THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

The essential handbook to getting a logo designed for your company, product or service.

Steve Douglas

THE LOGO FACTORY®
EST. 1996

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CHAPTER TITLES

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INTRODUCTION

The Guide to Great Logos.

The Guide To Great Logos is not your typical logo design book. Rather than simply showcase designers' work (though it does that too) this book takes a logo buyer through the entire logo design process, from start to finish, doling out a myriad of tips and pointers throughout the way. *The Guide* looks at some of the ways to get a logo designed, selecting a logo designer and working through the various stages it takes to develop a great logo. We also offer up a wealth of technical knowledge - perfect for the logo do-it-yourselfer - that will allow you to use your new logo once it's been created.

About the author.

Steve Douglas has been involved in the graphic design and arts field for almost thirty years, having studied traditional illustration at the *Sheridan College of Visual Arts* (Brampton), as well as traditional art and photography at *Ontario College of Art* and *Three Schools* (Toronto). Steve has been a magazine art director, a photographer, as well as an ad agency art director until he founded his own freelance studio in 1990. This freelance project evolved in 1996 via the Internet into what is now known as *The Logo Factory* - a small design shop that specializes in logo design for small to mid-sized businesses. He lives in the outskirts of Toronto with his wife Sue, children Amy & Matthew, three dogs, a cat and too many fish to count.

SIPS MEDIA

WHO NEEDS A LOGO?

Does every business need a logo?
Or can you exist without one?

Who needs a logo? In the purest sense – nobody does. Anybody can create a business without one. In theory, anyone can toil away, providing their client base with the best in service and/or products – relying on word of mouth to expand. Putting faith in the old fashioned method of knocking door-to-door. Many of you are not convinced of the value of a full-blown logo design treatment. Or the expense involved in creating one. "My business will succeed by itself" you exclaim, "I don't need no stinking logo!" Oh sure, you still need to concentrate on your business basics (a great brand will not bail out a sloppy business – we don't promise that). But a decent logo (and hopefully a great one) will help to carve out a preconception of what your business is all about, and that will help your business to succeed. As a logo design company, it's obviously our sales pitch to argue that a logo should be part of your overall business plan. It's also something we believe. After all, it was part of our business plan. And having picked up this book, you're at least willing to accept that we know something about logos.

How many logos do you view a day?

Still not convinced? Look around you. It's estimated that the average person is exposed to over 300 business logos or brand marks an hour. Sound outrageous? Lessee. You start off the morning with a branded coffee (even 'no-name' brands have their own logo – in one of the great marketing ironies), eat your branded cereal, shower with your branded shampoos and soaps. On the way out the door to your branded car, you dress in your logo'd clothing, and pass by untold branded stores, billboards and even bumper stickers on the way to work. You'll probably pass a *FedEx* truck or two on the highway (did you notice the hidden arrow in their logo?). If you have access to the Internet in your daily labors – your 300 per hour exposure rises exponentially.

What a logo means.

A logo – the word is an abbreviation of the word logotype (or logogram), which is defined as 'a symbol representing a phrase, word, or idea' – has represented many things throughout the times. The swastika became the

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universal symbol of absolute evil (even though it had its start in Indian culture as a representation of good luck) A logo can represent the better of man – the cross has come to represent Christianity (when colored red – it's a logo for Red Cross medical services), a crescent moon Islam (when colored red – the Islamic version of the Red Cross), a star has come to represent the Jewish faith. Logos have come to mean more mundane things as well – a red octagon means stop, little stick people mean washroom (the one with the skirt is for the ladies), arrow mean 'this way', etc., etc., etc.

The Big Boys can't be wrong, can they?

In our commercial endeavors, logos have come to mean a quick meal (the *McDonald's* arches and other fast food logos), sports (the *Nike* swoosh) soft drinks (*Coca-Cola* – who even brought us today's version of Santa Claus as part of their branding endeavors). Our comic book characters get logo'd (the Bat, the 'S' and the 'X'), teams have sports logos aplenty (the *San Jose Sharks* set records for their first season logo covered merchandise sales – the logo was that cool).

Our rock legends do it too, with band logos dotting the entertainment landscape. There aren't too many people who don't recognize the unique typography of *KISS* or *Aerosmith*. Even punk bands have them too. Remember the Ramones logo? And even though they might be before your time, *The Beatles* logo adorned Ringo's drum kit long before they become one of the biggest bands in history. *Star Wars, Jaws* and *007* have their own logos, as do *Star Trek*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Shrek* and the entire *Godfather* and *Harry Potter* series. Not to mention the flying logos of the movie companies that produce them. And there's a reason why every minute of *CNN* and *Fox* news reporting is accompanied by their simple icon at the corner of the screen. Books, cars, clothes, food, entertainment, religion and sex (yes sex – the *Playboy* bunny doesn't mean Easter egg bearing small furry animals). Military branches have 'em, countries have 'em, and even space (if *NASA* has their way) – will have 'em. All of the *Fortune 500* companies have logos too. And when it comes to kitsch, can anything top the smiley face logo? Not surprisingly, Smiley is very big business.

Why do all these entities use logos? Recognition folks. Recognition. In the incredibly cluttered visual space of the average consumer you have a

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nanosecond to grab their attention. You better make it good. If your brand is a clip art logo found at the local print shop, and is also used by twenty other folks clambering for attention, what chance do you really have? Slightly, and I do mean slightly, more than someone who doesn't even have one. And yet, when it comes to creating a business model, many folks believe they don't need a brand identity. Or if they do, a discount 'clip-art' solution that can be found in their local print shop will suffice as their new company logo. Or second-rate logo templates that cost $70 over the Internet. In essence, they believe that every other business, country, sports team and religion on the planet – from the smallest to the absolute largest – have got it all wrong. Maybe they do. But as a business owner myself – until the church, the USA, *Microsoft*, *Nike* and my fave rock band are proven wrong, this is one tried and true business model I am willing to follow. And follow it religiously.

Attention to the Nuts & Bolts.

On a surface level, the benefits are simplistic. A great logo on a well-designed letterhead or business card design will stand out against a bunch that aren't. A nicely developed brochure or flyer will stand out better than one that isn't. You want to be among the .05% of promotional material that isn't headed for the trash. Simple yes, but it's more than that. On an 'gut' level a well executed logo design gives your clients a psychological 'lift'. A well-designed logo (accompanied by an effective 'look-and-feel' branding system) gives newcomers to your business a perception of professionalism and attention to detail. You look after all the 'nuts and bolts' of your business and in turn, will look after them.

Conversely, if you pay such little attention to your businesses' image – what's really going on behind the scenes? (At this point the nay-sayers will argue they're paying too much attention to their client's needs to care about a silly logo, but is anyone really going to buy that? I know I wouldn't.) A professional logo and corporate identity gives the impression that you care about your business, and in turn, care about the things your business does. You take pride in everything about your company – from how it looks, which obviously translates to how it looks after its customers. It is an overall image of strength, quality and professionalism that starts the minute your clients are exposed to your business. Often that initial exposure is a split-second. Don't you want to make it count?

SAN · FRANCISCO

Pick a Pizza

www.pickapizza.com

Client: Pick a Pizza
Designer: The Logo Factory

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DO YOU NEED A LOGO?

A litmus test.

While the previous chapter spoke more in general terms, what about your particular case. Do YOU need a logo? Maybe. Maybe not. While this may seem somewhat odd, especially from someone who makes his living at selling design services, this is perhaps the most critical step to the entire logo design process. How can you tell if you need a logo?

Well, ask yourself a few questions starting with these;

1) What are the short term, mid range and long-term goals of your company or the product/service you are developing?

2) Are you going to be competing for the attention of prospective clients and customers in a crowded marketplace?

3) Will you be entering an already thriving industry and – let's not be coy – fighting to 'steal' business away from other, more established companies?

4) Do you need to get people's attention – the "here I am, and here's what I do" kind of attention?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, then you'll probably need a logo design and all that entails. Conversely, if you're working for 'the man' during the day, and moonlighting to a few friends at night – say, accounting services come tax time – then you don't need a logo, simple as that. Word of mouth, and casual referrals are likely to keep you more than busy enough.

More 'bang' than you need?

Sure, you may want something 'nifty' to doll up your invoices, but you can probably manage that on your own – using standard business software and the supplied logo templates. You may even be able to crank out your own rudimentary letterhead and business cards (Avery and other paper suppliers offer pre-cut material that can be printed on your personal printer). As much as my studio (and any other graphic design professional) would love to work with you on your new identity, it's probably more 'bang'

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than what you need for the expectations you have, and the goals you have set. If, on the other hand, your business aspirations are to develop your business further, more investigation is probably in order.

Advertisements need a logo.

One of the litmus tests we can employ at this juncture is this; if you're planning to develop some brochures, maybe even an advertisement in the local paper – you might need a logo. You'll notice that's still a 'might'. Bulletin boards at the local supermarket are full of hand-posted 'flyers' – you recognize them by the multitude of tiny 'pull off strips with hand-written phone numbers, and while these advertisements might be more noticeable with a decent logo, they probably perform to the level that can be expected – a trickle of inquires and one or two solid leads. If that's all that you're after, then a full-blown logo, and the work involved in creating one, is still more than what you need.

However, if you're planning to drop a few hundred on an ad that is to be featured on a newspaper page with a load of other ads, then yours better stand out (for the most part, classified ads still enjoy the 'no logo needed' status). Yes, your deals are better. Yes, your service is faster. You're even a nice person. But if people don't notice your ad, who really cares? A version of the 'if a tree falls in the forest' and 'the sound of one hand clapping' arguments. Same goes for your website.

The intangible feeling of unease.

Think of this – you've been looking for a product or service on the Internet. You've run into sites that sell what you're looking for, but for one reason or another, you've chose to look elsewhere. Oh sure, it may have been price. But haven't there been times when you've backed out of a web site because the website wasn't 'right'? It didn't 'look' as professional as the site that finally earned your business. Perhaps it 'felt' a little shady. Bad graphics. Spelling mistakes. And yes, it probably featured a bad logo, maybe even a hideous one. Pretty nebulous stuff. You probably couldn't put your finger on it at the time. Trouble is, if your fledgling company or service is poorly presented, neither will your potential clients. They'll just 'feel' that something's not quite right about your business. And you'll lose the sale.

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Mmm, Yummy!

Penny Lick's

Ice Cream Parlour & Confectionery

www.**penny**licks**icecream**.com

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Selling your company to strangers.

Once again, if you're simply filing tax returns on behalf of friends and family for a few bucks on the side, none of this is an issue. Simply naming your company should be enough. If, however, you're trying to sell you services to strangers – and have but a few seconds to convince them that you are exactly what they're looking for, you need to think about branding your company. Because that's what a great logo (and related branding) is all about. Convincing strangers that you are the best (or at least very good) at what you do.

Strangers you ask? Sure – let's take another example. Let's say your homemade chili was such a hit at family picnics you decided to sell it at the local farmer's market for a few bucks a jar. You could probably still get by without a logo on the jar and your booth. Captive audience, word of mouth, returning customers and a limited production capacity (how big is that crock-pot really?) combine to render a logo less than critical. If I wanted to be a stickler here, I could also argue that if the chili is good, a good branding workup will help move it through attention grabbing branding. I could also point out that if your chili is, in reality, simply mediocre – family members can be very forgiving – a good identity is practically a prerequisite. You'll have few return clients and you'll always be looking for new customers. It might also behoove you to have a flyer through which your word-of-mouth referrals can find you. I am, however, trying to avoid nuance here, so I'll stick to my original black and white point.

So, while it's true that not every company or business needs a logo, it can similarly be argued that in some instances a decent corporate identity is absolutely critical to the longevity and growth of others. And only by taking a long, hard look at what you want to accomplish with your entrepreneurial aspirations, can you decide which applies to you.

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How much should a logo cost?

Well, isn't that another $64,000 question – what is a logo worth? Is it worth hundreds, or thousands of dollars? Can we even put a dollar value on something that will represent your company for (hopefully) its lifetime? That all depends on whether you approach the branding of your company as an expense, or an investment in the future of your company. If you view your logo as a simple expense – in the same category as say, FAX paper, you probably won't view it as being worth very much. Using the time-tested philosophy of 'you get what you pay for', and if your logo is simply a pretty picture that you want to slap on a few printed papers and the right-hand corner of your 3 page website, then you might be well enough served by shopping for your new logo design based on sticker price. Get it cheap. Get 'er done.

If, on the other hand, you view your logo as an investment in the overall picture of your company, a flag around which you, staff and customers can rally, then your logo is going to be worth a lot more. And worthy of the extra time, and expense, involved in doing it up right. That's not to say you have to break the bank to get a great logo – you don't – and it's up to you to decide how much you pay for your visual identity.

The value of a good logo.

What is a logo's value? The answer varies from case-study to case-study so I can't speak for every business owner. I can, however, speak about someone close to me and her company. Pretty well everyone on-staff views their logo as a bad logo. It's been around for years (it was designed by one of the founders' children as part of a series of 'expense saving' in-house logo design contests) and no-one has the courage to even suggest changing it. In the development of marketing and advertising materials, rather than the usual 'make the logo bigger' mantra, the directions usually involve making the logo smaller (while certainly refreshing, this was due to lack of confidence in the logo as opposed to anything clever). The logo has been hidden. Ghosted. Screened to almost invisible levels in the background. Sometimes, the logo wasn't used at all (this became so prevalent that a recent management directive makes it an official company policy to use the logo in its un-tampered version). Sum result – the company has no

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consistent identity or brand. Which is a pity. The company is in the community service field, sends out a bucket load of brochures and tri-folds, prints a ton of event T-Shirts, banners and trinkets. The logo is on the side of the building and I'm sure that they lose a great deal of walk-in business because no-one is making a connection between the brochure they just received in the mail, and the big building that's down the street. Everybody on staff knows this, but rather than change the logo (and risk offending someone 'upstairs') they trudge on, marketing services without a cohesive banner to market them under. Is their bottom line suffering? Placing a dollar figure on the loss would be impossible, but I'd argue yes, and I'm of the opinion that this outfit is in dire need of an effective logo. As are many companies in early phases of start-up. In terms of the value of a logo, perhaps we should take a look at what you can, or should, expect from your new corporate identity.

Will a logo make or break your company?

So what can you expect from developing a logo for your company? Will, for example, a good logo build a business? No. If your business comes from word-of-mouth or referrals, I'd argue that you don't even need a logo. A new company name will suffice (or even your own name if you're pushing the personal touch). It's only when you're trying to market, compete and promote your company against other folks would it really become an issue.

If you 'own' a particular business sector, why bother with the expense, and hassle, of a custom logo work-up (unless you're interested in 'looking good')? If, on the other hand, you don't 'own the sector' you'll need an arsenal of marketing ammo to grab the market attention, and in a few nano-seconds, communicate that you're better, faster, cheaper (or whatever particular 'hook' you're trying to promote). You need to stand out in a cluttered landscape and truth to tell, your company logo is but a part. How much of a part? Depends on what kind of marketing you're trying to do.

Sometimes, it's critical. On many occasions, you won't have the real estate to write a war-and-piece diatribe about your company – you'll ONLY be able to use your logo and a few scraps of type. You'll need something eye-catching, as well as at least a hint of what it is you do. Ask yourself honestly – does your current logo do that? If not, it should. A good logo can also lend 'instant' credibility to your organization pretty quickly – and can help

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any small business appear (on one level anyway) on the same playing field as the 'big boys'. Will a good logo help salvage a bad business plan, eradicate poor customer service or poor pricing models? Of course not. But it certainly will help you give the impression that you've 'arrived'. The rest is up to you. 'Leading a horse to water' and all that.

The $800,000 logo. More than meets the eye.

How much is all of this branding goodness worth? Depends what we're talking about. A few years back, the design and business communities were grousing about the approx. $800k that organizers paid for the new *2012 London Olympic Games* logo. In all fairness, I suspect the now-squirming owners received a lot more than just a few vector versions of their logo for that hefty sum. We're probably talking about a full brand work-up and integration plan (we've seen animations, movies, pins, etc) as well as the primary (and I'd might be tempted to argue, misguided) focus-groups that are involved in a project of this size. Over my design career I've been involved with brand roll-outs of this scope (I worked on some of the brand implementation programs for the development of the new *NorTel* logo in the mid-nineties, not as a designer of the logo itself, but some of the supplemental marketing material). The plan was to completely re-brand *Northern Telecom* to the hipper *NorTel*, complete with a new logo (arguably the first true 'globe and swoosh' logo of the internet era) and an officially abbreviated name. The cost to NorTel was in the $600K range, but included all the design, and across-the-board implementation of the new brand (the style guide alone was over 400 pages) as well as all the support material, trinkets and marketing. The new design had to replace the old one at the same time, on every scrap of material while being kept under wraps till the very last minute. Early speculation on a brand makeover ran the risk of giving stockholders the 'jitters' so we had to sign NDAs (these agreements also forbade us from buying NorTel stock within a certain time frame, due to our inside knowledge). A re-brand can indicate either a company that's in trouble (and fumbling around for an identity) or a company that's ready to take it to a new level. The number crunchers with the spreadsheets had figured out that keeping the re-brand on the QT was a better strategy – the less time available for market speculation, the better. And true enough, when the new logo and name were unveiled, NorTel stock leapt dramatically (only to tank about a year later). Overnight, the company made millions – so the $600K they spent was a comparative pittance.

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Money spent vs. money back.

I guess my point is that when people read about $800k logos. or $10k logos or even $5k logos, they believe that the artwork, and only the artwork, cost that much. Far from it. But it's why we get the 'I could have designed a better logo for less' comments from people who don't understand the 'behind the scenes' of something of this size. And at the risk of ticking off some of my designer friends, no, they couldn't. Most small design studios and freelance designers couldn't finance a massive roll-out of this nature (nor can their respective clients) – that's why large campaigns are generally doled out to established agencies with the necessary budgets (and more importantly, huge lines of credit). So, when a small business owner pays $500, $1000 or even $2000 for a business logo, they are NOT getting the same results (nor should they expect the same) as someone, in this context the London Olympic organizers, are getting.

When design companies brazenly compare their $150 logo design packages to $80k brand implementations at *Landor*, they're comparing apples with oranges while hoping clients are wooed by the magnificent (and quite ludicrous) price difference. They're also marketing their services to business owners as an expense, and when viewed from that angle, their 'cheaper is better' is fine. I'd argue that a corporate logo is not an expense – but an investment in your company's future – and approaching it in the same head-set as buying printer toner can be detrimental to the outcome.

Relatively speaking, and over the course of your company's lifetime, there will be few things that you'll get as much mileage from than your logo, and the money that you spend initially for its development. It's up to you to decide how much that investment is worth. If your projected sales for an at-home business are in the $10K per annum range, does it make sense to drop a few grand on a logo and brand work-up? Probably not. Are you aiming to drive those sales into the $100k or higher range? Then the investment makes more sense. And so on.

The logo sticker price.

It's difficult to put an actual dollar figure on the value of a logo (as opposed to the expense of same) but I'd argue that it's substantial. An effective logo is a way that you can tell potential customers your story, or more accurately,

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part of your story. Sometimes it's the only method available – best to make it count. And while it's true that you can always rustle up some cheap design work by doing-it-yourself, hiring some student, or opting for some discount logo design service you've found on the internet, it's probably wise to think long and hard before doing so. There's an old adage that goes something like "you get what you pay for." No reason to believe that doesn't include logo design.

Setting a logo design budget.

So how much should you pay for a logo? That all depends on your expectations. If you simply want a pretty picture, you're looking at a couple of hundred dollars. This type of project involves the client acting as an art director and in some aspects, the defacto designer of the logo itself. It takes the designer out of the creative side of the process and reduces them to a pair of hands, a Mac and a copy of Adobe Illustrator for rent. Pragmatically speaking, following a client's 'move this and add this' instructions are the 'path of least resistance' – revisions and original concepts are murder on a time clock – and can ultimately lead to less time spent on any particular design project. Hence the lower price tag. It's not even that such a method renders developing a decent logo impossible. If we were to put odds to the equation, I'd put chances of developing a decent logo at about fifty/fifty. But does it represent design value? Maybe not. This 'get 'er out the door' methodology buys into the premise that creating a logo is simply moving pixels and vectors around a monitor, trying to create a pretty picture that a client 'likes', will approve and ultimately pay for. If, on the other hand, you want to work 'with' a designer (a very large distinction), and you're open to exploring their ideas and concepts – even those that are a little 'off the reservation' – you may be able to develop a killer logo and something out of the ordinary. This process is a little more involved and more time, and monetary investment is required. More research about the your company. An overview of related branding efforts. An understanding of the people that the logo is supposed to resonate with. Bit of a hassle I know, but the extra time spent can present a designer with all sorts of information, ideas and direction that will aid them in creating a unique piece of visual real estate. It can be a teeth-grinding, hair-pulling back-and-forth, but at the end of the day, aren't you hiring someone to DESIGN your logo – and with all that entails – not just produce pretty little pictures with your company name slapped on it?

GETTING A LOGO DESIGNED.

Do it yourself vs. hiring a professional.

Many business owners are the very definition of do it yourselfers - this probably applies to you as you're taking time out of your hectic schedule to read this book. You've cobbled together a successful business from scratch, with little to rely on other than your wits and imagination. Like most business owners, you want to take a hands on approach to every aspect of your company, and when it comes to developing a logo for your business, who knows the market, audience, and company personality more than you? You know the direction you want to take your company, its strengths and selling points, as well as what makes your company unique from all others. Designing a brand yourself can t be that difficult, can it? You may have some some great ideas for a logo. If you don t, fret not. There s tons of do-it-yourself software (only $30!) and loads of so-called do-it-yourself web sites ($39 with a starbursty claim of no clip art logos either!) where you can peruse a series of icons, swishy things and scribbles, slap on your company name, and Bob, as they say, is your Uncle.

Doing it yourself.

Can you do it yourself when it comes to your new logo? Well, yes. And no. You might be able to design your own logo using one of the following do it yourself methods, (and save a few bucks into the bargain). That s the YES part. Though, as this book is supposed to be dedicated to developing the very best logo possible, we have to ask ourselves is that benchmark possible? Alas, that would be the NO part. The decision on whether saving a few bucks outweighs the caveats is a decision only you can make.

Logo design software.

Recently I received this notice via an e-mail ad:

Now available - Logo design software. Only $30.00!

Must admit I found that a little odd. I have what could be called logo design software - it s known as **Adobe Illustrator**. But that cost me over $600. What's the difference? The advertised version of logo design software is not actually design anything. At best it can be called clip-art composition software (and that s being very charitable). The premise is that you can pull

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a few (badly) pre-designed logo templates together and add some text and viola - you have a logo. Sounds like a great idea, but on further inspection not so much. The templates cannot be protected by copyright, or even more importantly, a logo trademark. You see, you never own the icons supplied -the company that sells you the software does. And because hundreds of people are using the very same templates, you can forget about unique. You can also say hello to reproduction hell - most of these templates are in pixel based format so they require four color reproduction, cannot be resized for larger applications and are impractical for most applications other than the web. This software likes to advertise as no design skill needed . That shouldn't come as a surprise - there s very little design taking place. In fact, ALL of these DIY logo design solutions - including the shiny web based Flash logo generation websites - are nothing more than template logos with pretty packaging. And using a template is NOT the way any professional should want to brand his/her company. In our obviously biased opinion of course.

Getting your hands dirty.

