Creating Extension Material

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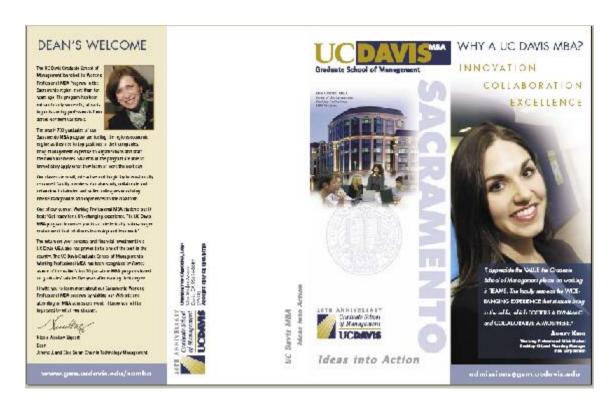*The International Learning Center*

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1. What are extension materials?

Extension materials are easily understood messages that either:

1. motivate the target audience —farmers, for example — to change the way they do something, or
2. provide information on how to implement a practice, or
3. raise awareness about promising new practices or possibilities (and indicate where to get more information).

Extension material can be:

1. verbal recommendations
2. extension bulletins/brochures
3. fact sheets
4. posters
5. radio dramas
6. videos

Brochure need to attract attention and motivate the reader to seek more information

2. Why do farmers adopt technology?

Farmers adopt an alternative technology when they:
1. are aware of an alternative,
2. see benefit in the alternative (and are therefore motivated to try the alternative),
3. can access the needed inputs, and
4. can understand the alternative to try it correctly.

In general farmers would rather avoid risk then choose profit. Therefore, new technologies must have an acceptable level of risk as well as clear benefit for the farmer. Benefit can come in many forms – increased profit, increased yield, less labor, etc..

Extension materials therefore need to raise awareness and communicate:
the benefits of an alternative technology, and how to correctly apply the technology.

3. What are the changes in approach to extension?

The major shift in the approach to extension is to Involve farmers and extension workers in the technology development process from the beginning.

Extension has evolved to be more participatory (bottom-up). Participatory approaches involve extension and research working with farmers from the start of the technology development process. Groups work to jointly identify major problems and what options are suitable for local circumstances.

Top-down approaches rarely involved the farmers and/or extension workers until the time that a recommendation was made. This approach led to limited participant "buy-in" and often overlooked obvious problems with a recommendation.

Active involvement of farmers, research and extension to identify problems and solutions from the beginning leads to greater impact.

4. What about demonstrations?

"Seeing is believing" – field demonstrations are critical to success in scaling up.

It is well known that "People are more likely to believe what they see than what they hear or read".

Field demonstrations of new practices are therefore key to helping people:
1. Become aware of new practices,
2. Believe that a new practice can help them,
3. Believe they should try the new practice, and
4. Understand how to do the new practice.

Demonstrations can involve seeing (e.g., field plots) and discussion.

For a demonstration to be effective, advance planning is essential.

Establishing and conducting the field demonstration :

Key points to keep in mind:
1. Awareness – How will people know what has been done, the impact, who to contact and what to do?
2. Believe – Will people believe that they can do the practice and that it is relevant to them?
3. Try – Will people be sufficiently convinced that they will be prepared to invest time and/or money to understand the practice so that they can try it?
4. Understand – How will they get the information or inputs they need to correctly apply the practice?

For more information see Rice knowledge Bank (www.knowledgebank.irri.org) Fact sheets: "Farm Walk" and "Running Field Demonstrations"

5. Creating extension material – Where to start

> **Remember: Simplify, Simplify, Simplify!**

5.1. Audience

Start with a careful analysis of your audience. Who are they? What resources do they have? What changes could they reasonably make?

5.2. Needs?

What are the priority needs of the target audience (e.g., information, tools, etc.)? What do they most need to know?

5.3. Material type

What is the best form of material to maximize delivery to the target audience?

5.4. What change can you expect?

Extension materials need to motivate people to change what they do. When considering change, farmers will usually try a technology in just part of their field. Once they are convinced of the benefits and feasibility, they will adopt the technology more widely.

