U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary – Imagery Division, Department of Public Affairs

GUIDELINES FOR CREATIVE REQUESTS

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The Imagery Division of the Department of Public Affairs is a unique resource available to Auxiliarists throughout the organization. We stand ready to evaluate, design and produce artwork, letterhead, banners, brochures, videos, labels, covers and other graphic material which will make your program tools appealing and effective. "Imagery" is comprised of a handful of skilled professionals who, like many Auxiliarists, are employed full-time in their own graphics art professions. Like you, we have a limited amount of time to dedicate to Auxiliary activities. Like you, we are dedicated to volunteer service on behalf of our Coast Guard and Auxiliary missions.

This Guide reflects a fundamental philosophy of the Department of Public Affairs: *Customer Service.* We view our department as a kind of business, and the rest of the Auxiliary is our customer. If we make *you* look good and succeed, then we will have been successful. After all, graphic design is all about an attractive appearance.

Our experience over the last few years has demonstrated that the fundamental approach to our design projects has a dramatic effect on their success and timing. We are confident that your use of these techniques will ensure the timely and effective development of your products while making the best use of our productive capacity.

In an effort to create much more professional and attention-getting marketing materials, the Imagery Division of the Department of Public Affairs has compiled the following guidelines to ensure that your graphics and multimedia requests are processed in a timely and orderly fashion.

All requests for creative services must be submitted via the Auxiliary website form at http://www.auxpa.org/creativeservices.htm. This is to ensure that you have gathered all pertinent information about your project prior to requesting work. A tremendous amount of time can be lost in bouncing back and forth on fact-finding phone calls and e-mails. By filling out the form, we will get the information we need and you will learn more about what is needed to accurately process your request.

When you fill out the on-line form, you will no doubt come across items which are unfamiliar to you or to which you don't know the answer. ***You must get the answers to these questions.*** Feel free to contact an "A" Department staff member for assistance.

The Division's capabilities

The Imagery Division offers broad creative capabilities. We have Branch Chiefs in the following areas:

       Brochures/Print

Graphic Design/Illustration
Video
Audio
Photography
Web Services

Various Branch Chiefs and Branch Assistants hold responsibility for these areas; some for more than one. Resources are spread out all over the country. We do not offer printing, audio/video duplication services or web hosting, although we can provide quotes based on your specifications.

When you make a creative request, it is routed by the Creative Services Manager to the appropriate Branch Chief.

Who can request Creative Services

Before you provide us with your assignment, please make sure you have a viable plan for how the product will be used. To ensure that there is a decisive need for your product and that the chain of command is aware of what is being requested, requests can only be accepted from the following:

NEXCOM
National Staff: DVC (or equivalent) and above
Local Projects: DSO-PA

The above personnel may then designate a POC (Point of Contact) for follow-through.

Sometimes we receive requests early in the process of the development of a program, before the program has been completely planned and approved by the Auxiliary leadership which has supervisory authority over the project. Although we want a reasonable amount of lead time, it has been our experience that starting too early can waste our resources because changes in the program end up changing the copy or graphics. ***Please make sure you have cleared the project through your chain before delegating it to us.***

Please note that it is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED to use local resources for flotilla- and division-level publications and productions which are intended for limited distribution, but care must be taken that proper formatting and logo guidelines are followed.

Funding Issues

We all recognize how useful it is to have a focused handout to promote our programs. We could literally have a brochure for every one of our missions which could be handed to the customer, i.e., the recreational boater or the Coast Guard point of contact, in order to explain and illustrate our activities. This Guide is an excellent example. But if a brochure or manual is going to need to be mass produced by a professional printer and the funding is not in place to finance the printing, we could be wasting our time.

We understand that there are situations, such as grant requests, where the funding is contingent on being able to offer a pleasing and professional design. For example, we recently designed a sticker that will appeal to children attending boat shows. This was the subject of a Boat U.S. Grassroots Grant application. Unfortunately, Boat U.S. Foundation didn't think our

idea was as clever as we did, and we are still looking for funding for that project. But if you want to produce a brochure to hand out at boat shows, please make sure that we have the funding to produce it and that it doesn't duplicate something which is already available through another source.