On a popular *How Do I Do This or That?* themed website, there's a section on graphic design which leads, naturally enough, to do-it-yourself logo design. They offer up a slew of suggestions, encapsulated by the proverbial how-to list, describing in somewhat simplistic terms, how you can design your own logo. It goes something like this:

1) On a piece of notebook paper, make a rough sketch of your logo.
2) On a white sheet of computer paper, use a fine-point black permanent marker to re-draw your logo on one side. If you have no large shaded regions, skip the next step.
3) Flip the paper over. On this side, you will notice that the shaded regions have bled through.
4) Re-color those shaded regions on this side, to give the logo an even shade. Flip the paper over.
5) Using ONLY colored pencils (erasable works best), color in the areas that need color. When done, go over the color areas again with the colored pencils. If you don t have a flatbed scanner, skip the next step.
6) Take another sheet of computer paper and place it under your logo, to prevent any shadowing when scanning.
7) Place the logo in the scanner. If you have a flatbed, place it face-down. Scan.

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If you don t need to scan it again before saving the image, skip the next step.
8) In your scanning software, create a bound box around your logo with a 1/2 inch (12 millimeter) size and save the image. This will cut your image down to a size that includes only the logo.
9) Edit your logo in any photo editing software, as needed. Apply the logo to whatever you have in mind.

So there you have it. Who needs to hire professionals when all it takes is to sketch your logo design idea, scan it, and then edit the artwork with either an amateur level paint program (that will render your logo unusable for almost every application) or one of the most sophisticated (and difficult to master) design software programs around. Of course, if you follow the links in the article you'll find that the real purpose is to promote another version of do-it-yourself logo design software which, as we've just discussed, is a totally ineffectual way to develop any professional identity (and against their own advice, bypasses the sketch phase with a whole mess of mass-produced templates). While I don't want to be overly critical of someone else's design suggestions, there's so much wrong with this how-to list that I don t even know where to start (ahm, colored pencils?) But in a similar spirit, here s my suggestion for do-it-yourself dentistry -

1) buy tools.
2) find cavities.
3) fix teeth.

Or accounting.

1) Add stuff up.
2) Subtract stuff that you bought.
3) Submit taxes on this amount.

It s easy to write a how-to list. Not so easy to make it work. The real jaw-dropper phase of this logo how-to is the first - make a sketch of your logo . That one simple step is the reason tens of thousands of designers go to art school and colleges and spend a lifetime honing their skills and talents. They go on to suggest that you scan this logo into a photo paint program, edit to your hearts content, and apply to everything you want. Sure, if you want an RGB low resolution pixel based image that always has a bounding

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box (filled background) and can't be printed as a spot-color on business cards, brochures and the like. This is added to the how-to as an after thought (the how-to fails to mention that Adobe Illustrator costs around $600 and has a rather steep learning curve, one that takes experienced designers years to master). If you do wish to try your hand at developing your own logo, try to use vector based programs, rather than pixel based programs. Furthermore, this is what the professionals use, and when it comes to developing your brochures and other advertising material, most printers worth their sand would prefer to receive their print-ready artwork in this format. With the suggested pixel based program (such as Paint), if you are to change the sizes of your logo, then it s going to produce the blurring effect that we're constantly trying to avoid.

Template logos.

The sales pitch of this method goes something like this; rather than a custom logo, business owners can select from a library of pre-designed images and customize (minimally, it's usually just a matter of adding your name) for their company. Generally costs anywhere from $25 to $150.00. Often the images are low quality, and may be copied from other sources (without permission). We've even seen some of our work show up in logo template libraries (even bought it too, just to make a point). The templates are usually sold to multiple users, creating potential copyright and/or trademark issues. Also, the ability to copyright or protect these types of logos once purchased is very unclear.

Template logos are sometimes marketed through web sites that advertise themselves as "Make Your Own Logo", etc. While these sites claim the logos available in their extensive libraries are NOT clip art logos, there is very little doubt that they are. Clip art is defined as artwork being available for many users as opposed to stock logos, a much more preferable solution, in which the rights are carefully managed, and/or the artwork is only available for outright purchase. Here s a rule of thumb - if the template site you're purchasing a logo from (even these new-fangled Flash -driven customizable icon websites) doesn't allow you to purchase the logo outright (and subsequently removes the logo promptly after you check out), walk. And if a template site offers BOTH exclusive and non-exclusive purchase options, walk away faster. How do you know someone hasn't ALREADY purchased the design as a non-exclusive license, hmm?

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Hosting a logo design contest.

Logo design contests have always been with us, though the Internet has seen the rise of this phenomenon to almost deafening levels. There are even a slew of websites dedicated to the practice, euphemistically known as crowdsourcing, which promise to bring clients and designers together so that you, in theory, can develop your new company identity. The basic premise is this; you offer up a cash prize and ask a whole bunch of designers to submit entries from which you can select a winner. The benefits to the client are supposed to be the sheer volume of entries and designers. Much more selections to choose from. Sounds fair enough I guess. The benefits to the designer are & well, there aren't any benefits to the designer which, as it turns out, is one of the main reasons that logo design contests are a pretty poor way to have your logo developed.

Design contests are the bane of the industry, and not only frowned upon, are actively campaigned against. Most design organizations have an absolutely no-go policy on this practice, viewing it as unethical and damaging to the field itself. There's even an organization - *No Spec!* - whose only purpose is to educate designers and clients why this kind of activity is bad, bad news. Why should you care one way or another? Simple. The designers who enter these contests don't even view themselves as professionals, so (at risk of alienating some) aren't experienced enough to be working on any professional level company logo project. As much as it pains me to say this, logo design contests also attract some design charlatans, folks who aren't above submitting borrowed work in order to have a chance at winning the cash prize. We've witnessed quite a few instances where our work has been submitted as entries (one was even selected as the winner). Too, as these contests generally take place on anonymous web forums, there's no way of telling who is presenting those fab ideas. Do you really want *designguyz5145* developing the brand you hope to present to the world? And how easy will it be to contact him when your brand roll-out goes horribly wrong?

electric lemonade™

THE VALUE OF LOGO DESIGN CONTESTS

Is "more for less" a valid approach to logo design?

Logo design contest and crowdsourcing sites market themselves as a superior alternative to working with a freelance designer or design firm, mostly due to the raw number of concepts contest holders will receive. Do they have a point? Is a 'more for less' mentality an effective way to get a logo designed?

Gotta admit, when you read '300 submissions' to this or that logo design contest, it represents a pretty hefty number. For a client it seems like great value – a couple of hundred submissions for a couple of hundred bucks. Choice, choice, choice. Upon closer inspection, the benefits aren't nearly as clear cut. The numbers advertised (ie: 99designs is named after the number of designs, on average, that are submitted to their contests. Crowdspring claims 110+ concepts) are a hodge-podge of design, of various levels of usability (or salvageability if you will) that we'll break down using our handy-dandy pyramid infographic on the next page. Granted, the chart is completely unscientific and arbitrary, but does represent some casual observations we've made over the years.

Unusable concepts.

To be charitable, and at the risk of being called a snooty designer, the vast majority of logo concepts submitted to design contest sites are crap. This shouldn't come as a surprise – most design contest sites have absolutely no vetting process and advertise membership to their sites in the same way as those 'Make Money Online' spam e-mails we get every couple of hours. As in "design for our clients and make money online". While crowdsourcing sites claim anyone can design, that's simply not true. There's also some technical know-how that's necessary to pull off a successful logo design and most people in this category simply don't have it. When the only requirement to 'have a go' at a logo contest is an e-mail account, you can rest assured that the majority of people signing up have no idea what they're doing. It is the nature of the internet. It is the nature of people.

Sub-par concepts.

Having said that, there's lots of people with working knowledge of Illustrator and.or Photoshop who also pitch their wares into contests. The

Logo Contest Submissions

Quality, original ideas.

Recycled concepts that have been submitted to previous contests.

Stock art, clip-art & concepts that have been copied from somewhere else.

Sub-par concepts from people with working knowledge of software but little design skill.

Unusable concepts.
Usually from people who are not designers,
with little or no design skill and
very little knowledge of design software.
Enticed to enter your contest
by the 'Earn Money, Anyone Can Submit' membership advertising.

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contest holder stands a better chance of obtaining something of worth from this category – these enthusiastic folks can probably cobble together what looks like a logo. But are these logos any good? Are they worth the couple of hundred the contest holder has plucked down to get things rolling? I'm not entirely convinced. One of the pro-contest talking points is that they're a great way for inexperienced designers to learn how to design. That's cool and all, but these would-be designers are learning in live gigs, and technically on the contest holder's dime. Your dime. That's not downing the designers who are trying – my hat goes off to them – but are they able to create decent logos at every contest, sometimes dozens at a time, they enter? Even an experienced logo designer would be foolish to make that claim. And as the theme of this chapter is the 'value' of logo design contests, what 'value' is there in paying for dozens of designers, who may or may not have a clue what they're doing, to design your company logo?

Stock art, clip art and pinched ideas.

The amount of clip art, stock art and ideas pinched from other sources that get entered into logo design contests is staggering. What do you expect? When people only have a slight chance of getting paid (if their design is selected) many put in the effort that is commensurate with working for free. That's human nature. When you combine this with the anonymous aspect of most design contest sites, it's practically guaranteed that stock art (usually not licensed for logos), clip art (ditto) and pinched artwork will end up in most logo design contests. No big deal (as long as you catch the infringing designs) but does (at best) eliminating copied logos from your contest or (at worst) selecting a knocked-off logo, have any bearing on the value of same? I'd think not. The boasted 'drenched in design' ain't looking so hot now is it? But wait, we aren't finished yet…

Recycled ideas from previous contests.

This one is becoming more and more prevalent as designers who have entered hundreds of contests (often without winning any) begin to stock-pile unused design concepts. When working on spec (ie: getting paid only when your design is selected) what would you prefer to do – spend an awful lot of time coming up with unique concepts each and every time, or dip into the reservoir of unloved concepts that are collecting digital dust on your hard drive? I know which one I'd pick. Maybe, after entering the same

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logo in 1, 5 or 10 contests, someone might actually pick it, huh? Nothing wrong with that *per se*, but it's one step away from picking a stock logo, and doesn't lend itself to the supposed 'value' of running a logo design contest.

Quality, original ideas.

Sure, there are some decent designers on crowdsourcing sites, and as much as it pains me to admit, you'll probably find some quality, original ideas pitched during the duration of most design contests. However, the number will be a small fraction of the overall tally. And there's where the true value lies of running a logo design contest – denoted in our pyramid infographic by a small yellow triangle. But does obtaining such a small sample of quality original ideas equate to the 'more for less' value as boasted by contest and crowdsourcing sites? From where I sit, and using my admittedly old-fashioned financial filters, it certainly doesn't. Wading through an immense sea of unusable concepts to (hopefully) find a pearl seems like a terrible waste of a lot of people's time, including that of the contest holder. Your time.

Logo contest survival guide.

In the interest of fair play, and lest I get accused of 'sour grapes', we're going to give people who still insist on holding a logo contest a few tips on how to avoid getting stuck with someone else's logo (which I think we can all admit, is never a good idea). Here's how it works.

Whenever less than ethical 'designers' enter contests, they immediately use *Google Image Search* (**Yahoo** & **MSN** have them too) to search for designs that suit your project using keyword combinations that would describe it. They look for an image they like and it you're lucky, they'll change it a little so that it won't be recognized by anyone but the owner and/or the original designer. There's about a 50/50 chance one of them will find out. If they do, whether these design changes will be enough to pass a legal challenge is anyone's guess. If you're not so lucky, they'll pass someone else's logo, unchanged very little (or not at all) as their own. Then, a lot of people will notice, raising the threat level of getting into hot water to almost 100%.

If you hold a logo design contest, you should perform the same searches using the resources just mentioned. Search through Google Images using

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the various keyword combinations and descriptions that describe the logo your contest is supposed to be about. If you're lucky, you'll find any potentially infringing designs before things get too out of hand. Before you're stuck with thousands of business cards and letterheads that you can't use, because you've plastered them with a design that belongs to someone else. And before the nasty e-mails start arriving.

Or, you could avoid logo design contests altogether. You'd be better of working one-on-one with a freelance or design firm and see that itty-bitty yellow triangle get a lot bigger.

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THE McLOGO EFFECT

The internet has changed the logo design industry forever. Sometimes, not for the better.

As competition for design business has heated up, so have the promises and sales pitches of logo design companies (especially those that you'll find on the internet). Some are perfectly legit. Others, not so much. It's often quite difficult to decipher the come-hither pitches and blinking starbursts you'll find on many logo design websites, especially if you re taking a stab at designing your own logo for the first time. That's not to say that every site you'll run into on the web is promising you the moon, but if our experience in the logo wars is any indication, it s quite a few that you'll find using the keywords "logo design" in a search engine toolbar.

When you run that search on Google, or a similar search engine, you'll bump into a ton of blinking, flashing web sites, all promising seemingly impossible feats in their 'come hither' sales pitches. It's as if 'logo designers' on the web have developed an entire new language in order to lure visitors, via search engines, to purchase their goods and services. While using the Internet to find a design house that can create a new corporate brand is tremendous (it allows people to work with top-notch designers that they'd otherwise never had the opportunity), it also features a unique set of pitfalls and caveats. As competition has heated up, so has the rhetoric involved in the marketing of logo design services via the web.

As you wander from site to site, you're sure to bump into some promises and sales pitches that you've never heard of before. Especially as it applies to graphic design. Which ultimately leads to a deceptively simple question –

"why do you want to charge me $x, when I can find dozens of companies who want to charge me $x/10 with unlimited revisions, 2 day turnaround, etc, etc, etc?"

To the untrained eye, their logo design samples looks as good as most (they're not really), yet their published rates are 1/10 of what a reputable design studio charges. The advertising pitches seem too good to be true (unfortunately, they are – as it turns out, we're comparing apples and oranges). You have to ask a squishy situation – what exactly is the

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difference between their process and other designers?

So let's decipher the 'sky's the limit' promises that are being dangled in front of you. For your edification, we've put together an anthology to help you understand the slick, confusing and sometimes downright misleading, promises that these logo sites pitch via their online design marketing efforts.

Our 1,000 logo designers are the best!

One of the top Google ranked sites boast that they have over one thousand logo designers who are "*the best in the world*". In fact, they are described as "*the same people that other businesses pay thousands of dollars just to get a few hours of their time.*" They also go on to claim that over 100(!) of these designers work on your project. Hmm. For a couple of hundred dollars? Sounds a little far-fetched but, okay. What you're not clearly told is that projects are offered, as a contest, to thousands of untested freelancers (pros, students, hobbyists alike) who compete against each other (hardly the 'Team' advertised) to get your approval. These poor souls are paid peanuts (if their projects are accepted in the first place) and admit to putting in effort that is commensurate with it. Not quite the 'top-notch' professional designers being advertised. It's actually a glorified logo design contest – and that method not only has some very serious drawbacks, but (if you're EXTREMELY budget minded and don't mind the risks) can also be had for much, MUCH, less money than being requested.

A business magazine described the process as follows –

Designers love it for the following reasons: They never have to meet with the clients; payment is immediate; they can work at home, day or night, with total flexibility; they can make $100 per design. That may be peanuts to a Madison Avenue pro, but not to a youngster making his or her mark"

I'm not ripping on 'youngsters making their mark' – was one myself a long time ago – but that's NOT what's being advertised (the words they use in the promo copy as 'Madison Avenue Pros'). It's just that I'm not sure if I want a 'youngster' who is 'making his or her mark' to be working on my new corporate logo. And what's with the "*never meeting (talking) with the client*" bit? After all, hadn't you just shelled out some pretty serious money to work

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with a 'seasoned veteran' that other businesses pay "thousands of dollars just to get a few hours of their time?" Okay – never mind.

It's all about the numbers.

Some online logo design firms promise that more designers will work on your project (for more dough, natch). Not sure I understand that one either, unless you take into consideration that these designers are working remotely, and in isolation. Having more 'eyes' on a project is cool and all, and many designers work in a studio environment (as opposed to remotely) so every project features a collaborative effort of multiple designers and Art Directors.

The idea that you pay more money to obtain a collaborative effort (that is, one supposes, the reason you selected a company to design your new logo, as opposed to a solitary freelancer) is ludicrous. Besides, as it should be pointed out, a top-notch logo artist DOES NOT inject his/her style into a project, but rather the project is 100% unique for each and every client (or it should be). Combined with the collaborative efforts of studio-mates, this guarantees the production of a great original logo. This idea that "more is better" is an idiotic philosophy that doesn't (or shouldn't) apply to a design process. More visual Spam as opposed to a targeted, researched approach. In any logo design project you should not simply be looking for more stuff. You're looking for the right logo. For. you. If you're looking for the unique one-on-one design process that a qualified freelancer offers, then this promise should be irrelevant anyway. One great designer can obviously create a better design solution that ten mediocre (or inexperienced) designers can.

Your own project manager.

Granted, a 'project manager' has a nice ring to it, but I thought the exercise here was working with the designer? Not quite. This phrase usually indicates that the person taking instructions, comments and directions is not the one executing them. They're being passed on, broken telephone style, to a designer who is not close to the phone (or, one supposes, an active e-mail account). In other words, to a freelancer with unqualified credentials. Once again, that advertised in-house designer (the one with all the skills) doesn't even work for the company. Clients are not 'allowed' to

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talk to the designer because the company doesn't quite trust the designer. After all, the designer could harvest the account (such is the risk when paying peanuts). You probably noticed the company based on the strength of their portfolio. How do you know if the designer working on your project is even featured in the company's logo portfolio? You don't. And if someone's willing to pull the old 'project manager' ruse – it's a safe bet you're not going to get a straight answer should you ask the question. You, on the other should prefer one-on-one service and the accompanying attention to detail. Portfolio should also reflect the designer(s) who are working on your project too…

Money back guarantees.

On many of these sites, if you wish to explore the fine print, it seems there's a little detail called a 'service charge' – usually in the $75 range – that's been left off the starburst. Now, I was never that good in math, but if memory serves $X minus anything is not 100% of $X. The so-called 100% refund also expires the minute the client requests revisions after the first round of preliminary designs. Okay, so let's run this one through the McLogo translator –

"You pay up front for the full job, we spend about an hour working up the preliminary designs and if you don't like them, pay for the hour we spent and we'll give you the remainder of your account back".

Now, that sounds fair – pretty close to how we do it at our studio. Trouble is, that's not half as impressive in blinking text as tah-dah – "100% money-back guarantee".

Our logos improve your bottom line.

This, I suppose, was a natural extension of the 100% money back guarantee. But how to claim more than 100% money back? Easy – "*we'll let you use the logo for a while and if it doesn't work, we'll still give you your money back.*" Nice promise. On closer inspection, however, not nearly as impressive as it sounds. In fact, it borders on madness. Firstly, this promise is almost impossible to quantify. On the other hand, one would hope that a new logo would improve the bottom line. Anyone who needs a logo is invariably in start up, and the logo is the beginning phases of some fairly

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hefty marketing efforts. One would hope that sales are going to increase with the use of this new logo. But what if they don't? There's a slight snag. In order to get your money back, you have to supply the company 'professionally produced' versions of stationery, brochures and the like. That means you've spent significantly more in reproducing the logo, than the original $300.00 you spent on having the logo designed. You also have to agree to stop using the logo (including the newly printed stationery, brochures and the like) and then you'll get your money back. Guess what that means? You promise not to use material that you probably paid $1000s of dollars to produce, in order to get a refund of $300.00. Oh yeah, you also have to deliver (at your expense) all the printed material to the logo design firm so that they can do with it what they see fit. Chances are, if anyone thinks this is a good guarantee, their lack of financial progress has nothing to do with the logo in the first place…

Lightning fast turnaround.

NASCAR logo design. First one in wins. Lessee – these companies are boasting that they'll spend less time than everybody else on my new, staggeringly important logo design? Sound's good – where do I sign up? Good design takes time, and rush creative work usually costs a lot more – designers have to be paid overtime. Other designers need to be assigned to the project. But here we have bargain basement pricing. and 'lightning fast turnaround'? Something has to give. What critical aspects of the logo design process are we shaving off to speed up the process? Research? Development? Rendering and fine-tuning? Or could it be that we're pulling logo ingredients, Frankenstein style, from a library of previously designed material? Just wondering is all.

Unlimited revisions.

Have to admit – "unlimited revisions" looks impressive in a red starburst. And at a flat rate too. How is this possible? Answer – it isn't. Speaking bluntly, 'unlimited revisions' on a logo design project is a goofy concept, impossible to maintain, and the use of these two words is designed to do one thing, and one thing only. Separate design buyers from their cash. Firstly, it shouldn't take 'unlimited' revisions to arrive at a great logo. A decent designer should be able to hone in on an effective logo within a few revision cycles. After all – the preliminary concepts were initially worked up

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with target market and business philosophies in mind. Anything else is just Visual Spam – throw enough designs at the project in the hope something, anything, will resonate with you.

Here's a fun test – order a logo from one of these online companies, and request, nay demand, that your work-in-progress logo to be previewed in one million color combinations (alright, let's be more reasonable – ten thousand color combinations) within the three day turnaround schedule. Ten thousand is not even 'unlimited'. Unlimited is, well, unlimited. And if the answer is anything other than "yes", then the service is NOT really offering unlimited revisions. Simply put – when companies promise you 'unlimited revisions' on ANY design project they are lying. Flat. Out. Full. Throttle. Lying. Simply put, nobody can truly offer 'unlimited revisions' with any 'flat rate' design project (unless on billable hours and in that case, the more the merrier). Any single project risks bankrupting the studio. Great-grandchildren could still be working on this logo design project.

Online do-it-your logo generators.

We've seen these flash-based web sites describing themselves as do it yourself logo design, usually advertised with the description "you don't need a designer". Well, considering that design is about conceptualizing a logo, and these DIY sites are simply a glitzy logo template generator, it's technically true. You don't need a designer for their service. As there's no design work being performed. Where I come from, these would be known as 'clip art logos'. Not many people flock to rent dentist drills to perform DIY dentistry because the company involved promises "no dentist required". Here's how the DIY service works – you select an icon from a library of pre-designed material (usually rejected preliminary designs from 'real' logo design projects or, 'borrowed' from other design sites). You type in your company name (using a generic, usually shareware, font) and the DIY cookie cutter spits out a logo. Sound familiar? It should – used to be called clip art. And last time we looked – clip art was not among the recommended approaches to corporate identity design.

When it comes to online logo generators, there's also the question of originality, or even legality, of some of the icons offered for sale. Witness the fine print on one such site regarding pesky issues like trademark and copyright:

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"(2) Trademarks and Copyrights. User acknowledges that no trademark, copyright or service marks are being conveyed under this Agreement. User acknowledges that LogoGarden has no obligation or duty to perform copyright, trademark or service mark searches to validate the symbol database is not infringing on any trademark, copyright or service marks. Accordingly, LogoGarden encourages Users to perform their own independent searches. User acknowledges that LogoGarden shall have no responsibility to assist User in seeking state or federal intellectual property protection (i.e., trademark registration). LogoGarden shall not be responsible to assist User to perfect the Users rights."

Course, if you find any infringing trademarks and/or copyrights, the good folks that run the site would like you to let them know:

"(3) Third Party Rights. If Users believe any content appearing on the Web Site infringes another party's rights, please to notify us of this infringement."

Not exactly a resounding endorsement of their own services.

McLogo - a summary.