6. Six steps to developing extension material

Follow these 6 steps after you have identified a problem and a suitable solution. Note that solutions do not always have to be "new". Solutions may already exist as indigenous technologies.

1. **Medium:** Decide on the medium of communication (written, radio, video etc).
2. **Participation:** Develop the material with a range of interested groups (farmers, other extension workers, scientists etc)
3. **Problem and target audience:** Briefly describe the problem and the type of farmer that the technology is suitable for (e.g., what sort of crops, environments, farming practices).
4. **Technology analysis:** Describe/Analyze the technology in simple terms:
    - What is it?
    - What are the essential parts of the message (the minimum knowledge needed to correctly apply the technology)?
    - What are the benefits (e.g., greater returns, less labor, better safety, lower risk)?
    - What are the risks?
    - Why would some not adopt the new technology?

    You are then ready to start developing the actual extension materials.

5. **Draft the material:** Develop the material so they are:

- Focused and concise (avoid saying too much)
- Appropriate for the culture and literacy of the target group
- Easy to read and understand
- Illustrated with images easily understood by the target audience
- Logically ordered
- Active — write to encourage action and clearly state where farmers can get more information.

6. Pre-testing: Pre-test materials with the target group and respond to their feedback.

Pre-testing allows you to check and/or improve ideas, communication content and other extension materials by submitting them to a small group that represents the target population.
You can revise concepts and materials or change your approach if the pre-testing is not as successful as planned.

7. Guidelines for written materials:

7.1. Brochures, Fact sheets and bulletins
- **Brochures** are usually folded leaflets with an advertising or promotional message.
- **Fact sheets** usually present a technical point in an easily understood manner.
- **Bulletins** are often distributed to a lay audience but are presented in a slightly technical style.

Your written material should be focused, concise and active. It should make readers eager to do or use what you are suggesting by explaining the benefits.

Think about the following when developing your brochure or bulletin:

The Basics:

- What do you hope to accomplish?
- Who is your audience?
- What are your audience's needs?
- Why do you expect this audience to be interested in your message?
- How do you hope your audience will respond to your message?

Getting Started:

- Try to develop an outline for your brochure or bulletin.
- How do you want it to begin and end?
- How can you divide it into manageable sections?
- What visual aids can you use?
- When you plan your extension material, get feedback from representatives of all relevant target groups.

Writing and Making the brochure or bulletin:

- Be clear --> Write simply and directly!
- Use photos that support the text to catch the eye and to inform your audience immediately.
- Choose fonts and images that are clear, big enough and of good color and contrast.

• Materials in color are more appealing but make sure that a black and white photocopied version is also clear and legible in case people start copying the original.

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Fruit Physiological Disorders:
Olives

Chilling Injury

By Adel Kader

Occurrence: The incidence and severity of chilling injury (CI) on fresh olives depend on storage temperature and duration as well as cultivar. The order of susceptibility to CI is Sevillano (most susceptible) - Ascolano - Manzanillo - Mission (least susceptible). Importance: CI can be a major cause of deterioration if fresh olives are stored before processing for longer than 2 weeks at 0°C (32° F), 5 weeks at 2°C (36°F), or 6 weeks at 3°C (38°F).

Fact sheets briefly present clear easily understood technical information.

Design principles, as briefly advised by a graphic designer

Clarity through hierarchy of the information using type, weight, size, position, angle, harmony and form of TEXT thus creating a visual scanning, an eye trip, that starts from a focusing point and continues through the layout

Need to have a GRID in layout, guides showing margins (upper, lower, sides), guides for the position of text, images, graphics. Same grid would be applied for the whole brochure. However, different LAYOUTS over a same grid (see attachment) confer amusement to the reader.

Never use more than 2 TYPEFACES, it will be so crowded and could create confusion.

Could have SIDEBAR next to main text explaining some details in text. The text on the sidebar usually has a smaller point size than the main text

Concerning the COLORS, use hints of green and yellow. Red would also give the hint of the soil

PICTURES: high resolution and shot in the same mood, with similar backgrounds.

CONCEPTS: have a major concept conveyed such as a production practice.

