort to reach out to those publishers and editors who believe their newspapers can't receive professional design help. Ultimately, the objective is to bring a new level of design, direction and distinction to those papers that qualify.

Ed has also traveled to the Ukraine, the Republic of Georgia and Armenia to offer design workshops and assist with redesigns of several newspapers in those countries.

Major seminars and workshops at which Ed has spoken:

Institute for Newspaper Technology: Design workshop, 2012

North Dakota Press Assn.: Design workshop, 2010, "A License to Print Money," 2012

Catholic Press Assn.: Design workshop, 2008, 2010, 2012

Nebraska Press Assn.: Design workshop, 2010

Kentucky Press Assn.: "A License to Print Money," 2011

His column on newspaper design appears regularly in Publishers' Auxiliary, the publication of the National Newspaper Assn. His column also appears in the bulletin of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Assn. as well as newsletters of press organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada. It is also distributed free to more than 1,800 subscribers worldwide.

A new venture, **Ed Henninger's Blog**, is followed by newspaper design professionals worldwide and updated weekly with reports and videos on news design and other visual arts.



WHY WE DESIGN HOW WE DESIGN

First and foremost, newspaper design must serve the reader. An exciting design that the reader cannot follow is a design that fails.

Proper design techniques serve to ease and speed the reader's way through the newspaper. They provide balance, order, focus, proportion and unity.

Those techniques assist both kinds of readers:

1. Skimmers, who breeze through your newspaper, looking only at headlines, pullout quotes, informational graphics and photos.
2. Devoted readers, who benefit from improved typography, better illustrations, graphics and photography.

A good design uses type that is legible in a form that is most readable. It pays close attention to page architecture, type texture, internal spacing, type size and length.

It is also consistent. The choices made for the typography of the newspaper apply to all sections, for all pages — the only exceptions being those pages where rules are broken to provide the reader a surprise. On those pages where you wish to appear different, typography and design immediately and clearly make that statement. But throughout the paper, most typographic elements are the same, reassuring the reader that the design is crafted to provide unity.

Design is flexible, to respond to demands of the news. A paper that adheres too strictly to formula makes it difficult to put the reader first: the formula tends to become more important than the reader it was developed to serve. In the case of extraordinary events or extraordinary enterprise by the newspaper's staff, we put into play a design that also is extraordinary.

Your readers come to you for your content. They want to know the day's news and they look forward to your enterprise reports and the daily features your newspaper provides.

Good design must serve to illuminate and work in concert with content. It is a basic of any type of design: form follows function. The news function is to deliver information and meaning to readers. And design helps to deliver: sometimes as a long story, sometimes as a small graphic, sometimes a map, sometimes a chart — often a combination of forms and elements. Each is carefully chosen to place the information before the reader in a way that is pleasing and easy to understand.

Fine design also is exactly what the word implies: designed. It is thought-out. It is crafted. It is based on a firm knowledge of design techniques and the principles that underlie those techniques. It allows for the breaking of design rules — but not without an understanding and appreciation of those rules.

The application of fine design can impart an abiding beauty and elegance to a newspaper. It can become refined without being snobbish. It can show high-class taste without turning its back on its working-class roots. It can go for the bold, especially in feature pages. It can be creative and stylish while keeping in mind a design fundamental: styles change, style doesn't.

Your design approach must reflect your community to your readers. Those readers should be able to see in your newspaper an image of what they are and what they are striving to be — as individuals and as members of their community.

Design, graphics, typography, illustration, photography, color — each is a means to an end. Each is a tool which, used properly, helps the reader assimilate and comprehend the news.

DESIGN ... IN FOUR-LETTER WORDS

When we hear the phrase “four-letter words,” most of us call to mind words that are considered impolite or improper. That’s not always the case. In fact, there are many proper four-letter words that apply to graphic design. And these four-letter words deserve a special place on the designer’s desk. Or pinned to her wall. Or taped to his computer screen.