Alas, it seems that despite these wonderful attempts at skinning the proverbial cat in unique ways, there's only one way to create a custom logo design that is worthy of representing a great new venture. That's working with a seasoned professional who has a client's best interests in mind, as well as a pride in his/her craft. Sure, they may not promise unlimited revisions, a free coffee mug (it's been done) or other three ring circus sales pitches. They will, however, produce a solid, technically sound and original logo that you can proudly use as your corporate identity. And isn't THAT what it's all about?

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HIRING A LOGO DESIGNER

What to look for. What to avoid.

So you've decided to hire a logo designer or design firm. Running a search on any of the search engines for online logo design or similar keywords will produce 100,000's of companies and individuals who claim to be logo designers (that's probably how you ended up finding this book in the first place). Other than obvious standouts, the company logos presented look fairly similar. When it comes to the bottom line, pricing is all over the place - there s even places where you can have a logo designed for ten bucks (but even the most price conscious client will know there's a very large catch there) - and it may get terribly confusing before too long. While we would be more than happy to work on your new logo design project (and one purpose of this book is to convince you of that), we also realize that there are other very capable design firms, studios and freelancers out there that are worthwhile hiring for your job. We also realize that you may well hire one of our competitors who will create a perfectly serviceable design that you're happy with. However, as with most of our logo design articles and chapters in this book, we've donned our Industry Watchdog cap and believe, at the end of the day, that an educated client is a happy client. As such, we offer some suggestions for finding, and hiring the designer or logo design firm that will create your new company mark.

Logo design experience is critical.

Does the designer have a gallery of company logo design examples? Logo design is a developed skill, and requires both technical and artistic prowess. Look for REAL logo designs - examples of *actual* design projects. Anyone can claim to be a logo designer, create a nice icon and reverse engineer it into a company that *would* be appropriate, IF such a company existed. It is, for example, easy to create a nice swooshy design and show it as an tutorial example of what *could* work as a high-tech company. Or come up with homesy graphics and use that as an example of a quaint little bread & breakfast. It s not so easy to create an *actual* design that pleases the client, their marketplace, and the designer as well. Also, watch out for designers that feel it s necessary to tell you why a logo is fantastic. If a logo needs a paragraph to explain what this color means, and what this shape represents, then ask yourself - is this is a really effective design? Keep in mind that you will never have the luxury of explaining the wonderful

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abstract meanings of your logo to anybody else. Hire a designer or firm that are able to display this experience and design savvy visually.

Bargain basement pricing.

Multinational companies pay tens of thousands of dollars for their logo design. That s how important the logo design process is. That's not to say you have to do the same in order to achieve a similar effect to Fortune 500 logos. You don't. However, if someone is emphasizing bargain prices rather than skill, service and technical knowledge, warning lights should go off. Quality design takes time, design experts, and the latest software, hardware and knowledge of the current graphic industry standards. These all cost money. Logo design is like any other commodity - you get what you pay for. Prices range from a few hundred dollars to thousands. The price you will pay for your logo should *not* be the only factor. Would you visit a dentist simply because he was giving away free mugs and a 20% discount? Or use an accountant that promised a free T-shirt if you spent $X on their services? Probably not. And as your company logo is perhaps one of the most important investments you'll ever make, it s in your best interest to follow the same ideology with the creation of same.

Effective logo design takes time.

Logo design houses that crank out a logo in a day or two as a standard service are doing just that - cranking 'em out. Or presenting rejected or unused work that was created for a previous, similarly themed project to yours. Quality design takes time. It is as simple as that. Designers need to research your company, your market, and your needs. And they need to create original work (that can be trademarked and/or copyrighted) otherwise you may print your logo on everything only to find out that the icon that took two days to create came off an obscure clip art CD, and is, in fact being used by dozens of other companies. Or a ubiquitous mark that s been used, abused and overdone to death. And keep in mind - the less distinctive your logo is, the more difficult it is to trademark or copyright. Three multicolored brush strokes may be wonderful and all, but the trademark office will be less than enthused.

Communication is paramount.

Can you reach your designer by e-mail and/or phone, or with local

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designers visit their studio? The more professional designers are like any other business; they have studios, offices and customer service staff. Graphic design is their business, not a part-time sideline. Communication is the name of the game. More importantly, can you communicate DIRECTLY with your designer. If you can t (i.e. - "*we'll pass the message on , or we only communicate via e-mail* ") usually indicates you re working with a house that employs freelancers. Not that this is a major issue in itself, unless you want more work created at a later date. The designer may no longer be available, and your brand "look and feel" may be at the mercy of someone who s not familiar with your work, or worse, someone who's style you detest.

Look at the firm's own identity.

Would you hire an accountant who was always under audit? A mechanic whose car never worked? A dentist with lousy teeth? The same should apply to your potential logo designer. Look at their identity. Their look-and-feel. They *never* get any better than this - this is, after all, their advertising, to the world, of what they are capable of. If you don t like the way their company is presented, what is the likelihood of them creating an effective design for you?

Beware shake-and-bake logos.

By default, a logo is a search for originality. So why then, would anybody resort to using Pre-Made or logo templates (simply clip art by another name). In order to save a few dollars at the onset, you're going to end up with a logo that is weak, unoriginal, and potentially infringing upon somebody else. Sure, you'll save a few hundred dollars now, but you re going to spend thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) in *reproducing* your logo on marketing and advertising material. You're probably going to have to live with your logo for years (changing your logo later is often a daunting experience). Don't risk it all by dealing with an untested or anonymous vendor simply to save a few dollars during the birth of your new company logo.

Multiple domain disorder.

In order to perform well in SEO for logo designers, it s a common practice for online companies to have multiple web addresses (domains) - all with

HIRING A LOGO
DESIGNER

different names, and oddly, different prices - in order to eventually snag your business. The search engines are peppered with such sites, some of them vaguely identified offshore design houses based in South East Asia. But you have to ask yourself - if a logo designer or corporate identity company can t create, and believe in their own logo, corporate identity and name, how can they possibly create an original logo that will work for you?

THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

THE GUIDE.

Everything you needed to know about designing a logo, but didn't know who to ask.

SELECT FONT

REVISION CYCLES

OFF-THE-SHELF

CUSTOM

CUSTOMIZ

SANS-SERIF

SERIF

STANDARD

ITALIC

KERNING

RMATS

PRINT

TAGLINE?

WEB

OFFICE

& WHITE
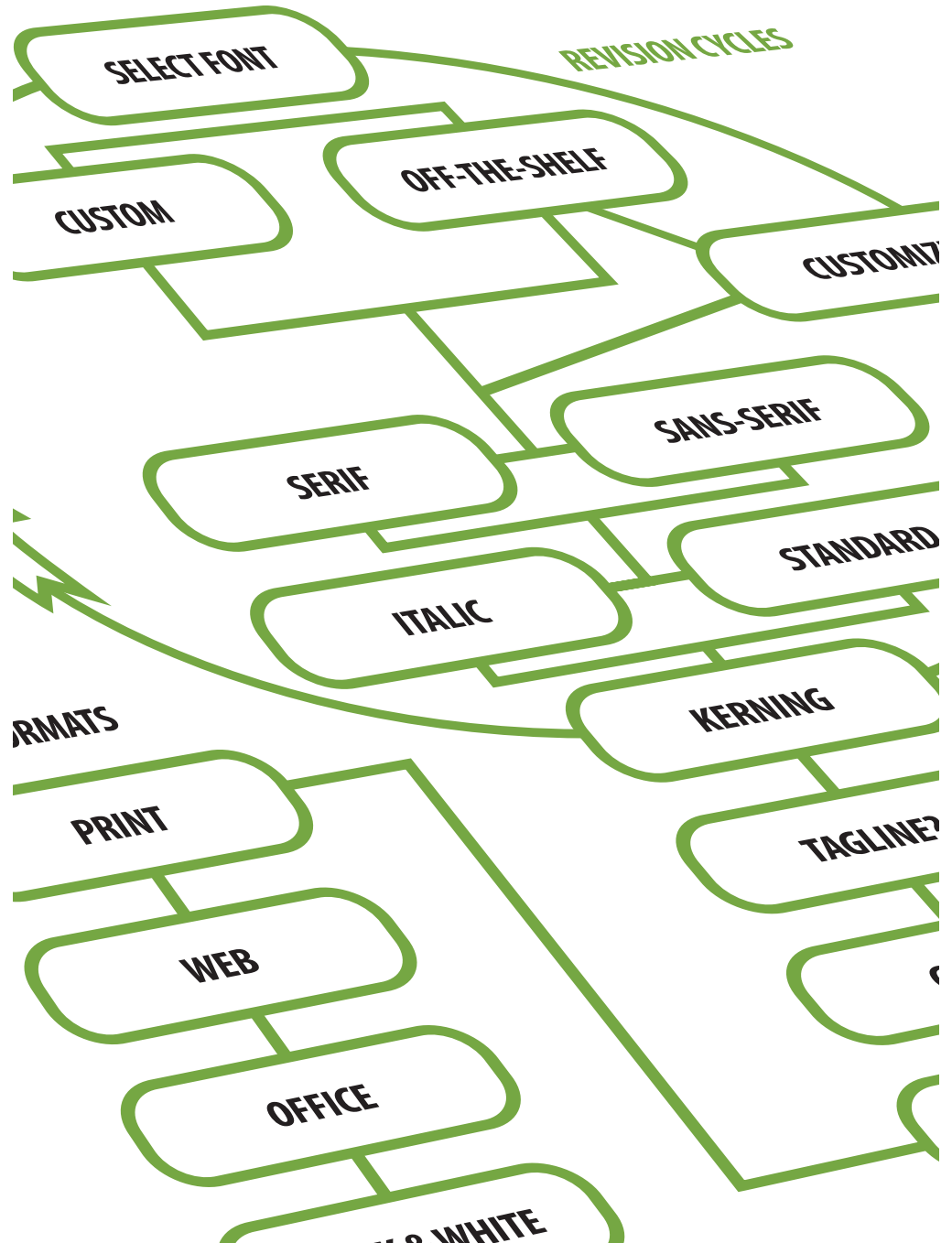
LOGO DESIGN ACTION LIST

While every logo design project is different, over the years our designers have formulated a list of common requirements that assist in a timely and successful project. Here's a few…

Step 1

Determine your budget.
While you don't want to break the bank on your logo, you also don't want to be "penny wise, pound foolish." Set a budget you can live with - and be upfront with your designer. Most are flexible and will accommodate realistic budgets.

Step 2

Determine your logo usage.
The usage of your logo will determine some design factors and technical limitations as well as which logo file formats you will require. What will be the immediate, and primary usage of your logo? This will help your designer how far they can 'push the envelope' with your logo.

Step 3

Think about the best type of logo that suits your company.
There are several different types of logos and each has pros and cons. Your designer can help you determine the type of logo that will best suit your needs – we've even assembled a list of logo design tips and road maps that will guide you through the process.

Step 4

Consider your audience.
What will appeal to your market? What will resonate with your customers? This will help you decide the 'style' of logo as well as the type of logo required. Do you want your logo to portray service, speed, economy, exclusivity, etc.

Step 5

Take a look at your competitors.
You want your logo to be better than your competitors and others in your field, while remaining unique to your company, product or service. What do

LOGO DESIGN ACTION LIST

you like about their logos? What do you not like about their logos? By gauging your particular market, you'll be able to set some design goals.

Step 6

Take a look at logos around you.

Logos are all around us. Take a look at the ones you see on a day-to-day basis. Which ones do you like. Which ones do you not like. Which logos give you a good vibe. Ask yourself why? More importantly, ask yourself which logos are appropriate for your business, audience and industry?

STARTING OUT RIGHT - SOME BASIC TIPS

Some pointers to make your logo design project a success.

While the following advice is compiled from some of the best designers in the field, it should be noted that most are not absolutes (you'll probably be able to find instances in this book that will contradict each and every one). They are, however, a decent set of guidelines that will help you narrow in on the best logo for your particular requirements.

Avoid shortcuts.

When you're in the market to have a new logo developed, there's always the temptation to take some short cuts. Usually to save time, money or a combination of both. Trouble is, most of these 'cookie cutter' solutions will turn out to be neither inexpensive or fast, and may cause a ton of headaches down the road – especially when your fledgling company starts to become more high-profile.

Some examples?

You may think about using a clip art logo (not a good idea – the image probably isn't licensed for use as a logo or if it is, is already being used by a load of other people). You may think about downloading a logo template. Similarly not a good idea – as most of these template sites are 'anonymous' and you're never going to be sure if the work is original. We've even found our client's logos being passed of as a template. And even if the work is legit, it certainly won't be unique. The very idea of 'templates' involves many people using the same design. And if it is unique, the chances that you'll get the correct formats are slim). Hosting a logo design contest has similar drawbacks and caveats. At the end of the day, there's only one effective way to design and original and effective logo, and that's to work with a seasoned professional with the experience to get your job right.

Simple is sometimes better.

A complex logo can be difficult to reproduce and more importantly, difficult to remember. Better to have a simple logo for your main design, and a souped-up version (like a beauty shot for example) when a more complex version is appropriate, and/or the reproduction medium allows.

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STARTING OUT RIGHT - SOME BASIC TIPS

A logo doesn't have to portray what your company does.

More often than not, business logos don't actually portray what the company does. Or creates. Think the McDonald's Golden Arches. No hamburgers. Think the FedEx logo. No trucks or planes (though a cool 'hidden' arrow). Think the Nike swoosh. No sneakers or golf shirts. etc. While sometimes having a logo that portrays an element of the company is appropriate, it's often better to have a corporate logo that's graphically void of detail – a logo that can be adapted to whatever direction the company takes. Think the Apple logo. True, it is an apple. But there's no indication that it belongs to a computer company. That's a pretty cool thing – the Apple logo looks just as cool on an iPod and iPad as it does on the back of an iMac.

Size matters.

Your new logo needs to reproduce at a variety of different sizes – particularly on the smallish side. Overly complex logos can 'gum up' when reproduced as a very small image. Think business card design, fax header. How about a key chain? Or a ballpoint pen? Take a look at the Nike 'swoosh'. Not a very dynamic logo but it is recognizable on a shirt sleeve on the television where a complex logo wouldn't be. Think of your logo as a mega-sized image as well. Like a billboard. Knowing how your logo is going to be used, both in size and media, can help your designer create a logo that's appropriate in terms of complexity.

Aspect ratios.

The aspect ratio (the relationship between the height and width of a logo) is critical. A logo that is too tall and skinny, or too wide and short, is not visually pleasing, and you'll end up with all sorts of layout issues when it comes to setting up your logo in artwork, especially when combined with other graphic elements (ie: business card, websites, etc). A logo that is closer to a 'golden mean' (almost the aspect relationship of a business card) is much more pleasing and more adaptable to working in other artwork. Square is pretty cool too – circle logos are very strong visually due to their 'square aspect ratio'. When it comes to using a logo in social media, a square format is pretty well it.

STARTING OUT RIGHT - SOME BASIC TIPS

Disconnecting icons and text.

If your company logo is to feature both an iconic logo and a textual treatment of your company name, it's best to have the elements as distinct pieces of artwork (as opposed to overlapping, intertwining, etc). This way, you'll be able to use either the text or icon solo, and the logo will still stand up. This is particularly true when it comes to using your logo on website & blog headers.

Your logo is for your audience.

Naturally, you want to like your logo (we've know lots of times were people are reluctant to use their logo as they no longer 'like' it). On the other hand, keep in mind that your logo is to appeal to your customers, and should be created with them in mind. You may be the most conservative person on the planet, but if you're trying to market to the hip-hop crowd, your sensibilities are probably different than your 'audience'. A logo that you 'like' probably won't appeal to them.

Your company essence and theme.

Your logo needs to portray the essence of your company. Are you a serious company, or one that revels in being whimsical. Are you appealing to a conservative set? Then a cartoon logo probably wouldn't be the best choice. Trying to brand a sports bar or an ice cream parlor? Then a logo that would work for a financial institution probably won't cut it either. Understanding a particular industry's 'theme' is important, and where a designer's experience comes into play.

Your logo needs instant impact.

Your new logo will probably not have the luxury of being in your audience's eye for a lot of time. In fact, you probably have a few seconds (at the outside) to 'grab' the viewers attention. If your logo needs to be deciphered, or has an elaborate 'back story' (see metaphor light) there's probably little chance that it will communicate the essence of your company, service or product effectively.

A tagline is nice, but...

A tagline (also known as a strapline) is the phrase or few words that

STARTING OUT RIGHT - SOME BASIC TIPS

describe a company, or the company's mission. Generally stated, taglines are featured under the logo (or in circular logos – around the logo). They're cool and all, but it's not advisable to include them in the initial design phases of your logo. Wordy taglines will require a small font that will become illegible at smaller sizes. Also, a tagline can create a lot of visual clutter in many applications. It's always better to have that ever-so clever tagline as a separate element that you can add when appropriate, or when doing so will not interfere with the design integrity of your logo itself.

Strive to be different.

You'd be surprised how many clients have asked that we design logos that are very similar to their competitors. Kinds misses the point, no? The idea of your own logo is just that – your own logo. While it can be helpful to look at logos that your competitors are using (or even people in the same industry), this should never be used as a guide to creating your logo. The idea here is to be different than your competitors. To stand out in a cluttered marketplace. To have a logo that's better than theirs. Or, at the very least – different. Avoid overused logo cliches at all costs.

Color is secondary.

The most important part of your logo project is the design itself. Oh sure, it's nice to see your logo in the colors that you will eventually use, but in the initial stages of any design the colors are of secondary importance. In fact, most logo design ideas start off as black and white doodles and sketches. Don't worry about colors in the beginning stages of the logo design process. They can always be changed,or edited later. Now, having said that…

Choose colors carefully

Whether you utilize a two spot color, or four color process logo will greatly impact any reproduction costs in the future. While not critical in the initial design phases, your choice of corporate color will have a ripple effect throughout all you corporate 'look-and-feel' material and is a decision that should not be taken lightly in the final stages of the design process.

STARTING OUT RIGHT - SOME BASIC TIPS

Some web colors cannot be reproduced.

In traditional media that is. And vice versa. Some WEB colors are beyond a CMYK range – meaning that the color cannot be printed using CMYK or Pantone spot color equivalents. To make things more complicated, sometimes WEB safe colors CAN be converted successfully. Best advice – if there's a particular WEB-safe color you wish to use, your designer will be glad to tell you of it's usability is outside of your monitor.

Keep your logo metaphor light.

While it's nice for your logo to actually 'mean' something (i.e. – this color represents growth, this dot represents our product) sometimes clients wish to write 'War-and-Peace' with their logo's metaphors. An overworked logo is not a pretty sight. The most memorable logos are also the most simple; the memorable complex logos are often highly rendered illustrations, not a bunch of geometric shapes. Dozens of swooshes, dots and colors – all professing to 'mean' something will not mean anything to the first time viewer even though it might be a 'cool' back story to tell. Take a look at the top 10 Fortune 500 logos. Pretty simple stuff. And established brands, the Adidas logo for example, sometimes don't mean anything at all.

Your logo is just a beginning.

True, it's an important beginning, but a beginning never the less. Don't expect your logo to single-handedly develop your company's 'brand'. Far from it. It is only by repeated use of your logo, combined with graphical elements (your marketing artwork, ads, etc) as well as the old-fashioned stuff (business ethic, customer service, etc) that will create your 'brand' or corporate image. Having said that, however, your new logo is the corner stone of these efforts, and its pretty important to get it right.

Repetition. Repetition. Repetition.

You want to know why the Nike logo is so successful? Is it because it's a 'great' logo? Far from it. Other than being remarkably simply, the Nike 'swoosh' is painfully uninspiring. No, the Nike logo is successful because it's been seen a cazillion times more than any other sports logos. On TV. On the shirts of top athletes. On the sports equipment of almost every professional sports team out there. Simply put, the Nike logo is so successful because it's

STARTING OUT RIGHT - SOME BASIC TIPS

been driven into our subconscious by constant exposure. And that's the same philosophy you should take with your logo. Granted, you don't have the promotional budget of giants like Nike, Apple or FedEx, but do what you can. Plaster your new logo everywhere. Every scrap of paper that leaves your office should feature your logo. Put it on your car (could be a tax write-off too). Letterheads, Brochure. Presentation folders. Use your new logo until you're sick of it. And then use it some some more. In fact, that's a pretty good rule of thumb – at the point you're getting sick of your logo (and you'll be tempted to change it – see next tip) it's just starting to get some traction.

Don't change. Almost never.

Once you've developed your logo, it's in your best interest to keep it. Brand recognition takes time (some studies state that viewers have to see a logo three times – or more – before they'll remember it the next time). There's an awful lot of logo clutter out there, so only be repetition will your logo break through. If you're going to change or update your logo, think very, very long and hard about it. If you decide to go ahead, then make sure you get it right that time. Changing a logo dramatically more than once (in a short period of time) may tell your audience that you're flaky and unreliable. We'll deal more with changing your logo in the final chapter of this book.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Some common logo design mistakes and how to avoid them.

While it's true that you know your business better than anyone else, the same can be said of designers at The Logo Factory. They know the ins and outs of logo design more than even the most seasoned graphic designers. And they should. After all, our design team has been creating logos and corporate identity for companies the world over since we launched our studio in 1996. During those years our designers have developed a keen sense of what makes a great logo and the steps. They've also been able to quantify some factors involved in unsuccessful logo design projects and the common events that derail an otherwise great logo.

Before you begin.

While you may have an idea of what you want your logo to look like, there are some issues that you've probably not even thought about. How will your logo reproduce on a variety of media. In general, is your new logo going to be reproduced as a large image, or postage-stamp sized? Will it be used exclusively on websites and blogs, or in the less-color friendly environment of traditional offset printing? Also, how are you going to work with your designer - as a passive client leaving the designing up to them, or involved deeply in the process, giving direction and suggestions throughout?

Sometimes it isn't any fun.

I would love to tell potential clients that every logo design project is fast, fun and easy. Sometimes it is. I would, however, be lying if we claimed *every* project was. Sometime a project will appear to go nowhere. The client and the designer can become frustrated, and sometimes a new designer, or art director intervention is required to salvage the project.

The war and peace extravaganza.

While it s always nice for company logos to actually mean something (i.e. - this color represents growth, this dot represents our product) sometimes clients wish to write *War and Peace* with their logo's visual metaphors. The most memorable logos are almost always simple logos. Any memorable

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

complex logos are often highly rendered illustrative logos. Dozens of abstract swooshes, dots and colors - all professing to mean something will not mean anything to the first time viewer. Any logo has a nanosecond to grab someone s attention. The simpler - the better.

Design by committee.

Perhaps the most difficult project for a designer, and the most frustrating for a client. A large group of people are responsible for selecting, approving and modifying the logo throughout the various design stages. Keep in mind that it is usually the loudest (and dare we say - the committee staffer with the largest ego) who invariably makes their opinion heard - not the committee member who has a keen sense of design. Better to select a voice for the committee who is keenly aware of your group's goals.

Art directing the project.

As designers, we are trained in many aspects of design, graphics and technology. By the time you view preliminary designs, we have attempted every variation of that particular design, having moved swooshes, right, left, up and down. Micro-tweaks will not improve the design if it is not to your liking. Best to tell your designer that you're not happy with the design, and work from fresh proposals. It's highly unlikely a design that does not have the ah-ha factor can be forced into a design that you love by moving its elements around. This is one of the main issues with design contests and crowdsourcing sites - you're expected to play art director throughout the project. Cool if you are an art director. A little daunting if you're not.

