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Magazine Design and Production

Journal of Court Reporting: Combining Content with Creativity

Background

The *Journal of Court Reporting (JCR)* is a high-quality, bimonthly magazine published by the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) for its membership. NCRA represents court reporters who use a stenographic machine to create transcripts.

In response to changing reader demographics, NCRA engaged JDG to redesign its publication. Our objective was to create a consistent, contemporary look that could be read quickly by time-pressed reporters. NCRA also required a template format so its staff could easily produce the departments in-house, while JDG continued to design the features on a bimonthly basis.

JDG's Solution

Drawing readers into a publication often begins with an appealing cover. Since the association's members called the magazine *JCR*, we created a bold sans serif typographic cover flag using that acronym.

Each *JCR* cover had to visually represent the main feature article or issue theme in a meaningful way without relying on predictable images, such as showing the hands of a court reporter on a keyboard. Our design team reviewed each issue's content and then art directed original photography, illustrations or images provided by the client to demonstrate themes in a memorable manner.

Understanding how an audience uses a magazine is key to producing a successful layout. NCRA had determined that its readers were busy professionals who tended to scan articles. To help make features easier to find and digest, we created a format that included strategically placed decks, subheads, sidebars, and pull quotes.

To maintain graphic consistency, we used the same bold sans serif typeface featured on the cover for the department heads and established a color palette. We also incorporated an art element within the standing head to further identify each department. This graphic treatment added visual interest in these sections, even though there was no budget for new art in every issue. For the text, we chose a serif typeface that was distinctive, yet easy to read.

During our nine-year relationship with NCRA, we have produced several award-winning issues recognized by such organizations as the Society of National Association Publications (SNAP), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and the Art Directors Club of Metropolitan Washington.

