content + presentation =

The complete package

1. Advocate for readers.

2. Understand how visuals introduce stories.

3. Appreciate brevity, depth and storytelling in all forms.

4. Tap the elegance of simplicity, in both form and function.

5. Value packaging, white space, alignment and grids.

6. Know news judgment — and when to break the mold.

7. Show off the good stuff.

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Content & storytelling

Content is still more important than packaging, but strong visuals are essential.

Play your best card — photos large and small, text short and long, illustrations, and graphics.

Avoid design furniture that will fade.

Use graphics as reader services.

News judgment

Use design prominence — devote size and shape to the most important news for this readership.

Give dominance to the correct visual.

Use headline size to prioritize information by news value.

Use secondary elements to share secondary news.

Leave unimportant information off the page.

Lead package

On spacious pages, offer a large lead package — a centerpiece — with your lead information in a dominant rectangle with wide outer margins.

Dominance

Use the power of your lead photo.

Go twice as large as any other element, but not square.

Packaging: related & rectangular

Serve readers with all related content in the same location.

Don't present unrelated information as related.

Avoid L-shaped packages, odd text wraps and unnatural text jumps.

Contrast

Play off your dominant visual with a much smaller, differing shape.

Don't let secondary visuals compete with the dominant photo in size.

Vary text shapes in shape and length, but keep them rectangular.

Watch for adjacent headlines. Adjust the size, shape and margins of these tombstones for clarity.

Simplicity

Don't overdesign. Keep it simple.

Balance

Don't worry about anchoring the corners of the page with design elements, but do avoid top- or bottom-heavy pages.

And don't worry about large chunks of gray text — if the content is worthy. If it isn't, edit it down.

Color

Color has power. Devote it to strong four-color photojournalism.

Spot color can't substitute for four color. Use spot color only as punctuation.

Avoid screens of color behind text — unless you're printed on crisp, white paper with superb reproduction.

Know your repro. What works for you?

White space

It empowers adjacent elements, so use it to frame your lead package.

Develop and maintain consistent space between elements.

Tight gutters and margins hurt readability.

Typography

Less is more. Use a serif and a sans serif for headlines, and use a serif for text.

Use a display font for graphics headlines. Then use a readable sans serif for graphics text.

Be conservative with type. Stick to the baseline, and watch for awkward wraps around art. Remember, special effects are noise you probably don't need.

Keep text type at optimum size, from 9-10.5 points. And stick to serif.

Avoid wide line lengths for text. Optimum is 14-18 picas.

Keep text blocks rectangular. Don't be compelled to break them with logos, infographics or pull quotes. Put those outside text blocks.

Don't let headline type overpower other type. Try fonts labeled "condensed" or "display."

Be consistent with headline type, but let subheads contrast with main heads.

Avoid type on art. It ruins both.

Stay consistent with flags and page folios. Don't let their size and color overpower the content on the page.

Infographics

Certain types of information are best reported in infographics.

Encourage reporters to collect information for your graphics.

Designers are reader advocates.

You can't create something from nothing. Be part of the planning for big presentations.

10 quick improvements

1. CONTENT — Show off the content with silent, simple design.

2. PACKAGING — Dominant centerpieces that vary shape and position. Package related content. Restrain story count.

3. PHOTOS — Dominance. Contrast. Fresh angles. Tight crops.

4. SPACE — Grids for consistency and simplicity. Spacious, consistent internal margins.

5. TEXT TYPE — Font/s. Indentions. Hyphenations. Optimum width.

6. DISPLAY TYPE — Display and condensed fonts. Consistency, with options: not too heavy, not too light. Match tone to story.

7. COLOR — Strong color photos. Restrained secondary color/s.

8. NAVIGATION — A simple flag that can work as a logo. Soft, common-sense folios inside.

9. ALIGNMENT — Simple margins. Rectangular text. Unity.

10. GRAPHICS — Consistent type specs and grids. Adaptable furniture. Never as fillers.

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