Purse shopping.

(A close relative of art-directing the job) - when you view your new logo and your reaction is instant. *"There it is! It s perfect! Just what I want."* At this point, the purse-shopping phenomenon can kick in - *"Now, why don t we try moving the text down, the globe to the right?"* If you have developed a killer logo, your reaction will be similar to the people you re trying to reach. Fumbling around for a better version of a perfect logo will only weaken its design, or worse, lose the original appeal completely. It would appear that most purse shopping is brought on by client's desire to get their money's worth, and exhausting what they perceive is the time paid for in the design charges. Remember, you're not paying for someone to put X number of

BRAIN FREEZE
HaWaiiaN SHaved Ice

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

hours into your design. You're looking for that designer to utilize their skill, talents, years of experience and knowledge of software into creating the icon that will represent your company for years. Milking a design for a few dollars can only hurt its integrity.

Cliches or trends.

Logo trends come and go every couple of years. In the latter half of the 90's the trend was the swoosh (or was it the swish?). A combo homage to Nike and an attempt by every company on the planet to illustrate that they were all high-tech and stuff, the swoosh became the most overdone graphic element in recent memory. Then came shadows. Then gel blends and reflections (like many graphic trends, thanks to Apple). Now, it s the so-called Web 2.0 look and feel. How to tell of a logo trend is just that? Simple. Is everybody doing it? Then it s a trend. It will be very *passe* in a few months or years and you'll be stuck with tens of thousands of business items plastered with a logo that causes you to shudder every time you look at it. Stick to the classic types of logos - longevity, adaptability and impact will be the pay-off..

WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOGO?

We try to discern what makes a great logo and how you can incorporate this greatness into your own brand.

Well, if that ain't the question to end it all – "What makes a good (or even great) logo?" Despite having been in the business for over twenty-five years and having been privy to the creation of thousands of logos (as both a designer and a Creative Director at our shop) it's still a difficult question. Naturally, we all know a good logo design when we see it. Just like many of our clients. And, conversely, we can identify a bad logo just as quickly. Unfortunately, these are but our opinions – we 'd argue 'educated' opinions – but opinions nonetheless. What about a litmus test for what makes a good logo and on the flip side, a bad one? Not so easy. Over the years, our designers have boiled it down to sliding scales of two factors – concept (the idea behind the logo) and execution (the actual artwork itself). A great logo would have both excellent concept and execution. I've also seem brilliantly executed company logos where the concept is lacking or bland, and terrific concepts that fell short on the execution side – poor rendering, overuse of special F/X, etc. Does it work? Let's take a look at the basic premise presented.

Concept and execution.

Using a few logo design examples from our portfolio, let's take a look at effective concept and execution and how these two factors 'play out' to make a 'good logo'..

Execution.

When The Logo Factory designed this *Steve Dahl Radio Show* logo, the main concern was the execution of the artwork (though the logo fonts and icon design had to be designed in such a

WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOGO?

way as to allow them to 'stand alone' as a solo logo treatment). The concept of this logo played a secondary role but that still doesn't stop it from being a nifty design. (Even though the idea of having a radio celeb holding his brand is a pretty cool concept in itself). While the logo is atypically complex, it still holds up quite well due to the execution of the artwork itself.

Concept.

Two examples of TLF logo samples that are driven primarily by concept (with rendering – while still technically proficient – taking a back seat). The design for Electric Lemonade contains all the company elements in one simple icon – the name, what the company does – as does the logo for Wonderstore Developments. Remaining graphically simple and iconic, it could be argued that these logos are of the 'traditional' school of thought for a corporate logo. Typography, while still complementing the logo, is subtle and non-distracting and the icons are more than capable of standing on their own. So, now we have some form of 'blood test'. Most 'great' logos are based on two 'sliding' scales – one for concept. The other for execution.

Does it work? I think so. If you'll take a look at the brands that you like, I think you'll probably find that they are unique in either concept or execution. And that's probably a good measure of what to aim for when you're looking to have your own corporate logo developed.

Uniqueness.

Your logo should be able to stand out as completely 'yours'. It's surprising how many times we get asked to copy logos – we've even had clients

PAPA's
Sports Lounge
& Casino

Who's Your Papa!

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WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOGO?

request a 'version' of The Logo Factory house. Not a good idea. On top of the potential legal complications nothing screams 'unprofessional' like a logo that's looks even remotely like someone else's. Do not engage in copying logos. I'll say it again. Do. Not. Copy.

Timeless.

Every few years there's a trend, or fad, that new logos seems to embrace. A few years ago it was the 'swoosh' – made logos all hi-tech and 'internety'. Trouble is, everybody jumped on that bandwagon and the treatment rapidly became hackneyed and trite. Few years hence, and we've got lots of people stuck with out of date designs. The latest design logo trend is so-called 2.0, a technique that (like a lot of design trends) can be traced back to Apple Computers. Take your logo, add a 'gel' treatment, give it glassy reflection at the bottom and you're all set. Web 2.0 is still going strong, but I'll go out on a limb and say it will be yesterday's news by end of summer. These are definitely logos to avoid.

Gimmick -free.

Special F/X and filters are usually applied, by inexperienced designers, to logos that are 'missing something'. Trouble is, what the design is generally missing is any design integrity, and adding bevels, lens flares and drop shadows is the logo design version of 'putting lipstick on a pig'. While it certainly shows how cool your designer's latest design software is, it doesn't do much for the professionalism of your mark. Such treatments are fine for glamour shots (used as display pieces on brochures and the like) but used on the standard version of your logo, are only going to cause grief down the road, especially when it comes to its application of on typical business material.

Adaptability.

Over the life of your company, you'll want to plaster your logo over everything you send out. That's the point of having a company logo in the first place. In order to do this, you'll need a logo that's adaptable to every occasion and while they may look 'pretty' , the design gimmicks we just talked about render your logo impractical for many of these uses. Some of these uses for your logo – checks, FAXes, embroidery, newspaper ads, invoices, letterheads, etc. Your new logo has to work on all of them. You'll

"Come Getcha Plate"

ORA LEE'S

Kitchen & Catering

WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOGO?

also need a quality black and white version of your logo that can reproduce as a halftone grayscale, or in the cases of low-resolution BW reproduction, a linear version.

Scalability.

When using your logo, you'll need to be able to use it small. Real small. Postage stamp size. Classic example of this – over the years, I've designed a load of sports event posters that feature logos from dozens of event sponsors. Space only permits the logos to be featured as very small images and it's always the simple logos that stand out when viewed from a distance. The cluttered logos aren't recognizable to any great degree and the sponsors are probably wasting their money, especially if inclusion on the poster is the only benefit of their sponsorship. When it comes to scalability, the text portion of the logo is the most important, as that's the piece you want people to remember. Scrawny, sickly text doesn't read very well at half an inch high.

Color is secondary.

Colors are extremely important. Using consistent corporate colors will become part of your brand – that's understood. However, when it comes to the design of your logo, color must always be secondary. A logo that requires color to 'hold' the design together is fine when reproduction is optimal – websites, 4 color process printing and what have you – but even then only if the size is appropriate as well. Logos that rely too much on color tend to blend together when used small and unless the contrast between the two colors is pronounced, will be a grey mess if used in black and white. As for low-resolution reproduction (FAXes, checks, etc) you can forget about readability completely – logos that use color as a design cornerstone usually come out as black blotches on a FAX transmission and with all their money, banks still haven't figured out how to print a decent check.

Appropriate footprint & aspect ratio.

The aspect ratio of a logo is the relationship between a logo's height and it's width. Bottom line, you don't want a logo that's too tall, or too wide. A square design is always best as this allows the maximum adaptability of a logo, especially when it's being used in conjunction with other artwork (or

WHAT MAKES A GREAT LOGO?

when designing a logo for social media) . The 'footprint' of a logo refers to the amount of physical space that's required to place a logo on any page. If the footprint is 'wonky' – trailing design elements 'poke' outside the footprint – it can greatly affect the size that the design can be used at, as well as the visual impact of same. See our chapter on aspect ratios and how they control the use of your logo.

So what makes a 'bad logo'?

Okay, so now we have some idea of what makes a 'great brand logo'. What about the converse? Does the lack of execution or concept make a 'bad' logo? Let's take a look. Using this formula, take a look at pretty well all the so-called logo templates sold by many online sites – you know the ones; you pick a 'design' from a series of pre-made logos and substitute your company name for some generic copy. Do the logos have concepts? No (most are just meaningless squiggles and shapes). How do they stack up on execution? Pretty badly. If they're squiggles, this is a forgone conclusion. If they are illustrations or actual objects these logos are either awful, or rendered in a manner that is consistent with most clip art collections (consistent line thickness, photo-traced realism).

The test.

Here's a design that's been 'inspired' by an actual example from a 'logo-template' site (No, we ain't kidding. No, we aren't telling). No concept. No execution. For all practical purposes this isn't even a logo. Impractical to copyright. Probably impossible to trademark. And while you can purchase logos like this for next to nothing all over the Internet, it could be argued that a 'logo' like this is worse that not having any at all.

Client: Steve Dahl Show
Designer: The Logo Factory

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THE CASE FOR
SIMPLE LOGOS

Of all the design categories we've worked with over the years, simple logos are the designs that are favored by most designers, but the most difficult to 'sell' to clients, especially when dealing with the end user. Many clients are looking for perceived value in the logo design process, and want a finished product that looks as of a lot of time was invested. A 'bang for the buck' kind of mentality. It's been our experience that simple logo proposals are often dismissed as *"looking like clip art"* (ironically, extremely simple logos are often the most difficult to develop).

Sometimes it's a short-sighted approach. Many of the most memorable logos are simple, uncluttered designs that work because of their simplicity, not despite it. Trying to put simple simple logos into a definition we'd use terms like "staid", "solid", and "clean". Over the years however, the delineation between simple corporate logos and their more complicated counterparts has blurred, and with the advent of a Web 2.0 mindset, it's difficult to define what a simple logo actually is, often being boiled down to *"I'll know it when I see it."* One way to see examples of simple logos is to view the corporate identities used by most of the top ten Fortune 500 companies. Most of these are simple, clean logos that are usually text logos and if an icon is used, it's used sparingly and features a ruthlessly simple and linear style.

Simple equals stable.

At The Logo Factory, simple logo design treatments are usually requested by companies that are trying to brand under a flag of stability – banks and

THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

THE CASE FOR SIMPLE LOGOS

accounting firms for example – and wish to avoid cute visual cliches and overused woo-hoo graphics that become dated in a relatively short time. As these designs avoid trends and fads, simple logos have the longest shelf-life and appeal to the widest market possible – extremely important for companies that are concerned about general population demographics. From a technical point of view, simple logos are usually the easiest to reproduce and are infinitely adaptable for every media imaginable (see our file format reference guide for all the possible variations – simple logos can usually be converted into every file format without much bother). These logos are instantly recognizable, even at the smallest sizes (important when using your logo as a social media avatar). There are a few downsides to a simple logo. It's difficult to develop a truly unique brand, trademarking your logo may be an issue, and it's only through repeated exposure of the mark will it gain any traction.

The war and peace extravaganza.

That's not to say you need to throw war and peace at your corporate logo – you don't – but the concept of a simple logo can be quite misleading. It's not just slapping a piece of nondescript art together with rudimentary type work. Far from it. See, simple logos are often the most difficult to design, it takes a fairly skilled designer, with the ability to develop sophisticated logo design ideas, to pare down complex concepts into a few graphic shapes.

DESIGNING A LOGO
14 THINGS NOT TO DO

Fourteen sure-fire ways to torpedo any logo design project.

A look at things that will utterly ruin, destroy and wreck a potentially decent logo attempt. I've tried (you can judge how successfully) to write this with both designers and clients in mind. So without further ado, we present 10 things NOT to do when designing your next logo…

14: Use script type in all caps.

If you insist on using a script font in your logo design, do not use all caps. Same goes for hand drawn fonts. On most script font sets, capital letters are designed as display fonts, that is they have nice decorative flourishes that aren't designed to be beside another capital letter with similar features.

13: Start your logo in Photoshop.

This is one of the most important 'do nots' and yet it the one that is most routinely ignored. Bitmap graphics are cool for photo images. Logos need to be in vector format. While later versions of Photoshop do handle some rudimentary vector functions, they're not up to snuff when compared to Illustrator or other vector drawing software.

12: Use auto-traced images.

While the Live Trace, bitmap to vector, function of Illustrator is actually marketed by Adobe as a way of making logos, it isn't. The resultant vector setup is sketchy at best and when you convert live-traced images to bitmaps, the anti-alaising feature of the format creates weird outlines and unpredictable abstract and orphaned pixels. When it comes to printing auto-traced images, you can run into problems, as the files are created with shapes butting into each other rather than overlaying. It takes a little longer but trace your images by hand for predictable results.

11: Use special effects filters.

Special effect filters – drop shadows, glows, lens flares, bevels – are wonderful. For use in everything BUT logos. Bottom line – special effect filters are usually thrown at a logo because it's missing 'something'. That something will be not be created by tossing a bevel at it. Here's another

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thing to think about too – most special effect filters in Photoshop use the RGB palette to give them 'sparkle' and as a result, often look dull and listless when converted to CMYK. Even if your special effect filter can be employed in a vector program like Illustrator, use sparingly, if at all.

10: Use a photograph in your logo.

Using a photograph in your logo is only going to lead to headaches and more importantly, needless expense over the long haul. A lot of both. If your logo is only available as a rasterized image, you won't be able to enlarge your design due to resolution issues. You won't be able to add your logo to other artwork or place it on a web background color (unless it's been created as a PNG file, a format that boasts a transparent background and even that comes with some technical issues). You won't be able to change colors without an ungawdly amount of work. Forget about spot color printing, vinyl sign plotting or shake-and-bake embroidery tapes. Animating your logo will be a hassle, it won't work for T-shirts and a myriad of other marketing applications.

Take a quick peek at your logo files – if you don't see anything with the extension EPS or AI, it's time to visit a designer who will introduce you to the joys of vector based logos (see the technical chapters for more on this). You should also keep in mind that many logo special F/X (glows, drop shadows, etc) can only be applied to bitmap images. Another reason, visual clarity notwithstanding, why gimmicky special F/X shouldn't be part of any logo design equation. At least if you want to use your new design anywhere other than a website or a blog header.

9: Ignore kerning and spacing.

Whenever words are input into any design software package, the program 'guesses' how close the letters should be to each other. This is known as kerning. In the case of software it's called 'Auto' Kerning. Problem is, these are only estimates and some software does it better than others, and accuracy often depends on the fonts you're using. Off-the-rack kerning is often more accurate in 'professional' font sets than fonts available for download on 'free font' websites, but as kerning is almost always gauged visually, as opposed to driven by some formulaic algorithm, almost all font sets require a certain amount of 'tweaking' by hand.

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It often depends on the software too. Microsoft Word is the worst, Adobe Illustrator is better though not perfect. Also, a word that looks well-spaced on your monitor will look nasty when enlarged to billboard size. Some letter combinations – V & A for example – require tighter spacing than say, M & N. Setting up correctly spaced typography is critical – poorly spaced letters will register in the viewer's minds eye as an amateur hour logo, even if they can't quite put their finger on what's wrong. I've seen text logos with kerning that you could drive a Mack Truck through. Hyper-kerning of words can be cool (when words are stretched out, with a lot of space between letters) but keep this in mind – when used smallish, and because the individual letters are small to begin with, hyper-kerned words are usually unreadable.

8: Throw in a 'swoosh'.

While clients and designers have generally clued into this one, there's still the occasional outbreak (and some online logo design firms seem to be hopelessly addicted to slapping swooshes on everything from a dentist to pet shop logos). Swooshes (or swishes) were all the rage a few years ago (looked all high-techy and stuff) but now they're a design element that translates exactly into *"I dunno – didn't have any other ideas."* I've seen logo portfolios that consist of one swooshy logo after another – for all practical purposes all these logos are identical and like the old TV series Dragnet, it's just the names that have been changed. Not that we haven't had issues ourselves. Hell, in the late 90s, we were guilty of adding a few swooshes here-and-there (okay, maybe more than a few) when the 'dot-com' boom was all the rage. At some point the 'thou shalt not swoosh' was added to the TLF lexicon and while it took a little 12-step rehab, we've managed to stay on the 'swoosh' wagon. We still get the occasional client who wants us to 'swoosh up' their logo, but we generally have the *"thou shouldn't really"* discussion at some point. Here's a rule of thumb – a logo that features a 'swoosh' today, will almost certainly be coming up for a redesign in a year or two (though some high profile logo redesigns managed to get that backwards). Better to head the idea off at the pass from the get-go. A swoosh is definitely a logo to avoid.

7: Throw in the kitchen sink.

True story: we were developing a logo for a town to mark their bicentennial

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celebrations. In the original project brief, the client outlined that they wanted to add a visual reference to a famous landmark – a monument in the city square – to the design. Fair enough. The monument was unique to the town, was where most of the planned events were to take place. The initial round of preliminary designs went to committee (where many concept problems arise) and the request for modifications came back. The client wanted to add a few more things to make the logo "wow" (roh-oh). They wanted a train, the train needed a station (obviously) so add that, there were lots of farmers so work in a barn, the barn also needed a windmill, throw in a few cows, some trees, there's these mountains, and oh yeah, the town also looks great at sunset so if you could toss that in too, well, that would be great. And while we were at it, the residents were particularly proud of the new City Hall so toss that in to boot.

A few design elements had become a laundry list – a veritable cornucopia of disparate graphic elements, all competing for visual real estate. One of the planned uses saw the design being reproduced at just over an inch wide, and it was inevitable that every one of the elements would end up as featureless squiggles when reproduced at any size less than, oh I don't know, 15 feet wide. The designer handling the gig voiced concerns about the complexity of the logo, but was overridden (client knows best doncha know) so each of the requested elements was sketched, rendered and added to the increasingly complex graphic. Of course, this myriad of illustrations expanded the time line significantly, so we also had an increasingly impatient client on our hands. Once the revised graphic was completed, it went once again to committee, where it was decided that well, maybe the logo was now too complicated, and maybe we could pare it down to just feature the monument from the town square. For those not paying attention, that was two weeks ago, when the preliminary logo design ideas were handed in.

Moral of this story – the simpler the better. Many often criticize The Logo Factory for our illustrative logo style, so we're not as arbitrary in applying this 'rule' as perhaps we should, but generally speaking – the simpler the logo the more chance you have of if being remembered, and the less headaches you'll have reproducing it in various applications.

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6: Use a visual cliche.

Yeah, we get it. Your logo features Stars and Stripes because you're a good-old patriotic company. You have a globe in your logo because you're, like global and stuff. And yeah, the little 'tripody' figure with the circle for a head represents some dude or another (a whole bunch represents a bunch of dudes working together in tandem). Beams of light radiating from your icon indicates that there's so much goodness emanating from the portrayed company, it simply can't be contained within the central graphic. Most people will fully understand that replacing a $ for an S in the logo indicates that you're attempting to portray something to do with finance. Similarly, there's very few designs where a molar (smiley face optional) can be found other than a logo design for a dentist. Trouble is, Murphy the Molar is used in a lot of designs for dentists. These, folks, are visual cliches, classified as such because they've been done, ad nauseum, to death and there's no way, no way at all, that your logo will be viewed as original or uniquely representing you. There's far too many to list here, but they're usually the very first thing that pops into your head when conceptualizing a logo for one industry or another. For that very reason, they should be discarded just as quickly. It's very rare that the very first idea that you (or your designer) will crank out is the best idea, and the first idea you have runs a very, very high risk of being a cliche.

5: Mangled, hidden and sexy time metaphors.

Everyone wants their logo to mean something – to represent some vital part of the company, product or service. Fair enough, though often easier said than done. Creating a graphic image that tells a specific story about a sometimes fairly specialized business activity can be a daunting task and always runs the risk of becoming a mangled visual metaphor. Trying to crowbar many visual metaphors almost guarantees that a logo will look like something else completely. Take the Toyota logo for example. Every time I'm behind a Toyota car, the overlapping ovals always look to be a man in a cowboy hat. It isn't. Here's the official explanation about the design (first released in 1989 with the Lexus line of luxury autos) from Toyota's Web site:

"The current Toyota Mark consists of three ovals: the two perpendicular center ovals represent a relationship of mutual trust between the customer and

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Toyota. These ovals combine to symbolize the letter "T" for Toyota. The space in the background implies a global expansion of Toyota's technology and unlimited potential for the future."

Now, how many people going to figure that out? Not too many I expect. Mangled metaphors can get worse too. A lot worse. Often involves sexy bits that are inadvertently created out of the negative spaces surrounding the various shapes. The original designer often doesn't see the implied pictures until it's far too late, and not before a lot of people have had a few giggles and titters at their expense. Sexy time logos may be funny. But they certainly ain't good for business.

Accordingly – here's another tip. Look at your new logo from every possible viewpoint. Sideways. Upside down. At an angle. Get your pals to look at it too – if you designed your own logo, your eyes and mind are preconditioned to see the logo as you think it should be. A set of fresh eyes, who have no preconceived notion of what your new design is supposed to look like, will see the hidden 'sexy time' metaphors before the logo is printed, oh, a thousand times or so.

4: Put the accent on the wrong syllable.

Upon failing that, forget words altogether and create an acronym that nobody will figure out. The graphic version of accent on the wrong syllable occurs when we're trying to jam several disparate elements into a logo. Often the effect is caused by stacking words on top of each other, and then stretching them out, or squeezing them in to fit within a certain shape or logo footprint. Wanting to 'line things up' is in a designer's nature and working around grids has been a basic design principle since just after cave drawings. Trouble is, somethings are never meant to line up. For example, our company name is The Logo Factory. Stacked one on top of each other, The, Logo and Factory creates a visual pyramid. And I hate pyramids as the shape of a logo. I might be tempted to line everything up, but that would mean making 'THE' as wide as the word 'LOGO' and those two words as wide as the word 'FACTORY'. That draws emphasis to the word 'THE' which isn't really important in the grand scheme of things. That would be putting the accent on the wrong syllable.

Certain word combinations are awkward to design around and that's just

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the way it is. It's often at this point that designers toss out the names of the logo, creating company acronyms using the first letters of the company. Shouldn't be an issue right? You'll automatically think IBM (*International Business Machines*), GM (*General Motors*) and HP (*Hewlett Packard*). Ahem, not quite. Here's the point about companies that use acronyms in their logo – they didn't start out that way. At some point, the public got tired of saying, writing or speaking about the full name of the company, so they abbreviated it for ease of use. Takes a whole bunch of usage before people start to abbreviate a company name (think Federal Express who shortened their name to FedEx when customers starting referring to having a package delivered as being FedEx'ed). Abbreviating a company name at the hop (in order to avoid working with difficult combinations of words) isn't going to help brand the company. In fact, the first question people will invariably ask upon seeing your spiffy new logo is "what do the initials stand for?" For what it's worth, this is something I found out first hand. After typing out the phrase The Logo Factory oh, about a bazillion times, I started to abbreviate our name to the acronym TLF. Even designed a peachy logo for it. People still ask me what it 'stands' for.

3: Copy, steal or borrow from someone else.

