



10 RULES FOR DESIGNING A SUCCESSFUL LOGO

1. Reflect the Brand

If you've not established a formal brand position statement for your product, service or company, this is the place to start before embarking on a new logo design project, a logo redesign or even a logo-update project. The brand position statement will guide the design process and serve as a benchmark to judge all design concepts.

A good brand position statement is one that includes three highly inter-related components: the target market, the frame of reference and the point of difference. If you don't know how to develop a brand positioning statement and equally important creative strategy, then find someone who does. If done properly and implemented effectively, it will be the best money you will ever spend on building your brand. You'll move from a "me too" representation of your brand to "this is what makes me different in the minds of my consumers."

2. Crave a Concept

A concept is a big idea—something that causes the viewer to ascribe positive feelings to the logo design. A concept could be as simple as a letterform that morphs into the shape of the product or service offered by the company. It could be a rendering style from a historical period intended to convey the long-term heritage of the company. It could be color choices that impart a sense of playfulness or seriousness or any other device that communicates meaning and links the viewer with the brand's position. I know what you're thinking. That's right. Yes, very few logos in the world have concept. If you think strategically before you act creatively you're mark will be remarkable.

3. Strive for Originality

Originality means creating a logo that hasn't been seen before, is out of the ordinary, stands out, and doesn't bring to mind other competing brands. A logo with originality will be ownable and easier to protect as your legal trademark. An original logo will have more top-of-mind presence among competing brands, bring more recognition and arguably more sustained interaction with the mark. Originality is always enduring.

4. Be Memorable

Following rule nos. 2 and 3 will help your logo have memorability. That's because being memorable is further strengthened by the proper use of a mnemonic device. These are sometimes unusual, clever twists or some design element the viewer discovers when seeing the logo for the first time or even with closer examination.

The simple act of discovery brings a sense of accomplishment and an attribution of intelligence to the brand by the viewer. But be careful. The use of such devices must be recognized nearly instantly by all to avoid the dreaded reaction, "I don't get it."

5. Keep It Simple

In this information-overloaded world your brand may be viewed by your target for only an instant. Bold, simple shapes and uncomplicated color schemes and letterforms will command the most attention. It's usually best to avoid complicated shading and tiny line work.

Avoid the temptation to create the State Seal look by using multiple images in an attempt to describe or present every aspect of the organization, product or service in one logo. Like a well positioned brand, logos should be single-minded and focused on one user benefit or point of difference.

6. Hit the Target

A critical consideration of branding is to know your target audience. It begins with understanding those characteristics that affect their behavior to choose a particular product or service. A logo targeted to teens will be very different in its tone and manner from a logo intended to appeal to engineers. Understanding factors that influence the target's purchase decisions will be beneficial in guiding the logo development process.

Various research and testing methods are available to determine which of your potential logo designs will resonate best with your target audience. Remember, it only hurts when you miss your target.

7. Don't Ignore Equity

When updating or completely redesigning an existing brand it's always wise to consider the existing equity of the current identity. Even though the current logo may not reflect updated brand positioning, it may have strong awareness among the target that should be taken into consideration. Colors, shapes etc. may need only to be contemporized.

A drastic change in design may signal that the organization, product or service has changed too. Unfamiliarity is usually the key to undermining long-term brand loyalty—and the invitation to look elsewhere for comfort and security.

8. Consider Reproducibility

In today's world a logo will be used in mediums that didn't exist 20 years ago, which include interactive media and Internet applications. Gone are the days when the logo sat statically on a sign or business card. Effective design today considers all possible media—from uniform embroidery to web site animation. Achieving the proper balance between size, colors and hierarchy of design across all potential applications can make a great logo or break a weak one.

9. Please Esthetically

Not only should a logo be unique and have concept, it must also be visually pleasing and balanced. Working with less skilled designers can be a frustrating experience, thus wasting time and money for mediocre and awkward results—all because of budget constraints and time considerations. Always review a design firm's portfolio and ability to think strategically. A design firm that's been recognized with industry awards is one indicator that they are respected by their peers and can produce outstanding design

10. Deploy with Consistency

A great logo is only as good as its consistent and thoughtful applications. Brand standards manuals are often created to guide the application of the logo to everything from stationery and signs to uniforms and new media. An effective standards manual will set rules in a simple, compelling format that's easy to understand and implement across multiple audiences. Like a good marriage, brand harmony is achieved with consistency and attention to detail.