

The "Right" Logo

By Colleen Ryan

The Logo: a little history

Logotype, commonly known as a logo, is a design, a graphic representation / image / trademark symbolizing one's organization. Designed for instant identification, a logo can appear on company letterhead, advertising material and signs as an emblem by way of which the organization can easily be recognized.

Originating in the 19th century, after a surge in industrial manufacturing that led to an increase in output, global distribution, and the commencement of competition, logos were created to differentiate between products within the same industry. Emblems or symbols were included on products, packages and labels so buyers could easily recognize the product they preferred. Logos revolutionized the advertising world.

There was a time when only affluent organizations could afford their own crest, emblem or logo. They were, in some cases, a very detailed drawing with many objects. Cost was not an issue and more was considered better. Then, flags were used due to their larger format. They were visible from the craft fields and from long distances.

Today, successful companies continue to say that "simpler is better". Especially when the world is advancing so rapidly, you have less and less time to impress your customers. Logo designs, now, are very stylish yet remain conservative, which makes them eye-catching and easier for the brain to memorize.

Selecting the Logo Concept

The most crucial aspect of logo selection is the logo concept. You must first determine what your logo should say about your company. You may come up with an image related to a business like a house for real estate or a car for a car dealer, or your logo could be just an abstract image representing the company's philosophy, for example, a pyramid or a blocky image for a stable, trustworthy company. A very dynamic image with orbits and swooshes, sparks, or particles might be suitable for a very young, modern, high tech company.

Not all businesses, though, can be easily associated with any particular image. For example, a programming company doesn't have many images to associate with (except a computer). In this situation, it would be recommended to concentrate on an abstract image and to represent the feel of the company's business rather than coming up with a specific image. Companies that deal with more than one business should have a more generic image, but the logo can still be made to look technological by implementing some straight lines in combination with curves, or more corporate with more proportional, symmetrical, geometrical shapes.

As a result of the expense involved in changing a logo, a "good" logo shouldn't be too trendy, but ideally last many years before needing a redesign. You need to ask yourself if the design will be relevant in 5 or 10 years.

Once a company has established itself with a specific look, feel and image, it becomes more and more difficult to change as time goes by. Some companies have enjoyed success without ever having to change their logo design. Kentucky Fried Chicken has used Colonel Sanders in their logo since the company was founded in 1952. Aside from some updates on their marketing front, Nike would be another good example (the Nike swoosh). Pepsi took a risk in the mid 1990s by drastically changing their image and logo but did so with success. However, it could have resulted in commercial suicide. If you'll remember, in the 1980s Coca-cola changed their brand image to

Coke. Pepsi then took over top seat in the market shortly thereafter. Creating a logo that can appeal to customers and consumers throughout the ages is important, considering that there will always be a risk involved with change.

If, however, you decide that your logo is in need of a face lift, here are some points to take into consideration: Does your current logo represent 3 of the key elements that make up a credible and high quality logo design?

- a. Does the logo portray your company in a manner which says that you are an expert in this field?
- b. Is the logo "contemporary", symbolizing a "forward-thinking" look?
- c. Is the message that you are trying to convey to the consumer clear?

If you answered 'yes' to all of these questions, then why change your logo? By revamping your company image, you may risk losing your supporters, clients that are already familiar with your products and services, your popularity, respect, as well as your market share. You can, however, clean-up your logo or update it with a lot less risk.

Tagline

When creating a tagline for your company, it is important to consider whether or not you are going to, eventually, go global. If so, create a tagline that gets your point across when translated into different languages. Here are some examples of successful companies that did not take this into consideration:

- a. Kentucky Fried Chicken's tagline "finger-lickin' good" translates in Chinese as "eat your fingers off".
- b. General Motors introduced the Chevy Nova in South America, and the company was apparently unaware that "no va," translated in Spanish meant "it won't go," or "it doesn't run."
- c. In Taiwan, Pepsi introduced its tagline "Come alive with the Pepsi Generation". In Chinese, the slogan translated as "Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead."

Shapes, Sizes and Types

Iconic logos: Iconic logos, one of the most common types, are represented by a single graphical element, icon or design which usually includes the company name below or to the side of the icon, for example: Nike, AOL, Micheline. When considering iconic logos, it is important to make the symbol fit any of the geometrical shapes. The best shapes to use are symmetrical geometrical shapes. They can be placed almost anywhere and still show balance and are very easy to handle.

There is no obligation as to the kind of shape used, you can use any free form shape you want, but you have to be very careful with the placement, so the logo doesn't look like it is falling apart. When selecting the shape, you should consider how conservative and stable your company wishes to appear.

Logo Type: Logo types consist only of the company name. A unique font or unique layout style can make a great logo, for example: Sony, Kellogg's, Coca-Cola, IBM.

Illustrative: An illustrative logo consists of a unique design; usually representing the company's field of business. These logos are often very eye-catching, detailed and impressive. As a result of their detail and colors, illustrative logos are difficult to reproduce and therefore expensive.

Integrated: An integrated logo is the combination of a logo type and illustrative logo. These logos are even more rare than the illustrative logos because of their expense.

Less is More!

Everyone wants a cutting edge, high tech, 'cool' logo. Consider, however, that some of the most successful logos are simple, and most importantly, easy to remember. Think of Nike, McDonalds, Pepsi, Coca-Cola. These are all very successful images that are, at the same time, very simple. When creating your design, you can get into picky little details and it is important to take a step back, close your eyes and see if you can essentially sketch the image in your head. If it is that memorable, then you know you are on the right track. Remember that "less is more".

Colors

Keep in mind, when selecting colors for your logo, that your color scheme should be appropriate for your company. It is also useful to use Pantone colors — universal colors which are used by professional print shops.

Colors often have a profound impact on viewers. Red and orange are said to produce excitement, red also tends to signify danger. Dark blue portrays comfort and relaxation, and yellow tends to create a feeling of irritation. If you are creating a logo design for a nursing home or a hospital, it may be a good idea to stay away from reds and bright yellows. Exceptions are always made though, such as McDonalds (which has both red and yellow in its logo!).

When choosing your color scheme, keep in mind the personality you wish to express for your business. Do you want your company to portray a professional image? Try using black, silver, and other dark colors. Do you want your company to come across and fun, dynamic, and funky? If so, try using bright and vibrant colors. Be creative.

Important Points to Consider:

- A logo should:
 - Attract attention and leave an impression
 - Create a look that is unique
 - Reflect the personality of the company
- Reproduction costs: The more detailed and colorful the logo design, the more difficult to reproduce, meaning a higher cost.
- The size: The perfect logo design will look great on a sign board as well as on a business card or a pen.
- Logo design companies are by the dozen. Take your time, research different companies and designers and compare packages in order to select a logo design company suited to your needs.
- Check your competition. What designs, graphics, and colors do they use? Remember that you need to be competitive.
- Trademark your logo. If your logo is trademarked, this prevents competitors and other third parties from stealing it.
- And last but not least, when in doubt, K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid).

Logo design is believed to be one of the most difficult areas in graphic design. A logo is essentially at the heart of a corporate identity. It is the face of an organization! The right logo design can be one of your strongest marketing tools. It delivers the message to the public that a company is unique, credible and professional. Make it stylish. Make it elegant. Make it an impact.

About the Author:

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04/25/05