It was a coin-toss whether this was to be #2 or not, but we figured that clip art logos are probably the design crime that's committed more often, so ripping on someone else's logo slides in at #3. This would include outright ripping ("*take this artwork, add my company name – change the color so that no-one will notice*") and the slightly less egregious trend-following ("*I've noticed there's a whole bunch of logos doing this – gel, chrome, swoosh, drop shadow, etc – I wanna logo just like theirs!*"). Neither are particularly good ideas. Blatantly knocking off someone else's logo is an immediate indication that you're a grade 'A' twit, bereft of creativity, original ideas, morals and more importantly – any pride in what you do. As a designer if you present knock-offs to an unsuspecting client. Or as a business owner who uses a flagrantly purloined design.

Used to be that you could get away with this stuff – it was unlikely that a one-man shop in one corner of the world would find out that a design doppelganger in another part of the world even existed. No more. This is the age of the internet, and it's amazingly easy to find out when pinched design work is being used by someone else. If you throw up a shingle on

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the Internet, someone can find the artwork that you borrowed, send off a nasty-gram to your ISP and contact their feisty lawyer, all without leaving their monitor. Besides, nothing screams 'unprofessional' than designing, or using, a logo that's clearly been influenced by someone else.

The less egregious trend-following isn't quite as noxious, but still runs into serious problems. Over the long haul, using a design trend in a logo instantly dates the work. At some point (unfortunately sooner rather than later) your funky new logo is going to get dated. Stale. Yesterday's news. What was cutting-edge a couple of years ago is tired and trite today. It's even possible that the trend you're so excited about today is already dated – unless you've got your finger on the pulse of the design community, by the time you even become aware of a trend it's on the way out. Even design professionals aren't immune to this – I wasn't even aware of Web 2.0 logos and design sensibilities until it was already hackneyed, and I pay closer attention to what's going on than most.

2: Use clip art in your logo.

If you're tempted to use clip art in your logo, here's a word of advice. Don't. And yes, that includes so-called template sites and online 'logo generators'. On these Flash-driven web sites, you can pick from a catalog of logo templates (*cough* clip art *cough*) and add your text (usually in a crappy, unkerned font – see #9 for why that's bad) and download your new logo – chock full of pre-fab, unoriginal goodness. These sites (ie: *Instalogo.com, Logomaker.com, Logoyes.com, LogoGarden.com*, et al) can call their little pre-fab logos Fire Trucks if they want – it's still clip art. And clip art is a ruthlessly bad idea to use in any logo. There's dozens of reasons why – here's the most salient – a logo is supposed to be unique. That' alone should cure you of the desire to add that nifty pre-fab icon to your design. Once you incorporate clip art into your logo, your piece of visual identity is no longer unique.

And no, changing the size of clip art doesn't make it unique. Neither does changing the color. Nor 'flipping' it around. Nor hiding bits of it behind other bits of artwork. Nor turning it on an angle. Or adding a swoosh. And if your logo is the same as someone else's (which is inevitable when you use clip art) you've defeated the purpose of having a logo in the first place. Better to have no logo (and build your company through word-of-mouth) than have a logo that someone else, often more than one, is also using.

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Platinum
Printing Group Inc.

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Nothing says "I'm a noob to this business thing" than presenting a logo that's the same as another company. Oh sure, you might pick a pre-fab logo that no-one else chooses, but that's a long shot at best. If you found it, so will someone else. Now, having said that – here's how you can use clip art. To get ideas. You may like the idea portrayed in something you've seen – nothing to stop you from using that as a conceptual starting point in developing your custom design (of course, you'll want to stray far enough from the design so that you don't run counter to #3).

Another alarming trend, thanks to Google image search and cheap stock photograph sites, and the ease of which designers – in a hurry to add an illustrative element to a logo – can rustle up some visual reference, is the addition of photo-based artwork to logos. Granted, Google image search and stock photo sites are a great way to quickly explore some obscure subject matter, as well as to obtain accurate visual reference for a design gig. Alas, some designers are going one step further – using photographs pinched from Google image search, *Photos.com* or *iStock* as the actual artwork in the logo. Oh sure, they'll take the step of rasterizing the image, or tracing the image for your logo, but the fact remains – they're using stolen photography to create a logo for their clients. There are several issues – the first being copyright.

A traced version of a photograph is at the very least, a derivative of a copyrighted image. That's bad legally. Also, if you found the image through Google image search, anyone can do the same thing, so it's a certainty that at some point you'll get found out. Nothing screams "*I'm a hack*" than people knowing you're using a traced photograph found on the interwebs and passed off as an 'original' logo. This, by the way, is so common on logo design contest sites, that it's almost frightening. Accordingly, if you want to add an illustrative element to any logo, by all means use Google image search to obtain visual reference. Then draw the bloody thing yourself. Or hire someone that can draw to do it for you.

1: Design your logo based on stupid lists.

Some of the 'don'ts' listed in this chapter are carved in stone (ie: it's never a good idea to copy or use clip art and Microsoft Word was never meant to be a design program) but others are of the 'in most cases' variety. Sometimes funky spacing is called for. Maybe (though it's hard to imagine

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when) a swoosh is what the Design Doctor ordered. Bottom line – if you're adept enough at creativity, and clever enough to make unorthodox design solutions work, you can ignore many, of the caveats listed. Rules are meant to be broken and generally speaking, the more experienced you (or your designer) are, pretty well dictates how far off the reservation you can go when it comes to developing a truly creative logo solution. If you're new to the whole logo design deal, you'll be better served by following all of the above suggestions (and others found on 'how to' lists).

The more familiar you become with what's what, the more 'rules' you can turf out. After all, design trends generally start when one brave soul commits what was originally thought of as an unpardonable sin, is high profile enough to be taken seriously, and their radical departure from established '*thou shalt nots*' is emulated by a horde of other designers all seeking to be 'ground breaking'. Who knows, maybe the swoosh will make a comeback (highly unlikely) or adding a lens flare will become the next Web 2.0 (guess that would be Web 3.0).

After all – who's to say what makes a great logo great? And who's really worthy of writing the end-all, be-all list of what you can, and can't do, when it comes to developing an award worthy logo? Certainly not I – my opinion is only that. An educated one perhaps, but just an opinion nonetheless. For example, and at the risk of committing design heresy, I'll go out on a limb and say that the Nike logo – one of the most recognized icons on the planet – is not a particularly good logo. If we lived in an alternate universe, the Nike logo didn't exist, and I were to present the ubiquitous swoosh to a client, I could expect to be questioned thusly – "*I paid you $X for this piece of clip art?*" (the same could be said about the Apple Computer logo, one of my faves). Now, when we pimp that same swooshy Nike logo a gazillion times, slap it on Tiger Woods and every other sports star know to mankind, you've got yourself a different story. A rather blasé piece of graphic design becomes a iconoclastic sports logo and a cornerstone of pop culture. Bottom line, (almost) anything goes. Push the envelope but pay attention to the basic premise of a logo – the visual encapsulation of the heart and soul of the venture being depicted. As long as it's not designed in Microsoft Paint, isn't a knock-off from something else and the name of the company is spelled correctly, all should be fine.

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The most overdone and over-used logo concepts of all time?

The logos on this chapter are amongst the most popular of all time. Not popular as in "*I like that cool logo.*" Popular as in "*hey, let's use a logo just like this one.*" Which when you get right down to it, isn't exactly a a ringing endorsement, especially since any exercise in branding is supposedly about designing an original logo. Accordingly, let's take a look at the most overused and overdone logos of all time. Don't get us wrong. These were all perfectly great logos at one time, in fact some of them were brilliant logo design ideas when they were first conceived. But that was a long time, and a bazillion knock-offs ago. Since then, they've become the most unoriginal logo design concepts of all time. Except for the original versions, which are still pretty cool. They are also treatments that are to be avoided at all costs, as using one as your company logo will advertise to a job chunk of the world that you, or the designer you hired, are a bit lacking in the originality department.

The ubiquitous swoosh

Granted, the 'swoosh in a logo' phenomenon has died down a little bit since becoming passe shortly after the dot com crash at the turn of the century, but there's still an occasional swish breakout when one designer gets lazy. And a whole bunch more take their lead. Swooshes are a perennial favorite because they're thought to represent high tech companies and because many communication giants started using them around 1996. Many designers believe that the swoosh comes from the Nike logo, but that mark was around for eons before swishes were getting slapped on logos left and right. The most common swoosh owes its heritage to the rings surrounding Saturn (which is cool, because the Saturn car company used a swoosh in their logo too, though they had a sound reason to do so).

Swishes are a favorite with designers because they're incredibly fast to produce. Drop a circle, copy and drag, extrude. While we celebrate the swoosh for serving many deadline crunched and concept-addled designers

The most
OVERUSED
& OVERDONE
Logos of all
TIME

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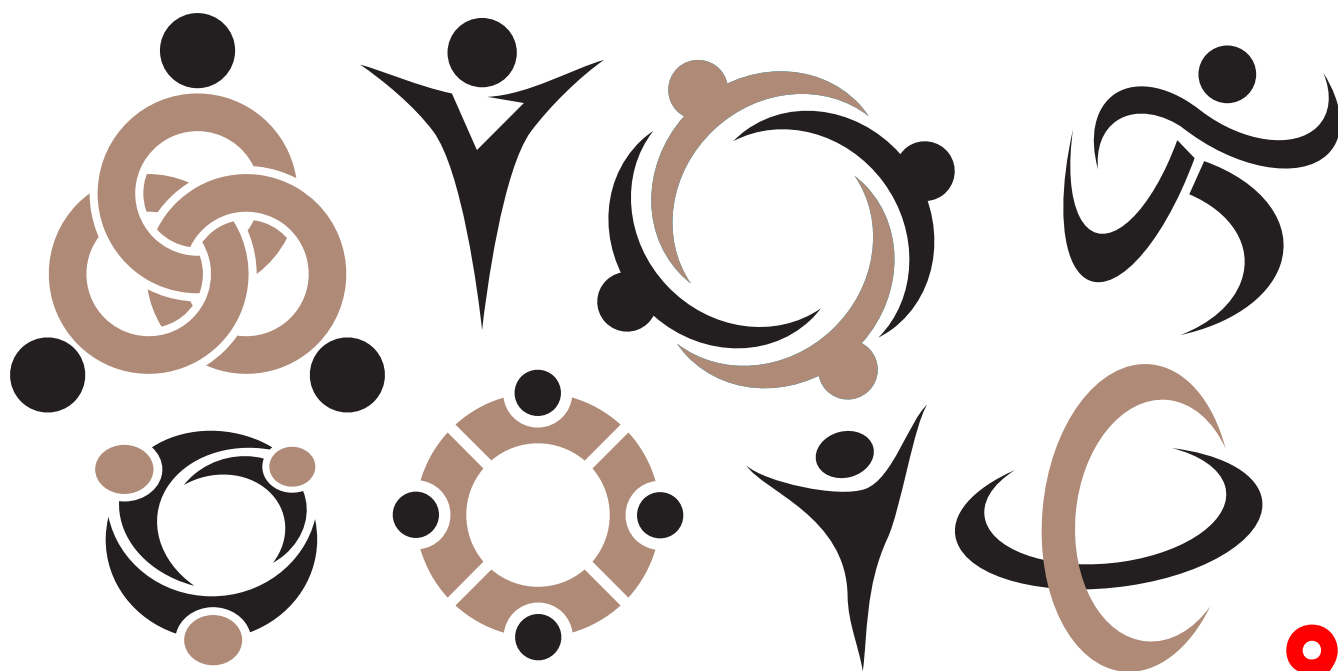
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for years, it's time to give it a rest. By the way, Saturn, the planet (not the car company) called. It wants its ring back.

Swoosh extravaganza logo

Oscar Wilde is often quoted as saying "Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess." Which is exactly what's going on with multiple swoosh logos. We're down with the excess. Not sure about the succeeding part. The thinking is this – if one swoosh is nice, then a whole bunch of swooshes is a lot nicer. Like its solo counterpart, the multi-swish extravaganza is favored due to the lack of time (and originality) it takes to create. Once we've created one swoosh, it's simply a matter of Control-C copy. Then Control-V paste, paste, paste. And paste again. Used to be that clients doled out bonus points whenever a designer managed to artfully wrap a couple of swooshes around the first letter of a company name. It's not every day you see that kind of design brilliance. Well, actually, it is. Every bloody day.
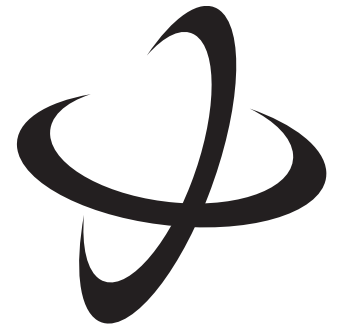
One-legged pointy man logo

Incorporating figures into a logo requires a little bit of design prowess. The human body is an incredibly complex mechanism, and paring all the bits and pieces down to a simple graphic ain't easy. Unless we resort to One-legged Pointy. Don't know how this poor guy lost a leg, but lose a leg he did. Replaced with shish kabob skewers, looks like he lost his hands too. This graphic element has been used for almost every design theme that calls for a human figure, particularly in the sports logo categories. No real surprise there – we can bend him, twist him and skew him for soccer, hockey and football logos. Lest we think that Pointy is but a mindless jock restricted to athletics, he's also been seen wrapped in a swoosh or two. You know, for more hi-tech and brainiac themed designs. Despite his decidedly non-bipedal nature, Pointy Man is a case study in true adaptability. Though if

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you're thinking of adapting him for your logo, it's time to hit the drawing board afresh.

Synchronized pointy-men logo

Remember what Mr. Wilde said about excess earlier? Same can be said for One-legged Pointy Man. Excessive use of little triangular figures can only improve on already brilliant logo, right?

To showcase a community vibe, Pointy and his friends can be found in all sorts of configurations but they're especially fond of half-circular and circular formations. These look really nice sitting on top of centered typography. Lots of groups, communities and networks like these logos. Which is why you shouldn't use it..

Swish Man

Despite having all his limbs intact, Swish Man is slightly less adaptable than Pointy, and usually remains on a until a logo calls for some sort of human movement. Running, walking, even riding a bike, it's all good.

Like his pal Pointy, Swish doesn't have any hands, or feet for that matter, but his arms and legs can be rotated into a large variety of positions for the appearance of more, or less, speediness. Alas, Swish Man is a solo player, as the introduction of others will leave any logo looking like a jumble of broken Saturn rings. Or swooshes. Which when you get down to it, is exactly what he's made from.

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The Ubuntu Widget

If we could only pick one logo as the most overused and overdone design, the wonderful little Ubuntu logo would probably be it. Or rather, one of the three widgets that makes up the Ubuntu logo (right), originally developed for the open source operating system of the same name. The original logo is supposed to represent a birds-eye view of little men, complete with round heads and out-stretched arms, and the Ubuntu Widget presents a endless variety of graphic possibilities. All of which have been done to death. Community logo? Check. Communication logo? Check. Anything to do with people interacting with people and we're good to go. The Ubuntu Widget is usually used in a group of three, but some versions will see four, or even five widgets in a circle. The Ubuntu widget is probably one of the most copied logos of all time. Over the years, there's been a few variants thrown into the mix. To whit:

The huggy Ubuntu Widget logo

This huggy version of the standard Ubuntu widget can usually be found in church, day-care center and support group logos. Group hugs are favored but one-on-one variants can be found in their natural habitat, the community care business card design. While not technically Ubuntus, we've had to widen this category to include some pointy-handed hybrids. That's okay, because nothing says "we care" more than a Huggy Ubuntu, pointy-handed or not.

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The Swimming Ubuntu logo

Think synchronized swimming. Birds eye view. You can almost hear the water splashing. Very similar to the Huggy, this logo can often been seen at gigs for day care, school and other community based groups. Lot of internet companies too. For additional 'swirly' goodness, the Swimming Ubuntus are often featured with alternating colors.

The Quarterback Huddle Ubuntu logo

There's nothing that illustrates putting smart heads together more than the Quarterback Huddle Ubuntu. Almost a backwards version of the logo proper, these logos combine the community theme of the original, with an added dose of "*ain't we smart*" worms-view symbolism. There's been a recent outbreak of Quarterback Ubuntus featuring Joomla colors cause nothing speaks of interactivity more than red, green, orange and blue. And why be even remotely original if we can knock off the colors too?

The Joomla Rings knock-off logo

With all of its intertlinked goodness, the original Joomla logo represents the open-source content management system (CMS) of the same name. The original Joomla is so nice, its little intertwined people (made up of the letter J) have been a source of design inspiration for many would-be designers the world over. Got to give it to the original. It rocks. But who needs original
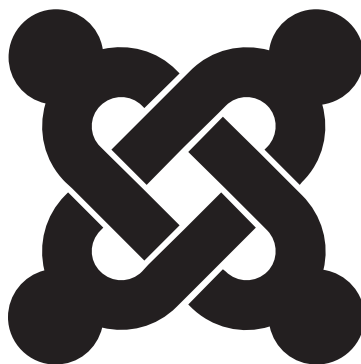
LOGOS TO AVOID

when we can simply borrow the concept, tweak it a bit, stopping only to figure out what ring goes under, and what ring goes over. The overlapping Joomla rings logo comes in all sorts of configurations. from circles, to ellipses and has been spotted in threesomes and foursomes. Many Joomlas still feature their original color palette because as we've mentioned, nothing speaks of interactivity more than red, green, orange and blue. How much as the Joomla logo been ripped on?
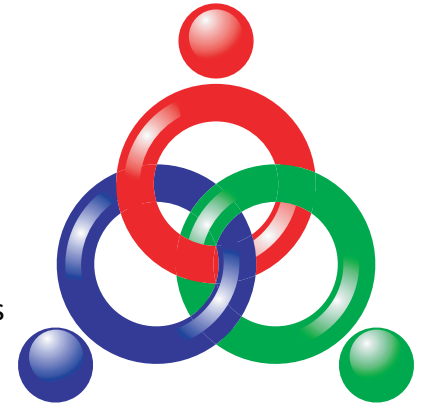
No idea, but it's a lot.

GutzFilm

A STRASBURG CORPORATION

BREAKING THE LOGO DESIGN RULES

We take a look at some 'golden rules' of logo design and break them one by one.

The internet is littered with design websites, the library is full of logo design books, and most them feature their own variation of The 10 Rules of Logo Design. We have ours too (see previous chapters for some). It's almost like these logo design rules are Design Commandments and should not, cannot and must not be broken by any designer or their clients. But are these rules carved in stone, just like the tablets Moses brought down from Mount Sinai? Is breaking any of these rules tantamount to committing design heresy? Over the years, we've discovered that there's some rather large wiggle room and we can break some, most or every single established rules that have been established for designing a logo. Let's go down the top ten:

A great logo equals a great company.

No. It won't. Regardless of how fantastic your new logo is, it certainly isn't a magic wand that erases a multitude of corporate sins. A logo is just part of your overall brand (albeit a fairly important one). If your company is terrible with its customer service, your products are defective more often than not, or your phone automatically goes to voice mail when people call, there hasn't been a logo invented that will undo that kind of bad corporate image. Looking after what your company does is far more important to the 'big picture' than how your company looks.

A bad logo is better than none.

This simply isn't true. Due to budget constraints, many business owners still believe that a mediocre logo is better than none at all. This is a natural result of this *'that's good enough'* era. That's faulty logic. If you've decided that a logo is needed to use to identify your company, isn't it a worthwhile exercise to develop a good one? Let's break a logo design rule right now – rather than a lackluster, mediocre or unoriginal logo, it's best to have none at all. Many successful companies have marketed themselves quite well with their name in a simple text logo, concentrating on other ways to distinguish their brand in the marketplace.

BREAKING THE LOGO DESIGN RULES

A logo has to cost $5,000.

We're not sure where the five thousand dollar figure came from, but it seems to be the price tag that gets thrown out, often during heated discussion about budget logo design on the internet, and usually by companies that are trying to muddy the waters as to what is, and what isn't, effective logo design. The pitch usually goes like this "*Up until we launched our logo design website, small businesses couldn't afford to pay five thousand dollars for a logo*". Trouble is, that figure has been pulled completely out of thin air. Very few companies pay $5,000 for a logo. And when they do, it's for a lot more than just a logo. More like a complete corporate branding rollout. There are lots of vendors that charge less than five grand. Often, a lot less.

You can never change your logo. Ever.

It is true that any logo will only get traction with the marketplace through repeated use and exposure. That only makes sense. However, that doesn't mean you should be stuck with a bad logo forever or that by changing your logo, you're committing some cardinal graphic design sin. Far from it. If the cartoon pirate your little nephew designed for your accounting practice is no longer resonating with people looking for accounting services, then change your logo. It's gonna cost a little of time, and will set you back in the expenses department, but the longer you use a logo that doesn't work, the longer it's going to take you to get your clientele to become attached to a new one. A logo isn't some marketing holy ground, so if you honestly believe it no longer works, feel free to change the icon you've been using since starting your business from your kitchen. One caveat though. You should make any changes to your brand carefully, as too many rebranding efforts will defeat the very purpose of having a brand in the first place. One of two logo reworks are an improvement to your company image. Any more than that and your company runs the risk of having a multiple personality territory. That's not good for business.

One version. All the time.

There have been thousand-page manuals written that lay out rule after rule on how to use this logo or that. What size it should be. How close the logo can get to type and other graphic elements. The number of colors. Etc. Etc. Etc. This is all fine and dandy – it's how major corporations build their 'look

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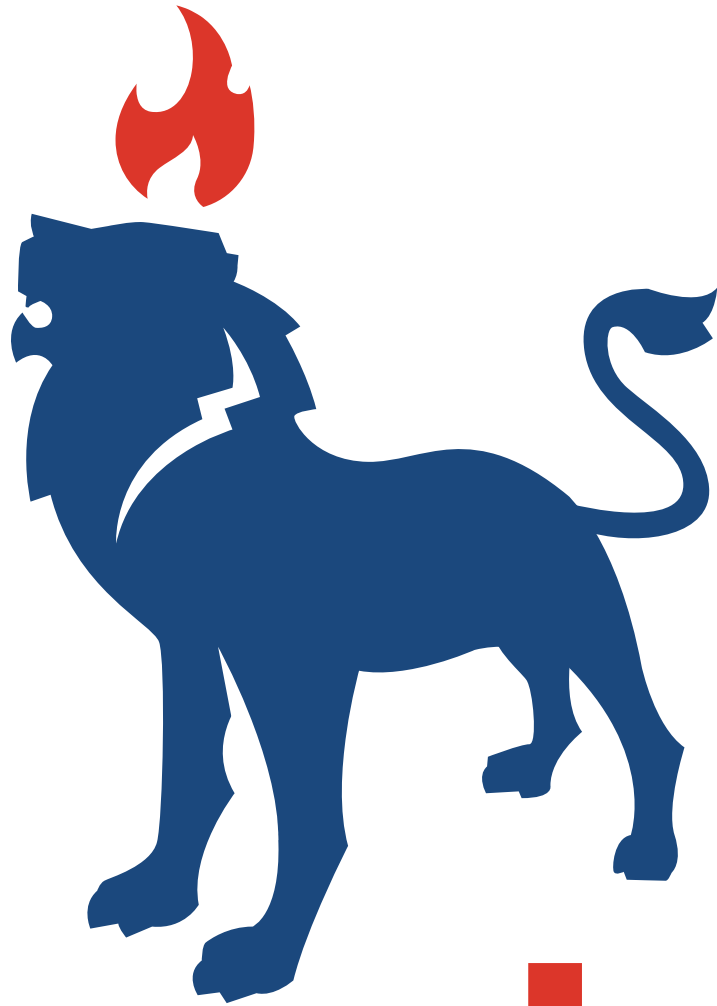
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COMMUNITY · CHURCH

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BREAKING THE LOGO DESIGN RULES

and feel', but is this really the approach for Johnny Appleseed? Maybe not. Large corporations are so anal about their brand guidelines because their logo is being plastered on hundreds of items everyday, by different vendors and suppliers, often in different countries where language can be an issue. There has to be some form of consistent use of large corporation logos, or else we'll end up with *Coke* logos that are purple and teal, or *Nike* logos that are backwards, upside down and spelt *Nicke*. If you're in control of the logo guidelines for your own company, don't be afraid to play around with your logo a bit. Use the icon portion solo. Use the text on its own. Mix up the colors around. As you're about six degrees of separation from all your marketing material, things won't get too out of hand without your say-so. When you grow to an international enterprise, with hundreds of designers who toil on your marketing and advertising material while you're on your yacht, then by all means, knock out your own logo usage guidelines. Until then, have fun. Or let your designer have fun. You'll be amazed at the results.