How projects are prioritized

Requests for creative projects are fulfilled on a first-come, first-served basis except where given priority by request of the National Commodore, NADCOs or other high-ranking national staff. This is also dependent upon and directly related to the scope of the project and availability of staff. *A minimum of one month lead time* is necessary on any request, and this must take the form of an absolute date. Some print projects may require at least a month and video will require several months to complete. *"ASAP" is not acceptable as a project deadline.* If you say "ASAP," you will be among the countless masses of our customers who need *everything* "ASAP." Your assignment will end up last on the list.

Projects with less than one month of lead time will be evaluated based on staff availability and scope of the project. *Absolutely no project will be accepted with one week or less of lead time.*

Requirements for requesting creative services

You will need to know the following things before requesting creative services.

1) Designate a POC (Point of Contact) for the project.

It is common to have four or five people providing their input on a project. You must designate a point person to be our primary contact. This person will coordinate the collection of information provided to us, and will forward any proofs or revisions to all the people on your team. We ask this person to please WAIT until they get all comments from everyone on the team before forwarding them to us. That last person you didn't hear from is the one who will have issues with the layout or text.

2) Gather all pertinent information prior to initiating your creative request.

Prior to initiating a new project, please consult with everyone on your team to get the correct wording, sizes, logos, how it will be printed or distributed, etc. BEFORE requesting your job. Please avoid generic requests – we cannot fulfill them. If you e-mail us and say, "We want you to redesign that such-and-such brochure, something a little more snazzy with new pictures and better copy. Let me know when you have that," you will be disappointed in the outcome. We cannot read your mind; you must be specific.

In past projects, we have wasted valuable resources by going back and forth on items that should have been decided on at the outset, resulting in extra and redundant work. After a project has been completed is not the time to discover that a team member wants to edit the copy or add more pictures. That should be worked out by the team earlier in the process. Of course, we realize that there will often be revisions to layouts, artwork and text that are unavoidable. This is often the case if we are working on an entirely new design or significant revision to an existing design. But actual copy and critical content should be established and approved ahead of time. Please think about your project in advance in order to answer as many questions as possible:

- Which logos do I want to use?
- How do I really want that worded?
- What colors should that be?
- What contact information do I want included?
- Do we have photos? Where will we get them?
- What audience is this directed to?
- How will it be printed?
- How long will it be (for videos or audio spots)?
- Will I need any programming (for web projects)?

A list of complete questions which need to be answered can be found on the on-line form.

As an aside, if you were paying a designer to do this work, you would be charged by the time and each revision. You'd therefore think more carefully about what you wanted and in order to limit the cost of your revisions. We're charging you – in time – for each and every change you make. Even a simple, two-word type change will take 15 minutes to open the file and fonts, change the type, save a pdf and e-mail it to you.

3) Decide on the final file format for delivery.
Because we deal with so many people in different parts of the country, all using different computers (PCs and Macs), different software (PageMaker, Quark, InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Word, PowerPoint, etc) and different operating systems (Windows XP, Windows 98, Mac OSX, Mac Classic 9 and below, etc), we cannot specify a final file format which will suit everyone's needs. For this reason, we must know the EXACT USAGE of your project, especially if you intend to be able to edit it yourself.

We prefer to furnish Adobe Acrobat pdf files for print jobs but unless you have a full version of Acrobat you will not be able to edit these. ***You must tell us this beforehand.*** If we send you a Word file and you don't have Word but would rather have the final be editable in PowerPoint, we would have to totally recreate the file. BEFORE we start the project is the perfect time to decide this information, not AFTER.

Consequently, if you decide after the project is finished that you'd rather print and edit it yourself instead of sending it to a commercial printer, you will need to initiate a new creative request through the web site*. **It is imperative that you decide all of this prior to initiating the project.*** We cannot stress this enough.

