

Μικεψ Σπορτσ

EVALUATION

PRESENTING INFORMATION - THE LEAFLET

The Data

- Due to a lack of time, the data used in the leaflet was not of truly professional quality. It would have much better to have gone onto the Internet, or even into sports shops, and gathered some of the literature used in the trade. The data used in the Excel sheet was, for example little more than guesswork, but I did feel that by adding product reference codes, it was given an air of authenticity.
- The addition of clip art and advanced features was rather ad hoc, and not properly thought out as well as it would have been done had I really been doing this as an A/S project. They were pictures of footwear at least, and so had relevance to the fact that was about trainers. The photographs were not fully relevant to the context of the document because, of course I was only doing this to show the possibilities, but again, at least they were footwear. However, they were original and gave me the opportunity of doing a little pre-processing in order to get the mark for that.
- I have counted the words on the two pages of the document, and there are over 200 words, so that it is detailed enough to gain the marks.
- I tried to make references to the factory plausible. For example, it is meant to be in the Midlands, so I used addresses for shop managers that could have been possible. The postcodes were also chosen a CV (Coventry) codes, although if I had been doing this as a student, I would have taken even more trouble to make them relevant. If you look closely at the telephone numbers given, you will notice that 01226 is not actually a Coventry code!
- The data in the table was of little value except to show that I was able to insert tables into my document and then customise them with merged cells, formats etc.

The System

- The document works well enough, and I explained in the design stage how the two pages would be printed together to make a double-sided flier. I am pleased with the Header ('Mikey Sports Marathon Series') and think this looks effective appearing on both sides of the document.
- There is enough of a variety of fonts, boxes, clipart and photographs to keep the viewer focused on the document, and the pages look busy and business-like. I think the rotated photograph works effectively and makes the page look more lively, maintaining interest. The way that the text in the 'We at' box wraps itself around the photograph also adds interest to the page.
- For the customer there is a lot of information in the document. There are visually stimulating graphics of the new line of 'trainers', plus a pricing structure and factory visiting times etc. The smallness of the print makes the document look professional and plausible in the real world. The **avoidance of messy background fills, blurred poor-quality bitmaps stretched out into unrecognisable shapes, too many comic fonts and too much WordArt** has helped to make this document much more attractive than some of the poor efforts I have had to mark this week!

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- The colours are effective and interesting without being too gaudy or muddled. The colours help to maintain the ethos of the document, as factual and informative.
- The little ‘Sale’ box is effective. In this case the font is decidedly friendlier and appeals directly to the customer looking for a bargain. On the whole I think the system works reasonably well, given the time taken to research and produce it.
- It would probably attract the attention of a customer browsing through the shop, but whether or not it would persuade them to buy the new trainer is another matter. Remember that this was done as a training exercise: If I was doing it for real I would have spent a lot more time researching sport-shoe technology.
- I think that it might have been better if I had included a hand-drawn initial design of the document. This would not necessarily have needed all the details on it, but I could have referred the examiner back to notes on design in the design section.

Future Modifications

Obviously the most important thing to do would be to look at the relevance of the data, and put more of a focus on the ‘new’ trainer and its features. In fact, very little is said about the new shoes at all! I would probably use a photograph of the new shoe across the whole of page 1 and wrap text and other graphics around it.

The layout would need only slight modification to allow the document to be folded into a 2-fold document (2 folds, 3 leaves)

I would use page 1 to extol the virtues of the new trainer, and not confuse the message by reference to the old stock. Page 2 would be used more for the existing stock and for customer information, such as contact details.

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AUTOMATED DOCUMENTS - THE MAIL MERGE

The Data

- **The data used for the mail-merge** was adequate for the purpose of demonstrating the automated routine, but I should have had more names and addresses if it was for real. My data amounted to test data only. I avoided fields in the database that referred to things such as ‘annual budget’ or ‘amount spent last year’ because they would have been unrealistic. In business, all the financial information would come from a separate database, probably bases around an Excel spreadsheet. The names and addresses might contain a link reference or code to this information, but not an actual figure.
- The telephone numbers are not plausible as they don’t match the postcodes, but at least they do have area codes. Some of the work I marked didn’t have these, which is sloppy research. I did not bother validating the data input too much, because that is not really the scope of this task (a database is the basis of the A2 (A level) task)
- **The data used for the form letter** was again adequate, but probably rather brief. The template contains all essential details, such as how to contact the company.
- There is no location map or directions of how to get to the conference, which are normally sent out as a separate sheet with all meetings of this kind. Often there is a list of delegates included, because people like to know who else will be going.
- The address details for the addressee are adequate and include a postcode and a reference.
- The watermark behind the text is effective, and the large heading as a Header has been used throughout the three tasks, giving a ‘house style’ to the documents.
- The text for the mail-merge is brief and contains basic information, but it is business-like and to the point. It does hint at the financial opportunity here (see section on ethos).
- I have proof-read the document and made sure there are no obvious spelling mistakes, grammar errors or capital-letter mistakes.

The System

- The system works well, in so far as the mail-merged documents print out with correct details. The addressee details are carefully placed to avoid errors such as house number and street on different lines, and there are enough fields in the database to allow me to address the manager as ‘Dear Bill’ and not ‘Dear Bill Smith’.
- The watermark appears behind the text and does not obscure the letter – it would be wrong to use graphics that overpowered the text and made it impossible to read (students please note!)
- By having the blank mail-merge saved as a template, it is very convenient if you want to send a form letter out to the same group of people again. For example, a week after the conference you might want to send out a little sales reminder to the same group. All you have to do is open the template and all the database data is already included, along with header, footer and watermark etc.