Only use two colors in any logo design.

This rule is a little more stricter than others, but technology and printing prices have given us more flexibility than previously available. This rule was carved in stone many years ago when four color process printing was incredibly expensive, especially when it came to often reprinted, non-revenue generating staples like business cards and letterheads. Much more economical spot color printing, using Pantone Swatch books to bypass CMYK printing, was a much more attractive approach for most small businesses on limited budgets. And designers designed everything accordingly. One and two color spot logos became the lay of the land and nobody dared designed printed material that strayed from this insurmountable rule. Designing logos is a bit different these days, with many printing companies even refusing to print spot color, preferring to convert everything into CMYK in order to print their material in 'gang runs'- when a printed runs a lot of different print jobs on one giant sheet at the same time. CMYK colors also translate more accurately into RGB palettes – the method of reproducing logos on websites and blogs. Storefront light boxes and vehicle wraps also use digital full color printing (as opposed to previous dye-cut vinyl signage that was available only in a limited selection of Pantone colors). Designers are a little freer to design multi-colored logos if we so choose. We can't break this rule entirely though – if you're a stickler

BREAKING THE LOGO DESIGN RULES

for exacting color accuracy then Pantone colors are still the way to go. Color accuracy through CMYK printing can be inaccurate at times, with some budget online printers being less accurate than others. This is especially true if your brochures, letterheads or business cards are being 'gang run" on a large sheet with multiple projects, all with varying color densities.

Blends and gradients are not allowed.

Everything we just discussed about spot and four color process, applies to this rule as well. Most color blends and gradients require 4 color process printing to print (setting up a blend in spot color can be difficult) and they became taboo for logo design during the spot color era. Not so much today. Before getting carried away with blend and gradients, we should keep this in mind. Even though we can be a more flexible in their application, there are still technical issues with logos that feature this often abused technique. As the number of colors required to render a blend properly almost always exceeds the number of colors available for certain web file formats (GIFs for example), banding is a real concern with it comes to low resolution reproduction. Bands of solid colors are formed to complete the effect, rather than a smooth blended appearance. We can get around that by using better file formats (JPG and PNG files for example) but it's still something to keep in mind (see our logo file format reference guide for more). Blended logos don't scale very nicely, especially on the small size, so if your company logo is going to be used a lot at postage stamp size, you should probably still tread carefully.

Follow the logo design 'trends'.

Every Christmas, logo design experts, and people who like to write about logos often publish great articles that predict the upcoming logo trends for the new year, or take a look at the observable trends that had emerged during the last. These are great articles to read, and certainly interesting for the graphic designer, but they're not logo design blueprints to follow. Design trends get overused rather quickly as tend to die off rapidly as people tire of the latest visual phenomenon. Trouble is, everyone that jumped on the bandwagon are left with logos that aren't so trendy anymore. Best to aim for timeless and sensibly constructed simple logos. You may think your logo is 'boring' now, but you'll feel much better about things when the trend everyone followed in January, is out in August.

THE BIG BLUE MARBLE CO.

Client: The Big Blue Marble Company
Designer: The Logo Factory

BREAKING THE LOGO DESIGN RULES

You're only allowed a simple logo.

Here's some decent advice. We should always design logos for the lowest common denominator. The absolutely worst, most artwork hostile reproduction method that the design is likely to be reproduced with. Printing your logos on pens is one such environment. The logo is used very small. Not much, if any, color freedom. Extremely low resolution on the screens used to print. If you're going to print a lot of pens a simple logo is the way to go. One color might help too. But what if you're never, ever, going to reproduce your logo on a pen? Then it's quite possible to up your game a little, adding a little complexity to your logo. See, that's the thing about complex vs. simple logos. A complex, illustrative logo is quite acceptable, if a complex, illustrative logo is what's called for. As a lot of our logos tend to lean towards illustrative, we often get grief from other designers for overly complex logos, but in our defense, we're also quite capable of developing simple text and iconic logos too. And we often push clients towards simple design. It always depends on what your application calls for. Sure, there are some very real advantages of simple treatments, and there's a lot of successful simple marks around. Though technology, both in design and reproduction, had given us a lot more latitude into what we can do. We're not saying your logo should involve the proverbial *War and Peace* extravaganza, but a little creative muscle flexing is certainly an option for you or your designers. Like most of our rules, it comes down to common sense and appropriateness of the imagery you want to represent your company.

You shouldn't steal anyone else's logo.

This is still a rule. And we can only break it a little. Copying a logo is never okay. There's all sorts of copyright and trademark ramifications. However, it's perfectly acceptable to look at other logos for inspiration. All sorts of designers scope out other people's work for logo design ideas. That's were most ideas come from, as creative people crib, mix and rehash other concepts to make their own unique work, though copying flat out is a very bad idea.

LOGO FOOTPRINTS AND ASPECT RATIOS

Often overlooked in the design process, aspect ratios and footprints can influence the use of your logo forever.

Square aspect ratio

Horizontal aspect ratio

Vertical aspect ratio

The aspect ratio of your logo is the relationship between its height and width, while the 'footprint' is the physical boundaries that are required for reproduction of the design. A logo that is too tall and skinny, or too wide and short, is not visually pleasing, and you'll end up with all sorts of layout issues when it comes to setting up your logo in artwork, especially when combined with other graphic elements (ie: business card, brochure design, web sites, etc) or when using it on website & blog headers.

Different Aspect Ratios.

Horizontal aspect ratios are handy when it comes to reproducing a logo as part of a web banner. A logo that is closer to a 'golden mean' (almost the aspect relationship of a business card) is much more pleasing and more adaptable to working with other artwork.


Horizonal aspect ratio

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LOGO FOOTPRINTS AND ASPECT RATIOS

Take a look at the Links logo, designed by The Logo Factory. This is a nice example of a logo with a horizontal aspect ratio (because this logo was designed for signage, the aspect ratio is quite deliberate). The usage of this logo, particularly the size that it's used at, will almost always be determined by its width. SImilarly, the usage of a logo with a vertical aspect ratio will almost always be determined by its height.

Logo Footprint.

The 'footprint' of your logo is often overlooked when inexperienced designers are developing their first logos. You can imagine your new logo's footprint as a bounding box around the minimum area needed to reproduce your logo. Let's take a look at the Links logo again. The visual focus area - the company name - only takes up half of the overall footprint, while the trailing star element necessitates that the footprint is double that. Trailing elements that create overly large footprints (in relation to the visual

Footprint of design
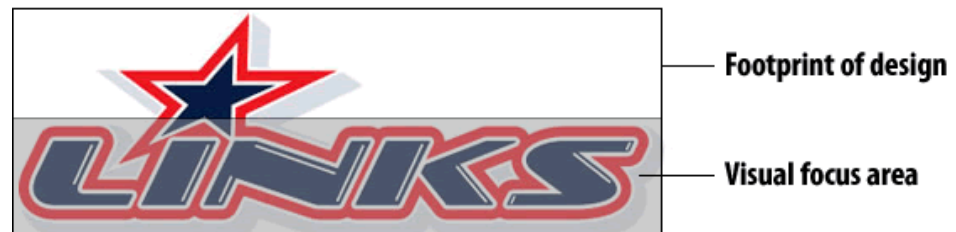
Visual focus area

focus of the design) can adversely effect the use of a logo, especially in the size it can be used, so it's preferable that trailing elements don't hang too far outside the visual focus area. Naturally, and like most logo design 'rules' this one can be broken, if you wish to "push the envelope." Dynamic use of footprints - like the Links logo - can add a new dimension to the look of your new logo (see Blues Street Barbecue logo - next page).

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DESIGNING LOGOS FOR WEBSITES AND BLOGS

Things to keep in mind when designing a logo for a blog or website.

While the most effective aspect ratio for any logo is certainly open for debate (though a square logo is often preferred when it comes to social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook & YouTube), developing a horizontal logo is preferable when it comes to blog and website header usage. This isn't a logo commandment or anything, but square logos can can lost in the top left corner of a typical web page header.

As if to illustrate that this isn't carved in stone, The Logo Factory web header logo is both square and on the right hand side. We don't think it looks too bad either. Accordingly, square logos can be used quite effectively (as long as the web header is designed around them). On the other hand, their vertical cousins can practically disappear. Let's take a look at some typical logo design aspect ratios:

Square aspect ratio

Horizontal aspect ratio

Vertical aspect ratio

LOGO

LOGO

LOGO

Now let's place those rudimentary logo shapes into some basic website and blog header layouts to compare effectiveness. Keep in mind that we've exaggerated things to make a point, but it should give you a basic idea of how thing play out. When we add everything up, a horizontal format is definitely more appropriate for website and blog use than a square one. For all intents and purposes, and unless we employ some pretty radical website styling, any extremely vertical logo design is out. There's probably not a graphic designer working today, at least those with a few years of experience under their belt, who hasn't had to deal with a variation of this

DESIGNING LOGOS FOR WEBSITES AND BLOGS

Logo with square aspect ratio

Typical website header

LOGO

Typical website navigation bar

Logo with horizontal aspect ratio

Typical website header

LOGO

Typical website navigation bar

Logo with vertical aspect ratio

Typical website header

LOGO

Typical website navigation bar

scenario – explaining to a client why their logo is so small when it's featured on their blog or website. The above illustration shows why.

Removable Icons and Fluid logos.

When it comes to using a logo on a website or blog header (and incorporating that notion into the logo design process itself) which is a better aspect ratio: square or horizontal? Alas, there's not dyed-in-the-wool solution, and neither one overshadows the other entirely (when designing logos for social media for example, it's strongly suggested that a square format is best). The most complete answer is that anyone that's serious about social media, websites and blogs, probably needs a little bit of both. It's always been advisable, if your designer is incorporating pictorial imagery into a logo, that it should be able to be used on its own, and disconnected from the text portion of the logo. Granted, that's not always possible, so designers and clients need to be a little more fluid in adapting their logos to different uses through a little 'tweaking' here and there.

DESIGNING LOGOS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Getting social with your new logo.

Facebook profile image

You Tube

Twitter

Twitter (feed)

We never thought that designing logos for use in social media was an important enough topic to even discuss, let alone write an entire chapter about in our *Guide to Great Logos*. Until that is, a frantic client called The Logo Factory studio recently with an issue about using his logo onto a Facebook profile page. "It's so small" he explained, "and half my company name isn't even there." Having designed the logo over a year ago, we knew right away what was wrong. The logo was slightly horizontal in its aspect ratio, had a minor footprint issue, and when it was uploaded to the server, Facebook's online cropping editor was resizing and forcing his logo into a square format. That made the image terribly small, and the square format of the profile picture was lopping off half the company name. Having a cool logo is fine and dandy, but in this instance, it was completely unusable.

DESIGNING LOGOS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Logo footprint   **Visual ID area**

Square Images for most Social Networks.

The problem didn't stop there either. Using the logo on other social media platforms, Twitter and YouTube for example, the issue would get progressively worse, as most other social media networks employ avatars that are much smaller than a typical Facebook profile 'badge'. On Twitter, neither the logo icon, or the text portion, would be legible at all. Even though this design, all things considered, is a fairly simple iconic logo. In terms of application on social media profiles and timelines, that didn't matter. It wasn't the complexity of the logo that was an issue. If was the aspect ratio – the ratio of the design's height to width – that was throwing things off. Not much we could do to help either. Even if we used the absolute minimum visual ID area, removing almost 2/3 of the overall design, any avatar badge would still be tiny. All things considered, a quick-and-dirty fix was simple enough.

You Tube

Twitter

(feed)

Facebook profile image

DESIGNING LOGOS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

We set up a couple of square JPG files, using a highly edited version of the standard logo. Our client could use the square version of his logo on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and the edited version still had enough of visual relationship with its horizontal sibling to make sense from a branding perspective. Granted, and as this particular logo wasn't originally designed with social media in mind, it wasn't the world's best solution. But it would work well enough to keep everyone happy.

Converting a logo for Social Media.

Afterwards, we realized that this issue might not be so uncommon for our clients, especially with the do-it-yourself nature of setting up social media profiles. Our client had no idea why his company logo was being cropped and truncated, yet our designer were able to figure it out fairly quickly. We can all agree that social media is here to stay, and will continue to grow for the foreseeable future, so should that use of a logo dictate some of the logo design process itself? In its simplest terms, is social media an argument for square logos? Or at least the creation of logos from which we can shave off a square portion, so that business owners can effectively manage their avatars and profiles on social media platforms? To illustrate the thinking behind this, we grabbed some examples from our portfolio and attempted to make them into social media avatars. So that nobody can accuse us of 'cherry picking' design (for best results) we used a couple from the first set in our logo design examples slide show. As the following will illustrate, we had mixed results.

73px by 73px Twitter profile avatars

DESIGNING LOGOS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

The first two logos (left to right) were able to be used 'as is'. At the size most social media icons use, any text isn't going to be terribly legible in the first place, so we simply used the icon portion of the logos. On the third logo, My Car Guy (right), because the text is interwoven with the design itself, that wasn't an option. But even though it's a relatively complex illustrative logo, it's still not too bad. Though in terms of being able to read the company name, that's probably the result of a Rorshach Test effect. What's that? As we know what the logo is supposed to look like, having seen the original, our brain tricks us by filling in the details. So here's the question. Would a first time viewer be able to read the tiny type or recognize the itty-bitty car? Here's another thing to think about too. Even though the car illustration looks like it has a square aspect ratio, it doesn't, and any serious social media application would need a redesign to make it into one.

Should we always design square logos?

Should we design every logo in a square shape? No. We're not suggesting anything that drastic, and there are times when a square logo isn't the best alternative – when using a logo on websites & blogs for example, the optimum configuration would be a horizontal format. When all is said and done, square logos are but another option in an almost limitless arsenal of design options. It's up to you to decide which is best for your particular application.

TYPES
OF LOGOS

Breaking logos down into four main categories.

Text

Iconic

Graphic

Illustrative

While there are an infinite number of variables that are possible with any logo design project, and many company logos 'straddle' the various types, our designers have found that most design 'treatments' will fall into four distinct categories; **Text**, **Iconic**, **Graphic** and **Illustrative**. While these categories are certainly not to be viewed as absolutes, and many logos have the features of several types, this is a fairly basic, yet accurate, overview for those new to the logo design process.

Each logo type has its merits, while others have disadvantages. Some types are more appropriate for certain market segments than others. By being familiar with the different versions, and their strengths and weaknesses, you can make an educated decision on which logo type is more suited to your requirements. Let's take a closer look at the various logo types, using designs pulled from our portfolio as examples…

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TEXT BASED LOGOS

The simplest logo is often the most complex to design.

From a visual perspective, text based logos are the simplest type (and favored by a good chunk of the logos for Fortune 500 corporations) but can be enormously difficult to design – a designer is limited in the 'tricks of the trade' that are available and when using 'off-the-shelf' font work, your logo runs the risk of being uninspiring.

Conversely, a memorable logo font can help 'brand' your name and is easy to reproduce on a wide variety of promotional items and marketing material, as well as being almost universally adaptable to the materials available. If we were to boil everything down to the main advantage of font-based logos it would be this – rather than promoting the image or theme of your business, the logo design markets your company name, and helps makes it memorable to potential clients and customers. Naturally, it helps if the name featured as the main focus of the logo is unique – if your company name is 'run of the mill' it's probably better to develop an icon design or use an illustrative approach in your logo development).

Letter spacing & kerning.

The most important aspect of a text logo (other than the font selected) is effective letter spacing, known in the design industry as kerning. Whenever words are typed into any design software package, the program takes an educated guess at how close each letter should be to its neighbor. These are only pre-programmed estimates – some fonts have different kerning

TEXT BASED LOGOS

parameters, and some programs do it better than others (Microsoft Word – though it should never be used to crete a logo – is the worst, Adobe Illustrator is better, though not perfect).

Keep in mind that what looks good on your monitor may not look so good when enlarged to billboard size. The only way to effectively space typography is by 'eyeball' and by hand (that's why you need someone with graphic design training in the first place). Some letter combinations – V & A for example – require tighter spacing than say, M & N. Setting up correctly spaced typography is critical – poorly spaced letters will register in the viewer's minds eye as a sloppy or amateur logo, even if they can't quite put their finger on what's wrong. That also applies to the 'tag line' of your design. These are the group of words, usually small, under the logo that generally describe what the featured company does, or how good they are at doing it. And while we're talking about fonts, if you're going to use off-the-shelf fonts (a perfectly acceptable solution despite what some design purists might say) there are certain type faces that were never meant to be used as display. Chancery Script is one. Papyrus was nice (a few thousand logos ago and before the release of Avatar). A quick search of Google will show people's opinion about Comic Sans. As far as the number of fonts, always best to keep that to a minimum – a logo (and tag line) with anything more than two font styles risks looking like a ransom note.

What fonts 'say'.

In terms of the type of fonts used, for practical purposes your options are unlimited but by understanding a little about what fonts 'say', you can communicate aspects of your company through the type of typography used. A serif font (Times Roman for example) has a traditional flavor, while a san-serif font tends to indicate a more modern identity. Italic fonts (slanted to the right) can indicate speed (and conversely, fonts slanted to the left – generally not a good idea – can indicate hesitation).

How your company name is presented is also important – all lower case lettering can be indicative of an internet or web-based entity. Font or text logos can always be 'jazzed up' with shields, backgrounds or other design flourishes that help create a truly unique brand that carves out your little but of the small business marketing landscape. Bottom line – if your new company identity is font driven, that doesn't mean it has to be boring.

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TEXT
BASED LOGOS

Pros of text-based logos.

• Favored by Fortune 500 companies and corporations (i.e. Microsoft)
• Faster to visually 'absorb' (requires memorable text).
• Recognition of logo also involves the NAME of the entity portrayed.
• More likely to be recognized later after limited initial exposure.
• More appropriate for 'conservative' companies.
• Can utilize spot color, or black and white reproduction effectively.
• Ease of color editing.
• Can be reproduced on most media without any modifications.
• Can be reproduced on low resolution media (FAXes, checks) while remaining recognizable.
• Can usually be reproduced in a variety of color combinations.
• Easily converted to black and white (one color or halftone).
• Usually lends itself to either basic logo animation or 3D animation.
• Is more likely to be recognized when reproduced at small sizes, or from distances.
• Simple for logo embroidery and requires smaller stitch count per impression.
• Very little technical knowledge is required for most traditional reproduction.

Cons of text-based logos.

• Difficult to create 'unique' logo font stylings that do not look 'off-the-shelf'.
• Less 'ah-ha' factor than Illustrative or Iconic.
• Requires very experienced GRAPHIC designer with understanding of typography.
• Less likely to be a trademarked logo (unless made up from unique verbiage).
• Less likely to be popular on wearables (without massive exposure)
• Less likely to illustrate the function of the company or product (may require tag line).
• Does not permit logo variations (i.e. aspect ratios for various placements)
• Unlikely to 'stand out' if featured in conjunction with iconic and/or illustrative logos.

Coffee Services Unlimited

ICONIC LOGOS

The most popular type of design.

SUNSHINE
TECHNOLOGIES

NEXUS
funding corporation

Creative Genius
GROUP
DISCOVER YOUR CREATIVE GENIUS

ucore
uranium

clupedia
Clues from Crowds

BIGBARK
CUSTOM CARD PACKS

GutzFilm
A STRASBURG CORPORATION

Iconic logos generally feature highly simplified graphics or symbols that reflect an aspect of the company and/or product portrayed. These graphics can be abstract in concept or feature a reasonably accurate depiction of same. Truth to tell, it's the treatment of the image, as well as the subject matter, that defines an iconic logo. Iconic logos are perhaps the most common and is probably the type of design that comes to mind if you were asked to describe "what is a logo?" Despite their relative simplicity, these logos are often difficult to design – it's certainly not easy to take complex ideas or concepts and break them down into a few abstract shapes. Doing so requires the services of an experienced designer who is able to understand both the conceptual and technical limitations of developing such a design. Because of the somewhat abstract ideas contained within them, iconic logos run the risk of being described as clip art logos by the

WONDER**STORE**

D E V E L O P M E N T S

ICONIC LOGOS

viewer, who may not have the understanding of what's actually being illustrated. Accordingly, the development of these logos should be left in the hands of seasoned designers whose ability to create simplistic graphics has become more developed over time.

Developing an iconic logo.

When developing an iconic logo, the logo design process involves creating a graphic that depicts some aspect of the company, broken down into a very simple series of shapes and objects. Unlike illustrative logos, we try to avoid adding blends, gradients and other nifty special F/X lest the design become cluttered. More often than not, iconic logos feature solid geometric shapes, arranged in a way that very quickly describes the company portrayed.

Utilizing an iconic design has certain technical advantages over their illustrative counterpart, the most important one being this; these logos are more adaptable when your design is to be featured at a small size, or in low-resolution reproduction such as newspapers, faxes, etc. Iconic logos are generally developed with a text portion – though secondary to the overall design – which can be dropped at a later date, once your logo has been well exposed through marketing and advertising.

That's not to say that iconic company logos aren't the result of a full-blown design process – they are. Pictured above are the steps involved in many of our design projects. Left to right: 1) our designers sketch out rough concepts and ideas using various elements of the company. 2) Once we've settled on some design direction, we render the rough doodles into vector artwork using Adobe Illustrator. This gives the client a better idea of what we have in mind and allows them to select an icon to work with. 3) Once we've agreed on a particular icon, we can add text, colour and turn the icon into a full-blown logo.

Due to their relative simplicity, iconic designs are the best choice for certain applications – embroidery for one example, flash animation for another – and these are the kinds of logos that have the fastest retention factor for your viewing audience.

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ICONIC
LOGOS

Pros of iconic logos.

• Faster to visually absorb than illustrative logos but more exciting than text versions.
• More likely to be recognized later after limited initial exposure.
• Can utilize spot color reproduction effectively.
• Can be reproduced on most media without any modifications
• Can be reproduced on low resolution media (FAXes, checks) while remaining recognizable.
• Easier to trademark the logo (with unique icon).
• Favored by hi-tech and start up companies. Easier to appear cutting edge.
• Can usually be reproduced in a variety of color combinations (easily edited).
• Easily converted to black and white linear versions.
• An iconic logo usually lends itself to Flash animation.
• Is more likely to be recognized when reproduced at small sizes, or from distances.
• Generally simple to embroider and requires smaller stitch count per impression.
• Icon can be separated and used individually either as main logo presentation or graphic accent.