Path

Develop a design philosophy that clearly spells out your design goals.

Plan

A design that is unplanned is not a design. It is untutored experimentation. It is frivolous. Planning is the cornerstone of sound design because planning must occur for design to effect and reflect content.

Design must be part of the plan. A good idea for a story becomes a better idea when design is part of the plan for presenting the story. When content and design are linked, they achieve a force that propels the story. Planning doesn’t take time; it creates time. And time is the one element all newspapers—regardless of size, staffing and resources—possess in precisely the same amount. A solid plan helps us to prepare for those events we know occur on a regular basis. Christmas, for example, should never catch us by surprise.

Work

Even the best of plans will not create good design unless there is follow-through. Give the details the attention they deserve and avoid shortcuts that undercut.

Risk

Make your design take some chances. Search for ways to say something new in print—or you will surely say the same thing over and over again.

Allow yourself the courage to fail — or you will surely never allow yourself the courage to succeed.

Stop

Know when you have done enough with your design and avoid the temptation to add more elements.

Less is more. Simple is best.

Talk

We design to communicate. But we cannot communicate without design—and we cannot design without communicating with other members of our team.

Deal

Understand and use the art of compromise to achieve the best results for your reader. Be ready to accept the ideas of others—those ideas may just be better than yours.

Sell

Be prepared to convince others that your idea can work—for them and for readers..

Love

Do it for the love of it—or do something else.

Design is not an 'extra'



Think of design as an 'extra' and interest in your newspaper begins to fade.

I've had it.

I just received an e-mail from an editor who was excited about a new look for her paper.

We had reviewed an issue of her newspaper together and the paper very much needs design work. On top of that, she's struggling just to put the paper together every week—her company switched her to InDesign a few months ago. Oh, yeah...they gave her some training to handle the new software. Four hours.

Her e-mail read, in part: "...the company won't fork out any money for any 'extras' at this time."

I am so sick and tired of design being written off as an "extra." Thinking of design as an "extra" is so short-sighted, especially nowadays when publishers are jumping through hoops trying to gain and retain print readers.

What is the v-e-r-y first thing a person sees when he looks at your newspaper? The design. The way your paper looks speaks volumes.

It says yours is a newspaper that's credible. Or not.

It says yours is a newspaper that's careful. Or not.

It says yours is a newspaper that's planned. Or not.

It says yours is a newspaper that's professional. Or not.

It tells readers yours is a newspaper that's polished. Or not.

It tells readers yours is a newspaper that's organized. Or not.

It tells readers yours is a newspaper that's consistent. Or not.

For far too many publishers, however, design is an "extra."

Yeah...

Like accurate reporting is an "extra."

Like good writing is an "extra."

Like making deadline is an "extra."

Like selling ads is an "extra."

Like good sales training is an "extra."

Like hiring the right people is an "extra."

Like checking your P&L regularly is an "extra."

Design is not an "extra." It's one of the key ingredients you need to create a newspaper that's worth reading—and worth advertising in.

But it's your choice. You can continue to discount the value of design...you can keep thinking of design as an "extra."

And eventually, even that P&L won't matter.

What clients say

“**You did excellent work**, at a very reasonable cost and you did that work on schedule and on budget. I’ve been through a number of redesigns at various papers in recent years and the one you did was the least expensive, went the most smoothly and quickly, and was the most successful.”
Andy Stone | Editorial Director | Colorado Mountain News Media

“**I chose you** to help us because of your newsroom experience and your commitment to content and to planning. Your design skills were obvious but I knew we needed a seasoned journalist to guide our efforts and to keep the project on track. We couldn’t have made a better choice. Our newspaper is a daily tribute to your design skills and your leadership.”
Linda Lindus | Publisher | The Southern Illinoisan