References:
- Brochure Marketing: 12 Tips on How to Do it Effectively by Julie Hyde. http://marketing.about.com/od/directmarketin1/a/brochmktg.htm
- Create a Brochure layout on line. http://www.mybrochuremaker.com/brochure-layout-fun.htmlDaimler Chrysler. Becoming a brand via communication. http://designnavigator.daimlerchrysler.com/index.php?id=128
-
- Tips for creating a brochure from "About.com" http://desktoppub.about.com/od/brochures/

7.2. Guidelines for Posters

A successful poster consists of

1. the essential information only,
2. use of pictures or symbols that are easily recognized,
3. strong colors and color contrasts without being gaudy, and
4. a limited amount of easily understood text that is presented at the appropriate type size.

Good reference: Poignant messages. Daimler Chrysler. http://designnavigator.daimlerchrysler.com/index.php?id=224&PHPSESSID=73f7117d145cc2808f695ec8db1a7c68
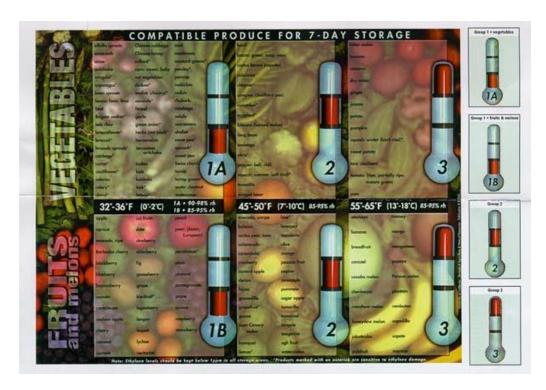
Posters can either raise awareness or provide enough information to allow farmers to take action. They should also stimulate discussion. Posters should not present large amounts of information.

Poster space is limited, so:
   • use as little text as possible
   • emphasize images and graphics
   • make sure every item in your poster is necessary.

If you want to offer extra information, you can produce handouts that provide more details than your poster.
A poster is essentially a visual presentation, so try to find ways to show what you want farmers to know.

Posters like this one from the Postharvest Technology Research Information Center combine attractive appearance with well laid out and easily understood information.

1. Preparation and Layout
- Identify the major message to be communicated
- Draw a rough sketch of your poster on graph paper - this gives you an idea of which components will go where. Include a title that calls for action;
- Make sure that your information reads like a book - flowing from left to right and from top to bottom. Arrows or identifiers (sequences of letters or numbers) can help guide your reader through the poster.
- Keep it simple — too much information leads to messy, cluttered posters.
- Avoid too many numbers and words.
- Stick to 2 or 3 main points. Too many points can confuse the reader.
- Get feedback from others before you finalize the poster.
- The size of posters can range from A3 Frame Size – 29.7 cm x 42 cm / 11.75" x 16.5" to 150 cm x 90 cm / 60" x 40".

2. Text
- Double-space all text.
- Use short sentences and simple words.
- Write concisely.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms and/or unusual abbreviations.

3. Fonts
- **All information should be large enough to read easily from at least 1.2 meters (4 feet) away.**
- The title should be printed across the top of the poster in characters of 80-150 points.
- Subheadings should be a minimum 60 points.
- General text should be a minimum 24 points.
- *Sans serif* fonts are easier to read. For example:
  - Arial

- - Century Gothic
    - Franklin Gothic Medium
    - Lucida Sans
  - Use one font throughout the poster. Don't mix fonts.
  - Add emphasis by using **boldface**, <u>underlining</u>, or color.
  - Do not use all capital letters unless it is for 1- or 2-word headings.
  ALL CAPITALS TEXT CAN BE HARD TO READ.

4. Illustrations and images

- Most graphics should be self-explanatory (i.e., they should not need an explanatory caption). Such graphics should dominate the poster (at least half of your poster space).
- Keep captions brief.
- Avoid visual distractions.
- Make use of logo's to show the origin and the branding of the institute but avoid that they are distracting.

5. Use of Color

- Color can be distracting if overused — 2 to 3 colors should be enough.
- Use a light background with darker images and a dark background with lighter images.
- Use a neutral background (gray) to emphasize color in images and a white background if you need to reduce the impact of colored images.

Reference: Design tips for posters from "About.com" http://desktoppub.about.com/od/posters/