Cons of iconic logos.

• Difficult to create unique icon.
• Requires fairly experienced graphic/logo designer.
• Runs risk of looking like clip art if not designed effectively.
• May end up as fad logo i.e.: globes & swooshes from 90 2s.
• Generally not appropriate for mascot or cartoon logos (though not impossible).
• Generally requires a text portion, unless the subject of massive exposure (i.e. Nike) which can lead to visual clutter.

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®

GRAPHIC LOGOS

A little more detail goes a long way.

If you talk with most graphic designers, they'll usually tell you about three different types of logo treatments – illustrative, text and iconic. Fair enough. The Logo Factory has added a fourth category – namely graphic logos – and you might wonder why the difference. To understand that, we'll have to tell you a little about why we try to classify logos in the first place.

While many purists will argue that illustrative company logos are 'too complicated' for many types of reproduction (a valid point – and something which usually requires a discussion with clients prior to a project start), it is also an area where designers at The Logo Factory shine. Many of our designers – as well as myself – have backgrounds in illustration so we tend to lean in that direction. In theory anyone can throw together some shapes to create something that is – in the loosest definition – a 'logo'. It takes some real skill and talent to pull off a successful illustrative identity. A more common approach involves the development of an iconic design – simple shapes and images that portray a concept or abstract idea, usually in flat shapes. That leaves us with text logos – custom typography or font work. When we opened the doors to our design company in 1996, we attempted to categorize logos so that clients would find it easier to work remotely with our designers. We needed a simple way for clients to submit client briefs via the internet and tell us the type of logo they wanted us to produce. After messing around for weeks, we finally narrowed the definitions down to three main categories as already discussed: Text and Iconic and another we'll touch on in a minute; illustrative

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GRAPHIC
LOGOS

Breaking down the classification of logos into these three distinct types also helped us set up structured design pricing menus that would be equitable to clients, while allowing us to budget enough design time to make projects practical from a business point of view. Those three definitions have served us admirably over the years, but – as a result of one of our designers' regular think tank sessions – we decided to expand our definitions by one category.

An illustrative-iconic hybrid.

While there are no absolutes, (a text based logo can also feature a removable icon) it's generally easy to understand which type of logo is which. Until we get to the illustrative category. We often design logos that are more complex and illustrative than iconic logos, yet simpler and more adaptable than illustrative logos.

Full-blown illustrations are one thing (and quite easy to identify), but over the years we've created many logos that could be classified as 'hybrids' of iconic and illustrative logos. Not quite full-blown illustrations, but too detailed and illustrative to be considered iconic. We've found that this vague category has been quite confusing to clients (especially since some of our logo design pricing is based on the 'type' of logo that a client wants). In order to clarify this, we decided to expand our accepted categories so that we'll be talking about text, iconic, graphical and illustrative logos. We're still working on the final definition but it's along the lines of this - Graphic logo

A graphic logo uses a bold linear style to create the essence of an actual object without the detail and resultant reproduction constraints of a fully illustrative logo. This type of logo allows for a more realistic portrayal of an item, theme or concept than an iconic logo while still remaining easy to reproduce, scale, etc. Almost the best of both worlds. By adding this category into our studio parlance (and factoring it into our pricing menu) we should be better to equipped to ascertain clients needs and budget requirements for their particular projects.

Pros of graphic logos.

• Easier to create 'unique' illustration. Less risk of imitators.

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THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

GRAPHIC LOGOS

• Appropriate for mascot, cartoon or whimsical logos.
• Is more effective for 'fun' establishments (bars, restaurant logos, clubs, sports logos, etc.)
• Once established, has a very high recognition factor (characters, mascots)
• Less likely to infringe on other copyright, and/or be confused with other designs.
• Lends itself to logo variations and situations (i.e. characters in various poses)
• Text portion of logo, if designed effectively, can stand alone as a text logo without illustrative portion.
• Lends itself to traditional animation (though complexity may add to cost and development time).
• More likely to be popular on wearables, incentives.
• Easier transition to reproduction methods than a full-blown illustrative • logo.
• Easier to reproduce on low-resolution media (embroidery, etc) than full • • blown illustrative treatment.
• Easier to recognize when reproduced at small sizes or from distances.
• Less difficult (costly) to animate and may lend itself to 3D.
• Spot color reproduction is possible. More highly rendered versions will still require 4 color process printing.
• Relatively simple to convert to black and white grayscale versions.
• Easier to trademark these logos (as long as a truly unique concept is featured in illustration).
• Better reproduction on low resolution media (FAXes, checks) while remaining recognizable.

Cons of graphic logos.
• Slower to visually 'absorb' than iconic treatment. Requires repeated exposure.
• Less likely to be recognized later after limited initial exposure.
• Runs risk of looking amateurish if not illustrated effectively.
• Requires skillful text addition and integration.
• Requires designer with technical knowledge for reproduction contingencies.
• Can appear to be a clip art logo unless carefully rendered with enough detail to be unique.

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D'Vine

WINES

ILLUSTRATIVE LOGOS

Not for every application but what the doctor ordered for others.

Illustration based logos are usually more complex and detailed than their iconic, graphic or text-based counterparts, and are a highly-rendered pictorial representation of some aspect of the company being portrayed. To develop the concept for the illustration, we can focus in on the name, the business concept or a company character or mascot that can be developed. Graphic design purists sometimes frown upon illustrative logos, and often with good reason.

This type of logo is often used inappropriately or in instances where they simply won't work. Often, many new to the logo design process want to 'throw the kitchen sink' at their new design – a visual version of 'the more the merrier'. Inexperienced designers can often create fully illustrative logos without giving thought to the client's market segment, the types of usage

REALITY ARTISANS

We *Craft* Ideas into Reality*!*

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ILLUSTRATIVE LOGOS

planned or the overall effect on their corporate image. It's certainly true that Illustrative logos are NOT for every application or branding scenario. Having said that, there are times when an illustrative logo is not only appropriate, but it's the one and only solution.

Effective illustrative logos.

When developing an illustrative logo, it's not just the drawing itself that's important. The artwork has be visually 'comfortable' with appropriate text work and the typography featured. The illustration needs to be self-contained enough to be effective as a stand alone design. And even though these kind of logos often require a full color palette, the final digital artwork and files need to be technically 'savvy' enough to work with a wide-range of applications.

Illustrative company logos require a full array of logo file formats and setups so that they can be integrated with other artwork – from full color to linear black and white. Developing an illustrative logo requires the attention of a designer who's familiar with all logo types and the ramifications of each – creating a illustrative logo is not just making a 'pretty picture', slapping on some font work and hoping for the best. When working with illustrative logos, it's also possible to create a logo 'sub set' – a series of simplified logos that are based on the original version and applicable when use of the full version is impractical or cost prohibitive.

Pros of illustrative logos.

• Easier to create 'unique' illustration. Less risk of imitators.
• Appropriate for whimsical, mascot or cartoon logos.
• Is more effective for 'fun' establishments (bars, restaurant logos, clubs, sports logos, etc.)
• Once established, has a very high recognition factor (characters, mascots).
• Easier to copyright.
• Less likely to infringe on other copyright, and/or be confused with other designs.
• Lends itself to logo variations and situations (i.e. characters in various poses).
• Text portion of logo, if designed effectively, can stand alone as an icon design or text logo.

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ILLUSTRATIVE LOGOS

- Lends itself to traditional animation (though complexity may add to cost and development time).
- More likely to be seen as a cool logo & popular on wearables, incentives.

Cons of illustrative logos.

- Take longer to develop which often translates into more expense.
- Slower to visually 'absorb'. Requires repeated exposure.
- Less likely to be recognized later after limited initial exposure.
- Requires very experienced graphic designer with developed illustration skills.
- Runs risk of looking amateurish if not illustrated effectively.
- Requires skillful text addition and integration.
- Requires designer with technical knowledge for reproduction contingencies.
- More difficult to trademark the logo (unless a truly unique concept featured in illustration).
- May be difficult to reproduce on low resolution media (FAXes, checks) while remaining recognizable.
- Color is integral part of design – difficult to edit or change colors.
- May be difficult to convert to black and white.
- While spot color reproduction may be utilized, most highly rendered illustrative logos require 4 color process printing.
- Is more difficult (costly) to animate and may not lend itself to 3D.
- Is more difficult to recognize when reproduced at small sizes or from distances.
- Less effective for logo embroidery and requires a higher stitch count to reproduce..

NEARLY NATURE LANDSCAPING

Client: Nearly Nature Landscaping
Designer: The Logo Factory

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THE LOGO DESIGN PROCESS

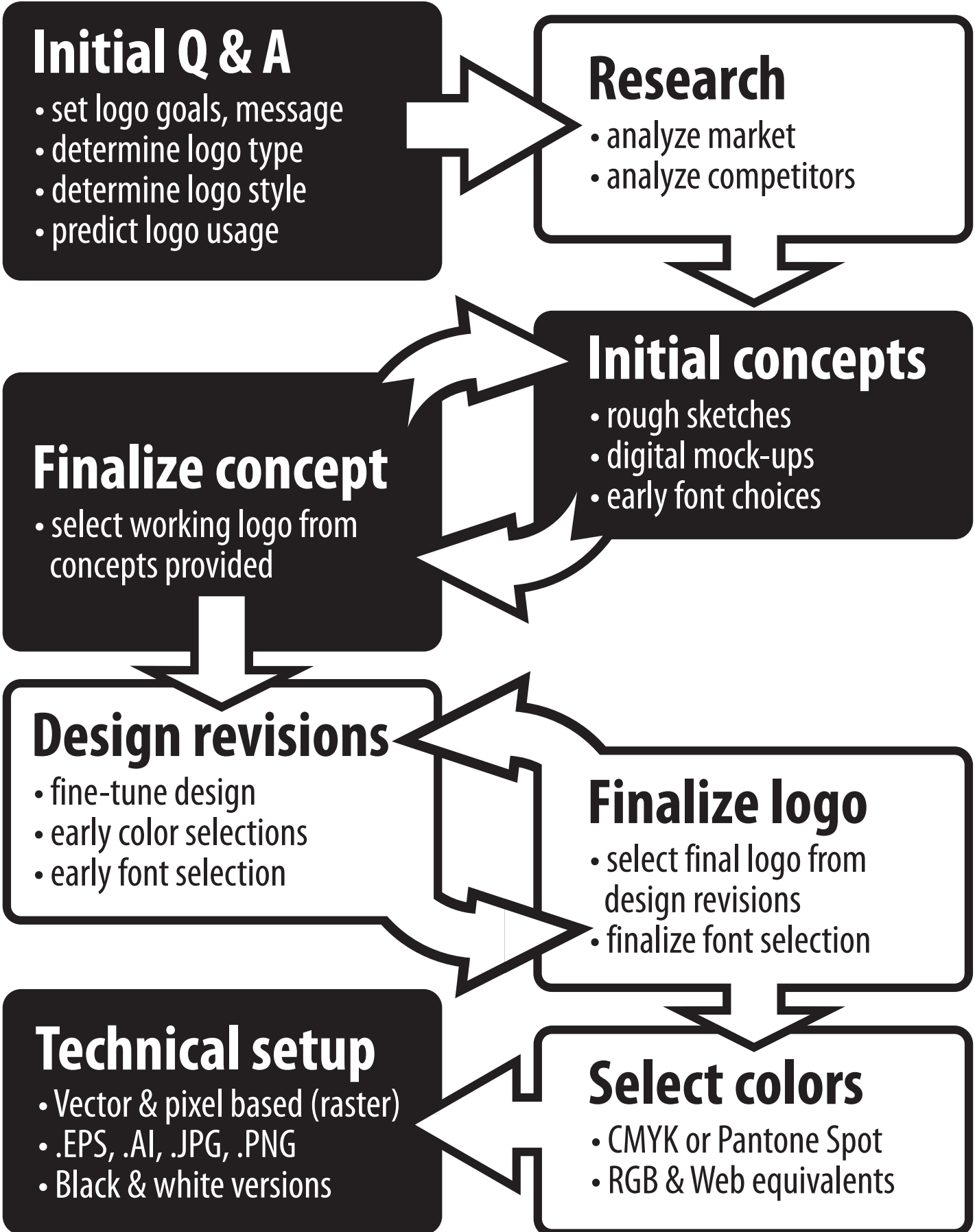*Step-by-step.*

Initial Q. & A.

The logo design process begins before pencil touches paper, or in this digital age, mouse touches software and generally involves an initial assessment of the type of logo that you need for your company, product or service. Known as the 'client brief' this basic Q & A allows a designer to map out the route your design will take, as well as let them tailor design propositions to your specific requirements. The 'client brief' gives a designer mission critical information such as your market, your target demographic, logo usage, your plans for future marketing etc. and allows them to gain an understanding of the goals you have set and how they can help you meet them.

Research.

Nobody knows your business like you do, and it'll take a designer a little while to get up to speed - unless they have specific experience in designing logos for your specific market niche. Using the information provided in the initial Q & A client brief, your designer will take a look at everything to do with your business including your competitors, in order to gain an understanding of what players are already doing in the field, and what kind of logos may be appropriate. At this point, we'll start to have some ideas and rudimentary concepts that will form the basis for our initial design presentation.

Initial concepts.

Initial concepts can come in many forms - from rough 'napkin doodles' to fairly finished digital artwork - but they all serve as a starting point to what will eventually become your new logo. This is a revision-heavy part of the design process as your designer tries to hone in to an idea that will meet your requirements while sill staying true to some basic logo design 'rules'. It's at this point that many design projects go 'off the rails' as either the client or designer become frustrated with the project's progress. Here's a tip for both - be patient. It's not easy encapsulating a business identity into a few square inches of visual real estate, but you will get there. Be open to new suggestions and ideas and communicate your own when they come to

Initial Q & A
- set logo goals, message
- determine logo type
- determine logo style
- predict logo usage

Research
- analyze market
- analyze competitors

Initial concepts
- rough sketches
- digital mock-ups
- early font choices

Finalize concept
- select working logo from concepts provided

Design revisions
- fine-tune design
- early color selections
- early font selection

Finalize logo
- select final logo from design revisions
- finalize font selection

Technical setup
- Vector & pixel based (raster)
- .EPS, .AI, .JPG, .PNG
- Black & white versions

Select colors
- CMYK or Pantone Spot
- RGB & Web equivalents

THE LOGO DESIGN PROCESS

you. Communication is key to any successful logo design gig, so keep the 'channels' open. During this phase your designer will also suggest some early font choices, perhaps even some color choices. Nothing is carved in stone just yet, so explore various possibilities.

Finalize concept.

Once you've gone through the painstaking sequence of preliminary designs and concepts, you'll eventually settle on a concept or design direction. That's great! You're halfway there. Typically, your designer will take that working logo and 'tighten it up', finalizing your selected concept into digital artwork that's almost 'print-ready'.

THE LOGO DESIGN PROCESS

Design revisions.

During this phase, your designer will 'fine-tune' your selected concept(s), applying their technical knowledge and expertise to the equation. Working with them, you can request revisions and 'tweaks' to your logo (though if the concept isn't working off-the-shelf and requires a lot of revisions to become usable, you may wish to think about selecting another concept - it's highly unlikely that a series of micro-tweaks will turn a logo you don't like into one that you do).

Finalize logo.

This is the exciting portion of the logo design process and involves signing off on a final design. The icon is perfect. The typography is just "so". A few more steps and you're the proud owner of a decent logo - the purpose of this entire exercise.

Select colors.

We've left selecting colors to the last because that's where it belongs. Colors should never be critical in the initial stages of the design process (most logo design projects begin in black and white) and while a very important part of your logo, can be changed around fairly quickly using modern design software and technology. Don't get hung up on color in the early stages.

Technical setup.

Once you've finalized your design, settled on a font and selected your corporate colors, you'll need a wide range of file formats and logo setups to use your new design effectively. Nobody experts you to be an expert in the technical end of things - that's your designer's job - but a working knowledge of file formats and their uses can help you insure the proper appearance of your logo on marketing material.

LOGO DESIGN ROAD MAPS

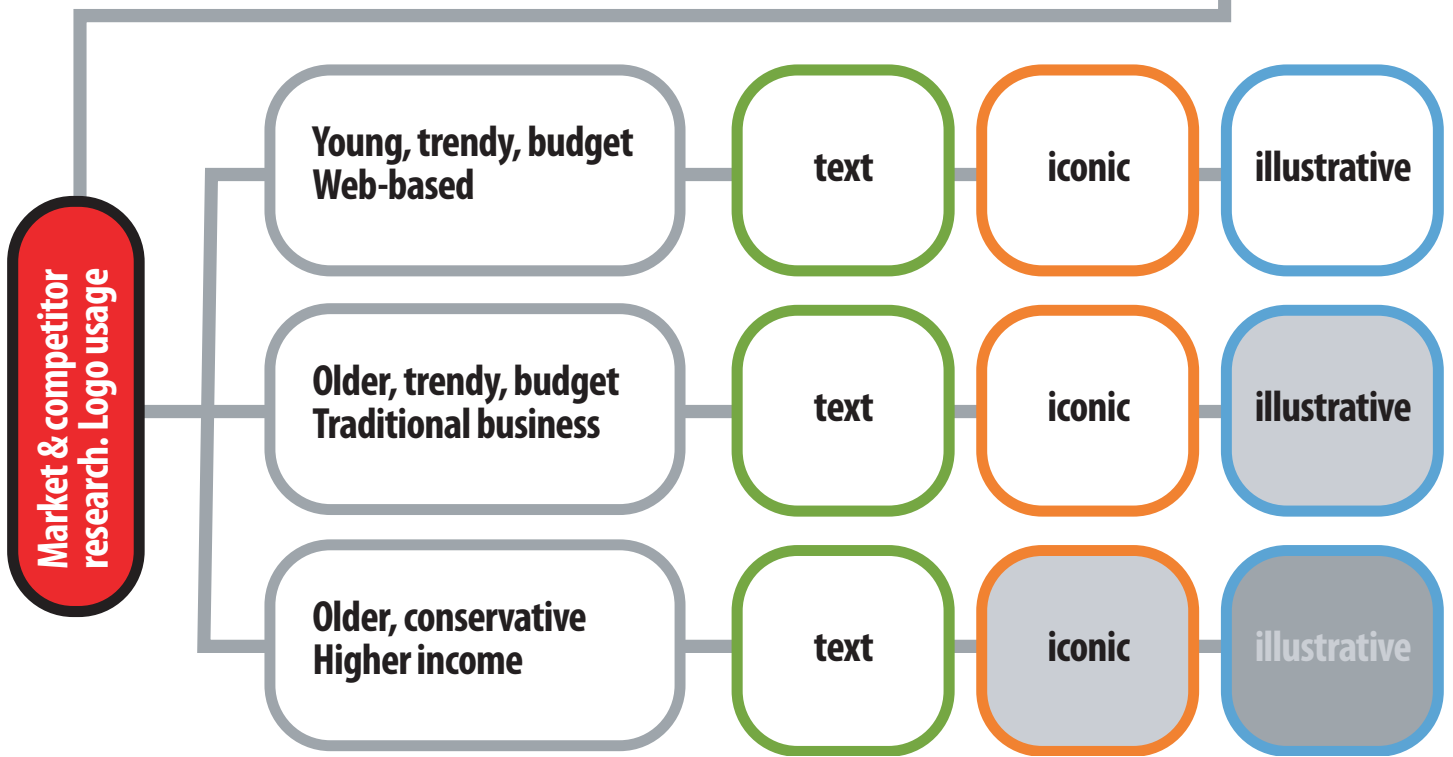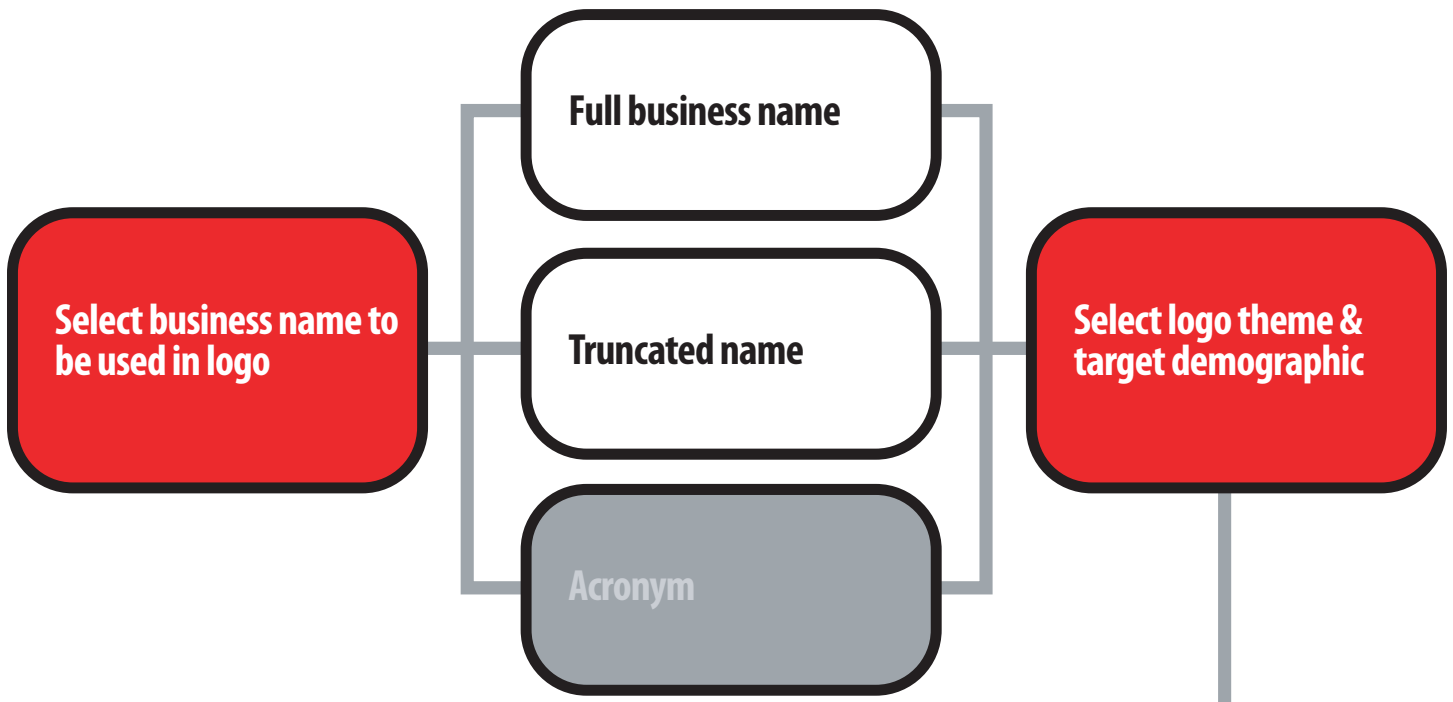*A graphic depiction of the logo design process.*

Over the years, and after thousands of logo design projects under our belt, I'm often asked about our logo design work-flow. How our studio works and how we tackle such a wide-range of different projects. An interesting question to be sure, and not one that can be answered easily, or arbitrarily. After all, every logo is different (the entire point of the exercise) and every logo design process is unique to each project we get hired for. Over a few weeks, I tackled this question, planning an interactive Flash presentation even, and in the planning stages came up with various flow charts that attempt to illustrate, as accurately as I can, the entire logo design process from start-to-finish. Occurred to me that the graphics looked almost like a subway map, or a road map, so figured it might be worth while writing a chapter that outlined some of the processes we use at the shop, as well as diagramming the work-flow of the various kind of projects we handle. Might be of some use to other designers, or clients, to see what options are available, as well as the various steps involved.