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- By making a macro to open the mail-merge template makes this job even easier, and placing an icon in the toolbar to run the macro is very effective, provided you remember to ‘save as’ the new final document with a different filename. Editing the icon to make it instantly recognisable is also effective. The other two macros work well, and set the page up to a preferred style, and make sure the printer is set up correctly. This saves many key-presses and avoids wasted paper, which otherwise might come out in landscape orientation for example.
- By inserting the date as a date/time field, today’s date is printed automatically every time I use the mail-merge. This works well.

Future Modifications

The modifications I would make if I did this again would be to include more data on the document. This would probably include details of how to get there, possibly with a list of delegates. The text of the letter is also quite brief. I would also do the things mentioned in the section above – i.e. I would check the plausibility of telephone numbers and postcodes.

I would include at least ten shops/ managers in my database, and print out only the first as test data. However, I would not bother printing out ALL of the mail-merge letters – four is quite adequate (more than that is just an attempt to pad out the work, and actually counts against you!)

Rather than do three macros, I would do one macro (to open a new mail-merge) and gain the other two marks by **including a table** on the document. This table would be an on-line data collection form that the managers completed, printed out and then returned to me. The important thing about completing the form on-line is that it would then be able to validate what the managers typed in, avoiding data-entry errors. The table would also include calculated fields, which are automatically updated. These could include questions about the shop’s annual budget, or previous expenditure and a total would be calculated and appear on the form. Explanation of how I did this would be important in the design stage of the task.

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THE PRESENTATION - POWERPOINT

The Data

- The data used for the presentation was clearly inadequate for the purpose of a new product launch, unless it was the first introductory minute of a much longer presentation. This is because it doesn't actually say anything about the new range. It really only consists of a series of photographs and only serves the purpose of demonstrating the features of PowerPoint. However, having the name of the sales manager on each slide serves a purpose, and this text is in white so that it is fairly discreet.
- The video sequence at the beginning is obviously simply there to show that it can be done, although it does involve shoes, and the photographs of shoes do have relevance.
- The clip art is also of shoes and has relevance.
- All of the written information is in a font size large enough to be read from a reasonable distance away. Graphic images are large enough and clear enough to be seen from the back of a room.
- The background to the master slide is effective because it is uncluttered and allows attention to focus on the photographs of the products. Students often make the mistake of spending too long designing an elaborate background, but this only confuses what the presentation is trying to say.
- The photographs are clear and much more informative than clipart images. The boot photograph that was pre-processed in PhotoShop is much clearer than the original.
- The sheet of price specifications is effective in that it looks plausibly, but close scrutiny will again show lack of research.
- The navigation buttons (bookmarks) have been made discreet by making them quite small, rectangular, choosing a more pleasing colour than the default colour of green and by making this semi-transparent.
- The sound on the first slide was captured with the video and is the sound of running feet, so it does have relevance.
- By having a master slide with the 'Mikey Sports' trademark header on each slide, the 'house-style' is maintained through the leaflet, the mail-merge and now the presentation. This helps to establish an image of the company in the minds of the customers.

The system

- The system works reasonably well. The video sequence loops until clicked, although it is important to have the video stored in the same desktop folder as the presentation for portability to other computers. The sound plays at the same time as the video. The master slide means that all the basic information (header/ logo and footer etc) doesn't need to be placed on each slide one at a time, and appears instantly and in exactly the same place. This avoids images jumping around and looks more professional.
- The slides are timed so that most actions happen automatically. The time delay between slides was adjusted to be about right, in most cases no more than 1 second unless there was a need for a particular image to stay on screen longer (for audience impact).
- Animations were kept to a minimum of variety. Words appearing 'letter by letter' to the sound of machine-gun fire was avoided! The animations that were used were effective in building up the message – timing was used to hold the audience' attention.

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- The navigation buttons (bookmarks) work, and enable the presenter to jump directly to the pricing structure and/or repeat the whole sequence again.
- The hypertext and the hyperlinked 'hotspot' both work and enable the presenter to jump to the company website where the full product range would be available. (This may be the reason why the data in the actual presentation is limited – it only serves to launch the website, which serves as the main vehicle for the product launch!)
- The animated full-stop sequence is minimal and I doubt that it would fully satisfy the requirement for 'original or flash animation'. IF this is the type of animation you decide to do (maybe with modified clipart images to create a movement effect) it would need to be well described.
- The final slide, containing edited video and sound files is only to show what could be done with a little more time/ effort to gain the full marks in this section.

Future Modifications

If I were to be doing this for real, I would obviously look very closely at the data on the slides. This includes the photographs, the clipart and the video/sound sequence. Does it give enough information to the audience? Are the images fully relevant? Is the pricing structure plausible? I would need to do more research on the Internet, or via local stores (fliers) and make sure that my facts were more convincing. I would need to spend more time developing the video and the animated sequence. More bookmarks through the system would allow greater flexibility than just first or last slide.

I might create a couple of simple macros to control printout: one would print only the data sheet (pricing structure) for managers. The other would print out the whole presentation as a handout, with six slides per page. These macros would be useful because they would save having to set up the printout options differently each time.

The main structure of the system works OK, but a more detailed presentation would be needed if I wanted to persuade potential customers (retail shops) to purchase goods in wholesale quantities.