“**The redesign experience** was uplifting and encouraging—an infusion of optimism, excitement, and opportunity. It challenged our thinking, our creative talent, and our reporting style. I’m very pleased with our ‘final product’ but fully understand that producing a newspaper in a changing world, with changing readership habits, is never considered final. We certainly couldn’t have done it without you and I shudder to think of the outcome had we chosen that path.”
David Mosesso | Publisher | The Jonesboro Sun

“**We are doing more** than merely sustaining the new design—the product is flourishing. What makes this redesign special is that this project was about much more than appearance. The transformation in has been incredible.”
Rick Bean | Publisher | The High Point Enterprise

“**Not only are we happy** with the cosmetic changes you helped us come up with for our market, we are still benefiting from the many tips and lessons you taught our staff on ways to put out a better newspaper. We have benefitted greatly from the general newsroom operational ideas you gave us on planning, organization and more. It’s been a great success.”
Will Chapman | Publisher | The Daily Iberian

“**With Ed, a redesign** is a learning experience even for the seasoned editor, reporter, designer or publisher. His newsroom experience was invaluable. This year for the very first time we won an award for best newspaper design in our category—and we are thrilled! The Green Valley News is a better publication because of Ed.”
Pam Mox | Publisher | Green Valley News

“**The redesign** of The Citizens’ Voice and Sunday Voice was the single largest editorial project ever undertaken at our newspaper. And it has been a resounding success. We have heard nothing but positive comments from our readers.”
Leonarda Bilbow | News Editor | The Citizens’ Voice

“**Our design was the talk** of the convention—everyone I spoke to bubbled over about how the paper looks. I was proud as can be, of course, and we’re setting the bar really high for all our colleagues now, thanks to the redesign.”
Joe Shaw | Editor | The Southampton Press

“**When the gigantic copy** of our front page was displayed on the big screen as the design award was called out, you could hear “oohs” and “aahs” all over the room. It is the best thing that has happened to our paper in the 11 years I’ve been here. You have my lasting thanks not only for what you’ve done for the look of our paper but for how much you have helped me understand the principles of design. I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors, though I know that luck will have nothing to do with it.”
Mike Dowty | Managing Editor | The Livingston Parish News

“**Ed is more than a designer.** He’s a newsman who understands what it takes to put out a newspaper. Most importantly, Ed is mindful of the time and equipment constraints most editors face, so he doesn’t propose design elements that are too difficult to produce. He understands when content should drive design and when design should drive content. That’s a balance in short supply in this business.”
Neil Westergaard | Editor | The Denver Business Journal

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The Francis A. Henninger Grant Program

The program honors Francis A. Henninger, who believed in hard work, commitment to family and giving to others without any desire for recognition.

Our mission

The mission of the Francis A. Henninger Grant Program is to make newspaper design services affordable for every newspaper—especially those with limited circulation, revenue and staff size.

The Grant Program

This application is designed to: 1) help your newspaper qualify for a Francis A. Henninger grant, reducing your investment in a newspaper design project; and 2) help us determine the amount of your grant award. The Francis A. Henninger Grant Program is administered by Henninger Consulting.

GRANT APPLICATION

Name of newspaper: _____

Circulation: _____ Sunday circulation, if applicable: _____

Population of circulation area: _____

Cycle (please check one): Daily ___ Weekly ___ 2x/Week ___ 3x/Week ___ 5x/Week ___ 6x/Week ___

Total full-time staff: _____

Total full-time advertising staff: _____

Total full-time newsroom staff: _____

Ownership: _____

Publisher: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Editor: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Why your newspaper should be awarded a Francis A. Henninger grant:

(Perhaps your newspaper is experiencing increased competition from large corporate competitors, your ad sales are declining or costs are escalating—or you're looking for a way to make your paper more appealing to readers and advertisers.)

Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you for your interest in the Francis A. Henninger Grant Program.

Please mail or fax your application to Henninger Consulting using the information below. If you wish, please contact us and we will forward you a pdf form that you may e-mail to us. We will contact you shortly after receiving your application.

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