

# The trend toward “soft sell”

*Clean, classy layouts prove that less is more*

In its simplest form, there are two trains of thought about how to get a message across in advertising. “Hard sell” is bold, bright, sometimes obnoxious and flat out gaudy. It smacks you in the face. You could read the ad from the moon. I think you get the idea. Then there’s “soft sell,” which is at the far other side of this spectrum. It’s small, subtle and uncluttered with sometimes very low contrast color. It can be almost difficult

**Soft sell is small, subtle and uncluttered, often with very low color contrast.**

to read at times.

I’m seeing a trend lately toward the latter approach. Contractors, corporate businesses, shop owners and many others no longer feel the need to scream. They’re choosing to make a scaled-down identification statement on their vehicles. It’s possible these businesses are quite established and don’t need to be a rolling billboard. Many of them have personal vehicles and don’t want to draw attention to their logo. Some clients identify their vehicles just so they can claim it as a business expense.

There are communities that don’t allow vehicles with lettering or logos to park in



a driveway overnight. I guess they're afraid of creating commercial cul-de-sac clutter. With the popularity of SUVs and high-end pickup trucks (not to mention the cost of them), I can understand why some customers want something smaller and less obtrusive for the sake of a classier look.

A few customers have told me their wives will use this vehicle after hours to run to the mall and they do not want to drive a moving billboard! I can understand that. Actually, I like this scaled-down, subtle approach to vehicle identification.

*continued...*



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■ **10 of this summer's projects**, November/December  
2000

In the article *Layout, cornfields and wide-open spaces* (SignCraft January/February 2001), figure 3 shows such an approach. A small logo on

**A small logo on a large vehicle can play on the viewer's natural curiosity and make them read it.**

a large vehicle will challenge viewers to look and try to read it. A small image can play on the viewer's natural curiosity to make them read it.

Look over these examples and see how these companies have minimized their advertising space and maximized the curiosity factor big time—while maintain-

ing a classy feel. Some of these are on the lower front door; some are in the middle of the door. A window in the extended cab area worked for one. The upper back portion of a rear quarter panel and the lower right tailgate is effective, too.

Do some experimenting moving your client's logos to other locations on the vehicle, and try a smaller size. You may find it creates a unique appearance that grabs the viewer's eye and lures them into reading it. I've always agreed, "Less is more." •SC





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