4) Only send FINAL APPROVED information and changes
5) SUMMARIZE all e-mails.
It is very easy to get confused over who is on what project, who needs to see revisions, and who gives approval, etc. For that reason we also ask that you ***DO NOT copy us on every e-mail that you send to members of your team asking for their input***. We only need to know the FINAL APPROVED information which you should SUMMARIZE from the myriads of e-mails which will undoubtedly fly back and forth while you're trying to work out the details. Please do NOT send us a huge e-mail quoting every reply from every person for the whole history of the project, debates about content, etc. THIS IS EXTREMELY CONFUSING. If you do, you are asking us to plough through that material and try to guess at exactly what you want. It's much less confusing if you just summarize the comments and advise us of the final decisions.

6) Limit file attachments.

When you "reply all" or "forward" an e-mail containing a file attachment and include us as a cc, you are sending us our own attachment again and "burning" our bandwidth. ***This is VERY important - you don't have to send the original attachment back to us or anyone else unless you changed something you want us to see.*** Some folks only have a certain amount of server space through their ISP, and by forwarding the same attachments over and over, you are jamming their in-boxes and causing them to miss other important messages. Please have consideration. Only reply to your own POC and include file attachments where absolutely necessary.

7) Know your distribution method and quantities.

Please know what your distribution method and/or printing process will be along with the content description. This is necessary because things are designed differently depending upon how they will be printed or distributed. For example if you assign a project to us without this information, we might design a project for "process" printing and later discover that you planned to print it using "spot color," not "process." In that case, the entire project must be re-designed as spot color so that the color separations will work with "spot color" system. This is additional work that didn't have to be done if we had been informed of the printing process at the front end. If you are uncomfortable discussing these details with the printer, you can provide us with the name and phone number of the printer and we will contact them directly to determine how the item will be printed.

If you intend for individuals to print the items themselves on their own printers, we need to know this in advance. There are margins that have to be adjusted and bleeds that won't work. If you intend to make your own changes, we need to know what computer platform you're using and what application programs you're using. Most of the time you won't be able to make your own changes, because we will provide you with the artwork in an Adobe PDF file. This is to ensure the integrity of the design.

Graphics which are intended to be used on the internet in web sites raise a number of additional issues. ***Never, EVER, attempt to resize or edit a graphic intended for use on the web unless you are a seasoned professional in this area.*** Web graphics are set to a certain size and resolution. Images created for the web will degrade noticeably if altered.

8) When requesting revisions to existing products, please mail ACTUAL copies of existing product. Do NOT fax.

If you are requesting revisions to an existing piece, please have a copy of the actual product being revised available to mail to your creative POC. Faxes are often received as black blobs, especially when there are background images and colors. Please do not assume that we know what you are referring to. We don't have a stock of brochures or any other printed, video or audio products. It is also important to see the previous printing process and the stock on which it was printed. If there is no particular printing process or stock requirement, then an e-mailed pdf or jpeg will do.

Similarly, if you have a particular theme you want to perpetuate in your program to reinforce the visual impact or "branding" of the program, be sure to include it with your specifications for the project.

9) Follow proper sign-off procedures.

Prior to final delivery of any project, we will send, via e-mail, a confirmation that the project is approved and therefore closed. Any changes made after this point require a new work request and are subject to the same time limitations as any other new project.

Please download the "Sign-Off Checklist" from the Creative Service Requests web page and ensure you have thoroughly reviewed your documents for errors prior to giving approval for final production.

We truly hope that this Guide is helpful to you. We hope our comments will not appear to you to be overly demanding or unreasonable. We are all in this premier volunteer organization together, and we want you to be as successful as you can be with your volunteer time. You *are* our customer, and even though you may not pay us for our services, we appreciate your support and attention to the process involved in our activities. The Imagery Department wants to deliver your projects to you with minimal delay and minimal changes. Please contact an "A"-Department staff member if you have any questions. Thank you for your cooperation!