7 Principles Of A Well Designed Logo

Paul Rand, arguably the best graphic designer who's ever lived and the genius behind logos for IBM, Westinghouse, UPS, ABC and others, said this about logos:

"If, in the business of communications, 'image is king,' the essence of this image, the logo, is the jewel in its crown."

That's a whole lot of power for such a singular piece of graphic design to hold all on its own. Knowing the goal is to create something intended to carry this massive responsibility, graphic designers approach these projects with a mix of thrill, dread, anxiety, fear and pride.

Fortunately, there are principles (how many and what they are depend on who you're talking to) that guide the development of effective logos.

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Simplicity

The best logos – the ones that give the viewer an immediate and clear sense of "you" – are clean and uncluttered. In general, less is more and simplicity is more impactful.

Remember that logos are used in a variety of ways, on different platforms and in various formats and sizes, so fine details will be lost. A strong logo will have few elements, each of which can be identified easily and integral to what you're hoping to communicate. If you have elements that don't contribute to the whole, get rid of them.
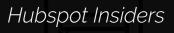
Memorability

A logo should be easily recalled after just a glance. A glance, after all, is typically all your logo is going to get from most people.

Like any symbol, it should stand for something singular, and it should be easily recalled if, after a person looks at it, he or she can immediately describe its basic elements ("It's three interlocking circles" or "It's a dog with a bone"). A logo that's complex, fussy, has multiple parts and pieces or is overly stylized will be difficult for the viewer to "get" and, as a consequence, easily dismissed.

Originality

Don't settle for a me-too logo. Do a quick search of logos in your industry and look for patterns and avoid mimicking them. Telecomm is filled with logos featuring globes, technology and electronics with logos that involve swooshes, and dentistry with logos of teeth or smiles (or both).

These all make sense and communicate what the companies want them to, but if you do the same you lose all hope of getting noticed.

Modern Yet Timeless

"Modern" is "today," but not so "today" that in five years your logo will look silly.

And, modern is different than trendy. A trend is "hot today" and will naturally (sometimes thankfully) run out of steam — probably sooner than later. Modern, on the other hand, is less stylized and more restrained; it captures the relevant characteristics of the times without losing itself in detail.

A logo should be modern in that it should be contemporary, yet not so nuanced with "hot" components that when that trend has run its course you'll be left with something that feels outdated. Because then your company feels outdated to your prospects.

Your overall approach should be modern as should specific elements, colors and typefaces.

Some logos have changed little over time, only tweaked to make them more modern but keeping essential elements intact, like UPS, Starbucks and Burger King.

Hubspot Insiders

Balance

The best logos are designed using principles of proportion and symmetry. Both the Apple logo and the Twitter logo utilize circles of proportionate values as well as symmetry to create a pleasing, balanced aesthetic quality.

Complementary

Your logo's graphic device and your typeface work together (in what's typically called a lockup) and enhance one another. Or they should. If your graphic device is clean and linear, don't select a typeface that's complex and playful (Fajita comes to mind). The two elements are really one, even if you determine times they can be used separately, and they must be complementary.

Versatility

Your logo will be used in a number of ways and in multiple contexts. Here are just a few:

- On t-shirts, baseball caps and, alas, fanny packs
- On pens, keychains and water bottles
- On very horizontal and extremely vertical banners
- On both black and white backgrounds (make sure your designer creates your logo in black and in white to satisfy these needs if necessary)
- Very large and very, very small
- Alongside other company logos, like those for specific products and services

Your logo has to maintain its integrity and serve its purpose no matter what the use. A good designer will understand all this and create a logo that works in all situations. He or she will also take into consideration any other branding elements, like textures or patterns, that are part of your brand and create a logo that complements them.

THANK YOU

Thanks for reading the 7 principles of a well designed logo. If you'd like to receive a consultation on 7 additional tips for logo design. Send us a email at info@slicustom.com to get some bonus content!

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