Is the printed brochure dead?

Mark Twain didn't have a thing to say about printed brochures. Trust us, we've checked. But he did famously say the rumours of his death had been greatly exaggerated. And that's as good a way of talking about printed brochures as any. Many businesses have let the brochure quietly slip away into the background. They've been elbowed out of marketing budget to make way for flashy websites with endless creative possibilities. Corporate brochures and glossy print have been superseded in the digital age. It's all online.

That's a good thing isn't it?

We're not so sure…

Granted, websites are very easy to maintain. Content looking a bit jaded? No problem. You can upload a news item, tinker with the testimonials - even give it a quick makeover. That should tide you over for a bit.

But that convenience costs us. Typically we don't often re-assess or rewrite our websites – we tweak them and add bits here and there. And the problem with *that* is that if you simply keep on adding and tweaking, you eventually end up with a dog's dinner of a website that has lost its original focus and clarity. Hardly the sort of thing you'd want potential customers to judge you on….

On the other hand, when a brochure's out-of-date, it's done. You can't adapt it, revise it or print over it. It's useless. But that's fantastic! Because whenever you need to replace it, you start with a blank canvas. You take the time to consider whether an entirely new approach is needed. That's pretty liberating.

And what about targeting your marketing message; only saying what a particular audience segment needs (*or wants*) to hear? The very nature of a website means it's visible to all. A printed brochure isn't. You can tailor your brochure to specific market sectors and audience profiles. You can make the focus as narrow or as wide-ranging as you like. And you have far greater control over who sees it too.

We also shouldn't underestimate the appeal of traditional tools. Prospective customers often enjoy the reassurance and solidity of a brochure. It's familiar and tangible; you know exactly what to do with a brochure. Compare that with the uncertainty of a website that can be accessible one minute and unavailable the next. And let's not forget the fact that the content can change without warning (because you're tweaking it in the background!) It all adds up to an air of transience that brochures simply don't have.

There's room for both

Let's be clear: we're not saying brochures are better, only that they're different – and that being different is a good thing. Incidentally, that's why it's important to avoid using brochure copy (or any other printed copy) online. A brochure that simply regurgitates your website makes the website redundant – and vice versa. It's also pretty annoying for a prospective customer who is taking the time to seek out information about your business to suddenly find everything they've already read repeated word for word somewhere else.

Think of your brochure as an entirely different way to promote your business. Now more than ever, the printed brochure can win you some serious plaudits. Let's face it; fewer people are investing in them, so just think what sort of an impact you can have with yours.

The printed brochure isn't dead. Granted, it doesn't challenge the website for dominance on the marketing stage. In the end, it's not an 'either or' question. Websites and printed brochures can work perfectly well together. And any good marketing strategy can use either or both to achieve its ends.