Banner Ad Do's and Don'ts and Creation

1. When you design your ad, keep it simple and clear, free of clutter with a message that's easy to read. It must jump out from the rest of the message.
2. Use images, but sparingly. You don't want to over stimulate or irritate the viewer.
3. The image(s) should not interfere with the design or message.
4. Keep file sizes small. It's important that your banners load quickly. For this reason it's better to use compressed JPEGs or GIF files.
5. When designing a banner, it's important to understand the importance of branding, so make sure you use the department's logo in some way.
6. Make sure your message and call to action is clear so the user can decide to click on it or move on.
7. Use bright blue, green and yellow colors. Do not overuse red.
8. Some words that can improve your click through ratio (CTR) are: Click here, apply now, submit and free.
9. Make sure the banner links to the page that has the information mentioned on the banner. Don't make them hunt for it.
10. Be aware that boredom sets in quickly. It's important to rotate your banners every 2-3 weeks.
11. Testing is necessary in order to find out which banners are the most effective. Once you establish that, you can run the effective banners and drop the ones that aren't performing as well. Use Google analytics to confirm the effectiveness of each campaign.

Creating the Ads

1. Programs that help with the building of banner ads are usually Photoshop, Adobe, Corel, or you can use online free programs like pixlr.com. Remember, you don't need to buy Photoshop Pro which retails for a few hundred dollars, try Photoshop Elements first. It's going to take you some time to learn this program, but if you're patient, it's worth it.

2. You can also use online banner ad creators. This is like hiring a 3rd party to build you an ad for cheap. There are several agencies you can find by Googling "Online Banner Ad Creator". We found a few companies like Bannersack, BannerAdsCreator, Bannerfans, etc.

Running the Ads (Starting a Campaign)

1. You can usually determine ahead of time what type of campaign you want to run. Many people choose from "cost-per-click" or a flat rate fee, or in some cases shared revenue. As a Fire Department, our best bang for the buck is typically going to be a flat fee so we can budget it, or a cost per click with a maximum budget.

2. *Demographics*. In online ad advertising, you can usually select the demographics you want your ad to reach. For example (age groups, locations, time of day, frequency, male/female, specific pages within websites, key words from searches, income etc)

3. *Picking your partners*. If you just throw your ad out there, sure some people will see it. But if you want to target a specific audience, take your time to pick your target, and be specific in your request.

Your money will work harder for you and last longer. There are many agencies that will take your banner ads. Here are a few examples: Google, Facebook, Local News, Statewide News, Online Fire Magazines, Trade Agencies, and Local Website Operators etc.

Here is an image with all of the typical online banner size options. The more you make and can offer to an advertiser, the more customized you can make your campaign. In some cases, the advertiser will even make an ad for you for free, or for a reduced cost. Just ask!
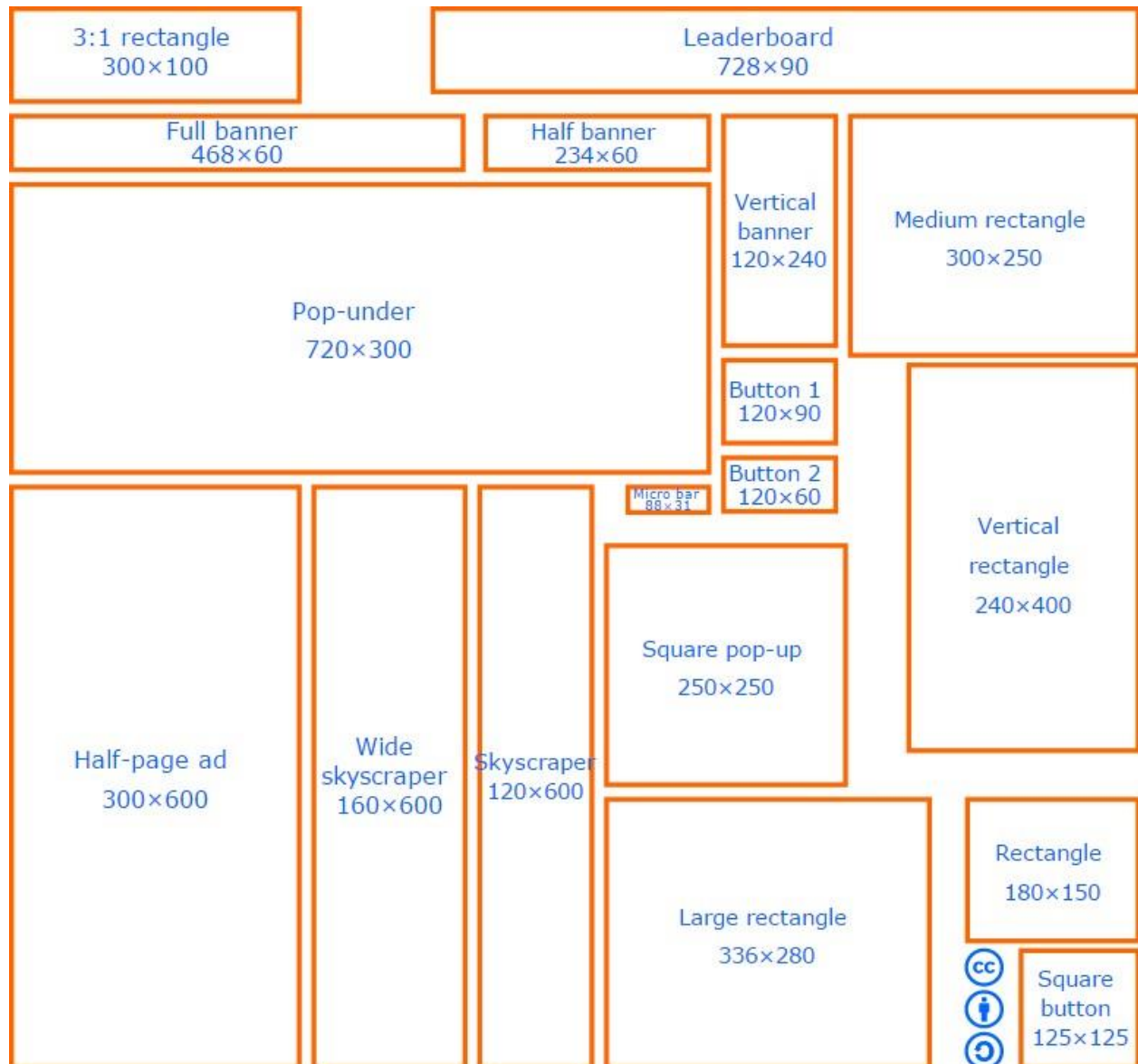
Here are a few sample ads created on Photoshop Elements 13 editor. (sizes are adjusted to fit this page)

This ad is a "Square Pop-Up" size of 250x250 (pixels)

Here is a sample size of "Leaderboard" size of 728x90