Selecting the right type of logo.

We've basically broken down the types of logos into three main categories (we actually use four but will ignore graphic for this exercise) – text or font based, iconic and illustrative. Which type of logo is appropriate for which project depends, to a large degree, on the market demographic and target audience. While a cartoon illustration design may be cool for some web site, it certainly wouldn't be appropriate for a home builder selling million dollar homes. Usage plays a big part too, as various media applications have caveats and restrictions – if your logo is going to be applied fifteen feet tall in vinyl lettering to the side of your truck fleet, best to have a simple logo than a complex design full of blends and drop shadows. I've attempted to build these concepts into the first part of our road map – selecting the right kind of logo. While nothing is set-in-stone, or arbitrary, the grey boxes represent types of logos that may, or may not, be appropriate. White boxes represent logo types that certainly are.

Business or product name.

Whether or not you use the full legal name of a company in any logo is usually a matter of choice. For example, our full name is The Logo Factory

Select business name to be used in logo
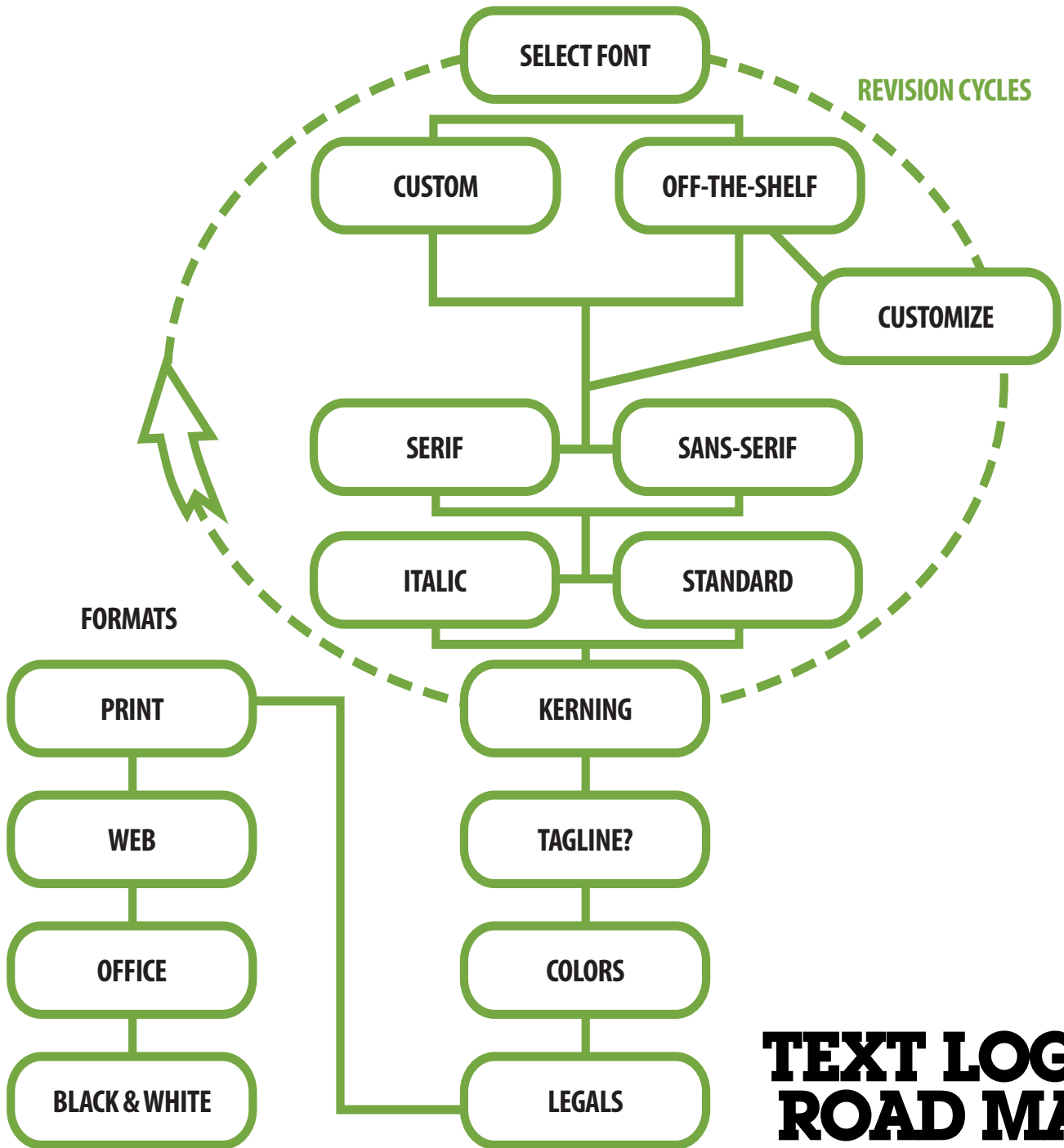
Full business name

Truncated name

Acronym

Select logo theme & target demographic

Market & competitor research. Logo usage

Young, trendy, budget
Web-based

text

iconic

illustrative

Older, trendy, budget
Traditional business

text

iconic

illustrative

Older, conservative
Higher income

text

iconic

illustrative

LOGO DESIGN ROAD MAPS

Incorporated (usually abbreviated to Inc) but we never use it, settling for the truncated version The Logo Factory. Some market segments may require that an LLC or a CO to be tacked on, and if that's the case, best consult with your attorney. Using an acronym in a logo is not generally not a good idea unless A) you have an exceptionally long name or B) your company or product has a great deal of established traction in the marketplace. We tinkered with using the abbreviated form TLF to represent our company a few years ago, but spent more time explaining what the letters meant than it was worth.

Market and target demographic.

This is often over-looked by both designers and clients alike. Who is the logo being designed for? The designer? Nope. The client? Uh-uh. It should be designed for the customers of the client. In order to select the right type of logo route it's critical to understand the demographics of the target audience. Take a look at the most successful competitor in your area, and see what they're doing. Copying logos is never cool, but it will certainly give you an idea of the kind of logo approach to take. And with that, on to the logo design road maps.

I've set up the road maps like a typical flow chart, running from top to bottom. The dotted lines represent steps in the process that are iteration heavy, usually involving a back-and-forth between the designer and the client. Stuff that needs explaining, with examples from our logo design portfolio, are below each diagram. Keep in mind that nothing in these road maps is carved-in-stone, and there's lots of overlap between the various logo types described. On the plus side, they're not as complicated as they seem at first blush. Ready? Let's have at it.

SELECT FONT

CUSTOM

OFF-THE-SHELF

CUSTOMIZE

SERIF

SANS-SERIF

ITALIC

STANDARD

FORMATS

PRINT

KERNING

WEB

TAGLINE?

OFFICE

COLORS

BLACK & WHITE

LEGALS

TEXT LOGO ROAD MAP

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TEXT LOGO ROAD MAP

Custom or off-the-shelf fonts?

Used to be that using a custom-built font for almost every logo was the way to go, but with the number of excellent fonts available these days, it's almost counter-productive. That's not to say you can't customize portions of words made up from off-the-shelf, so that's been added as an option in our text logo flow chart. The Logo Factory logo is a good example of this approach.

Serif fonts.

According to Wikipedia "serifs are semi-structural details on the ends of some of the strokes that make up letters and symbols." Think of them as little tails and feet in the typeface. While serif fonts are considered to be more legible in print as body copy, there are some resolution issues when used electronically, especially in smaller sizes. On the other hand, serif fonts can represent stability and are often appropriate for conservative and traditional businesses.

Sans serif fonts.

Sans serif comes from the French word 'sans' meaning, quite literally "without." As in without the little tails and feet we just talked about. While serif fonts may have a leg-up in the print world, it could be argued that sans serif typefaces read more effectively in the electronic world. Accordingly, sans serif fonts are often appropriate for modern, web-based or trendy new businesses.

Italic fonts.

Italic fonts are slanted, generally to the right, and are often used to emphasize portions of phrases. Italic letters can also represent speed or a sense of urgency. Keep in mind that there are some

TEXT LOGO ROAD MAP

legibility issues with italic fonts, especially at small sizes, and particularly on the web. Italic logos also can present some issues when selecting a complimentary font for collateral marketing material.

Kerning.

Whenever words are input into any design software package, the program 'guesses' how close the letters should be to each other. This is known as kerning. In the case of software it's called 'Auto' Kerning. Problem is, these are only estimates and some software does it better than others, and accuracy often depends on the fonts you're using. Off-the-rack kerning is often more accurate in 'professional' font sets than fonts available for download on 'free font' websites, but as kerning is almost always gauged visually, as opposed to driven by some formulaic algorithm, almost all font sets require a certain amount of 'tweaking' by hand.

Tagline.

A tagline is a little sentence, usually under the logo, that describes in several words the company, or the company's core activity. Using a tagline (also known as a strapline) in a logo is not recommended from a design perspective (the lettering is often too small to be legible) but almost always demanded by clients eager to tell the world what it is their company does. That's perfectly understandable, so it's often beneficial to design a logo that can be featured with, and without a tagline. Once the company is established, we can drop it.

Colors.

I've added the selection of colors well into the design process as that's were it belongs. It's often beneficial to design logos in black and white so that we're not relying on colors to define bits and pieces of the design (a foolhardy notion if the logo is ever to be reproduced as black and white).

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TEXT LOGO ROAD MAP

There are three main color choices we can make here – one color, spot color or four color process. Choose wisely here, as the colors you select will determine the hassle, expense and compatibility of your logo for its entire shelf life.

Legals.

The legals portion of all our road maps is two-fold. The first is whether or not to add a 'TM' or "®" to the logo. The difference between the TM and the R-in-a-circle comes down to a) a matter of taste (if you have in fact registered the trademark or b) if you haven't registered the logo but are claiming a trademark (in which case you can only use the 'TM' addition). The second part of the legals section is the transfer of ownership of the logo from the designer to the client, so that the proper copyrighting and trademarking is possible.

Formats.

Setting up logo files correctly is perhaps the most important step in the logo design process, yet it is often the area given the least attention with designers failing to edit their working files into versions that are ready for print, web and other uses. You'd be amazed at some of the poor setups I've seen in my day when designers ship their 'working files' rather than correctly formatted ones.

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TYPE OF ICON

LETTER FORM   LITERAL   METAPHORICAL   ABSTRACT

SKETCHES

RENDERING

REVISION CYCLES

SELECT FONT

CUSTOM   OFF-THE-SHELF

CUSTOMIZE

SERIF   SANS-SERIF

ITALIC   STANDARD

FORMATS

PRINT   KERNING

WEB   TAGLINE?

OFFICE   COLORS
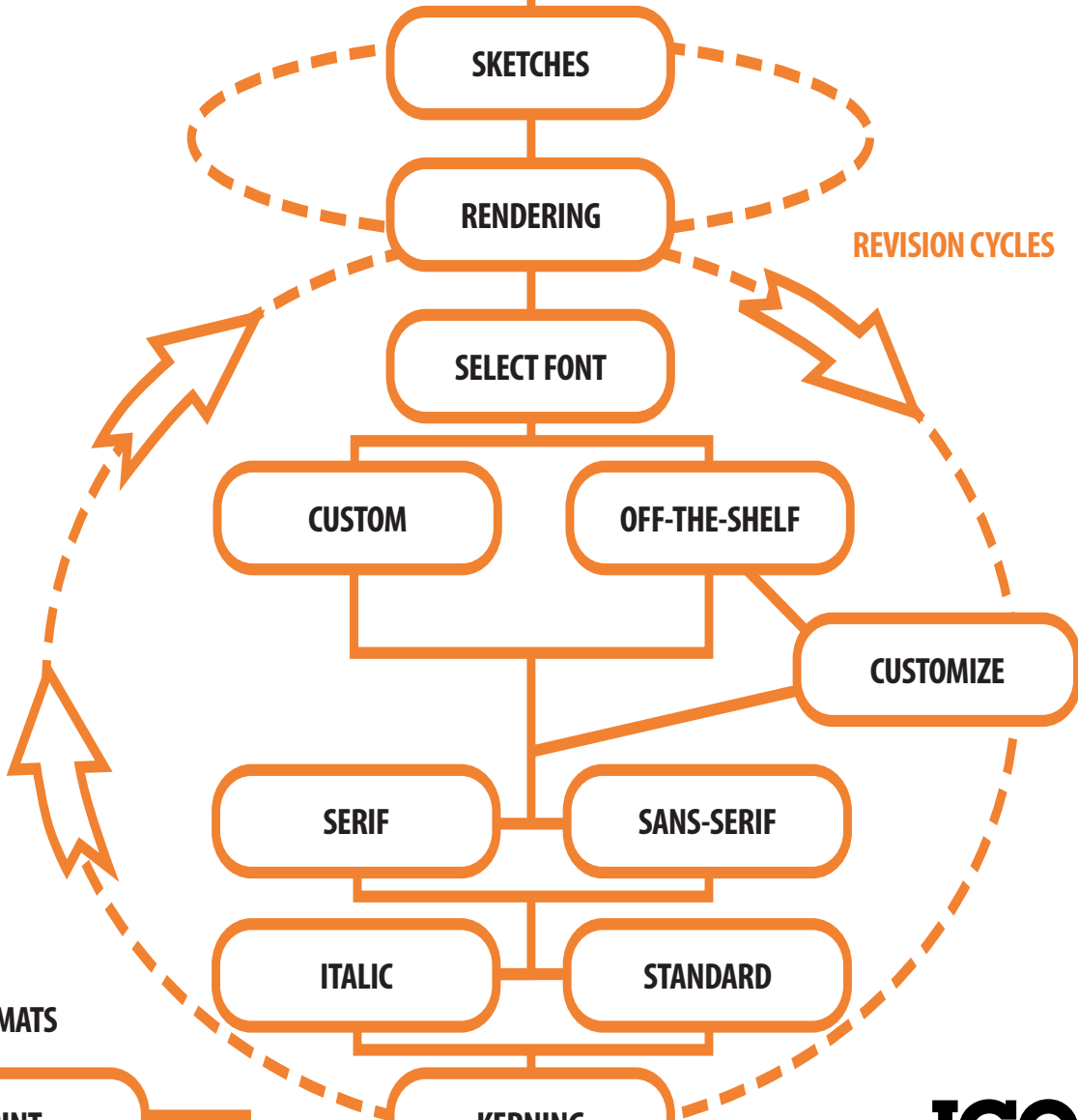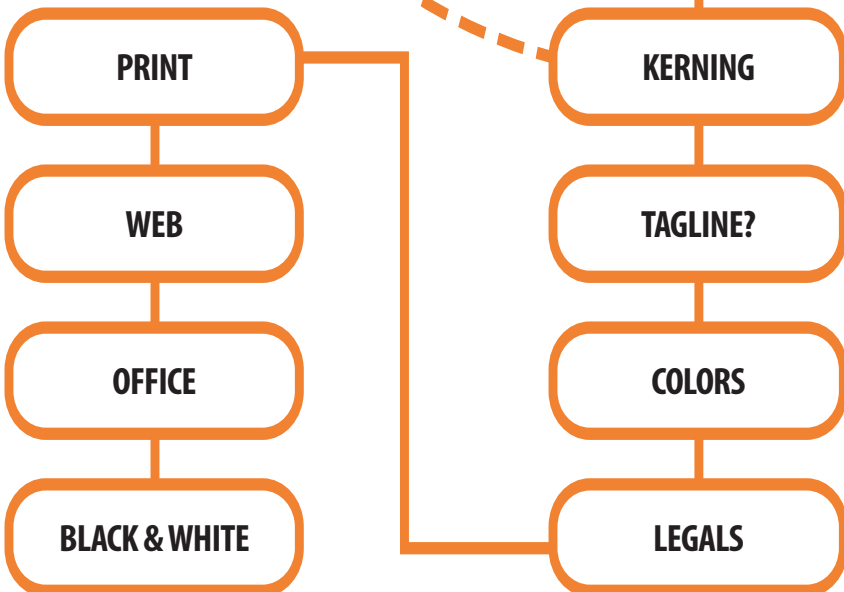
BLACK & WHITE   LEGALS

ICONIC LOGO ROAD MAP

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ICONIC LOGO ROAD MAP

Icon letterform

A very popular version of iconic logos, this type of design features an icon created out of one (or more) of the first letter(s) of the company name. Can also be worked into literal iconic treatments (see Cluepedia below for an example)

Literal iconic logo.

An icon that describes, in literal visual terms, a core activity of the company or product represented. In the case of Cluepedia (right) the icon illustrates the crowdsourced technical answers thrust of the website. The fact that this is also a letterform icon, with the figure created out of the letter 'C' is a bonus.

Metaphorical iconic logo.

These kind of icons are designed around visual metaphors of the company or product represented. In the case of Ingena, they wanted to represent the 'lifting' of start-up companies to the "next level." What better way to suggest that than using a metaphorical image of kites, worked into a brutally simple icon. Metaphorical icons are often hard to "sell" to the client, unless they understand the underlying symbolism as part of their business plan.

Abstract iconic logo.

Abstract icons don't really mean anything, but are simple ubiquitous graphics that look 'pretty' over the text portion of the logo. These are the easiest logos to design, but are often the most nondescript logos produced unless particularly clever. These types of logos are

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ICONIC LOGO ROAD MAP

often the result of a poor client brief, or faulty initial Q & A (most designs pitched as part of logo design contests or crowdsourcing effort will fall into this category for that very reason). That's not to say that abstract icons don't have their place – they do – but should be approached with a great deal of care in order to avoid designing a logo that's similar to something already in use by someone else. When there's no rhyme or reason to a logo, it runs a higher risk of having been designed before.

Sketching and rendering.
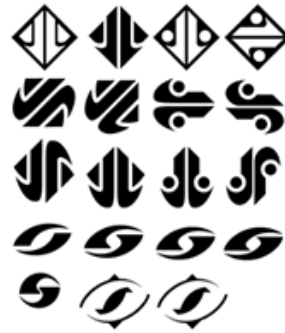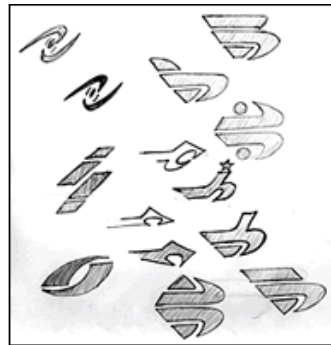
As odd as it may sound, desktop design software can sometimes be limiting in the early developmental stages of a logo. Despite all the nifty advances in technology there's nothing that beats old-fashioned doodles and sketches when it comes to working up early ideas, even for simple iconic logos. You may have to work up your doodles into a presentable form to get approval (while a designer may understand the potential of their sketch, it's highly unlikely that the client will). That's why this area is surrounded by a dotted circle. You will have to go through several rounds of sketching and rendering to hone in on the right design.

TYPE OF ILLUSTRATION

REALISTIC   CARTOON   STYLIZED   ABSTRACT

SKETCHES

RENDERING

REVISION CYCLES

SELECT FONT

CUSTOM   OFF-THE-SHELF

CUSTOMIZE

SERIF   SANS-SERIF

ITALIC   STANDARD

FORMATS

PRINT

WEB

OFFICE

BLACK & WHITE

KERNING

TAGLINE?

COLORS

LEGALS

ILLUSTRATIVE
LOGO
ROAD MAP

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ILLUSTRATIVE LOGO ROAD MAP

Realistic illustrative logo.

This type of illustrative logo pretty well defines itself. Realistic. Even though the main focal point is the illustration itself, the typeface that's incorporated must be strong enough as not to be overwhelmed, as well as complimentary to the overall design. There are some caveats with realistic logos, especially those with a lot of complex detail - reproduction at small sizes, or in cases where low-resolution media is required - may be problematic.

Cartoon illustrative logo.

Illustrative cartoon logos aren't for every application so proceed with care. If they are applicable, cartoon logos offer a wide range of marketing and advertising possibilities. Character logos have the additional benefit of being adaptable to various situations and the characters can be brought to life and placed in environments to illustrate various aspects of the company or service. Almost like actors that can be used to read your corporate script.

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ILLUSTRATIVE LOGO ROAD MAP

Stylized illustrative logos.

Stylized illustrative logos are often the most difficult to obtain client approval on. Sort of a combination of various types of illustrative logo types, served up in the designer's personal style. Accordingly, these logos are often the most satisfying for the designer.

Abstract illustrative logo.

Abstract illustrative logos are just that – detailed and rendered abstract graphics that may, or may not, have something to do with the core activity of the company it represents. Very similar to abstract iconic logos but with more 'oomph'.

Sketching and rendering.

We covered sketching and rendering in our iconic logo road map, but as initial sketches are CRITICAL in an illustrative logo approach, it's worth revisiting again with a few notable differences. Rather than simply doodling away to your heart's content, you may wish to bring in some photo reference on an illustrative logo – clients (and their customers) can be sticklers for detail so you want to make sure you're being accurate in whatever you're portraying in their logo. Also, it's impractical to render

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ILLUSTRATIVE LOGO
ROAD MAP

every single sketch, so it's a good idea to get approval BEFORE going to render, as opposed to our iconic logo doodles where it's possible to render multiple iterations. For that reason, sketches presented to the client need to be as finished as possible.
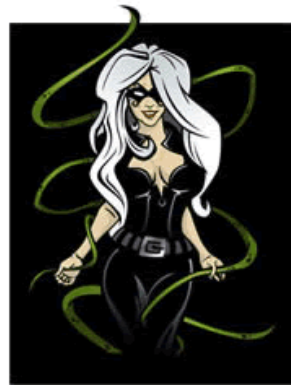
TIPS FOR WORKING WITH A PRINTER

Some practical tips on printing your new logo.

It's nice to discuss the intricacies and theories of logos and branding, but theory aside, there are some very practical implications to the logo design process. And it usually involves having things with your logo on them printed, your business card design let's say, and usually involves the services of an offset printing company. Many of you will choose to work directly with a local printer, but may be new to working with offset printers and some of the industry jargon involved, especially if you decided to design your own logo from scratch. Here's a few pointers on working with your printer and how to help insure there's no surprises when your new stationery design and/or brochure are delivered.

Check your swatches.

If you're hiring a printer to print spot color material, and BEFORE printing, ALWAYS check your colors with a Pantone Swatch Book. Checking colors on a monitor depends greatly on how the monitor is setup, and spot colors don't preview correctly using and RGB palette. Using PMS swatches is the only way to insure that your colors are to your liking.

The pudding is in the proof.

Always ask for a 'press proof' of your print job, regardless of the size. While it's sometimes difficult to get a color proof that's completely accurate when using spot colors (most proofing systems are set up for CMYK and 4 color process) it will give you a rough idea of the finished product, and also allows you to check for spelling and typographic errors before committing the job to press.

Mixing Gloss & Matte finishes.

If you're printing on a combination of coated (glossy) and uncoated (matte) papers – typical with 'glossy' business cards and letterheads which are matte by nature – keep in mind that the coated and uncoated surfaces may shift the colors you've selected and colors may not match exactly across your stationery. You can adjust for this by using different inks for each part of your print job. Keep in mind this will add cost to the overall project, but may be worthwhile if you're a stickler for color accuracy and consistency.

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Bridgehampton
MOTORING *CLUB*
Established 2001
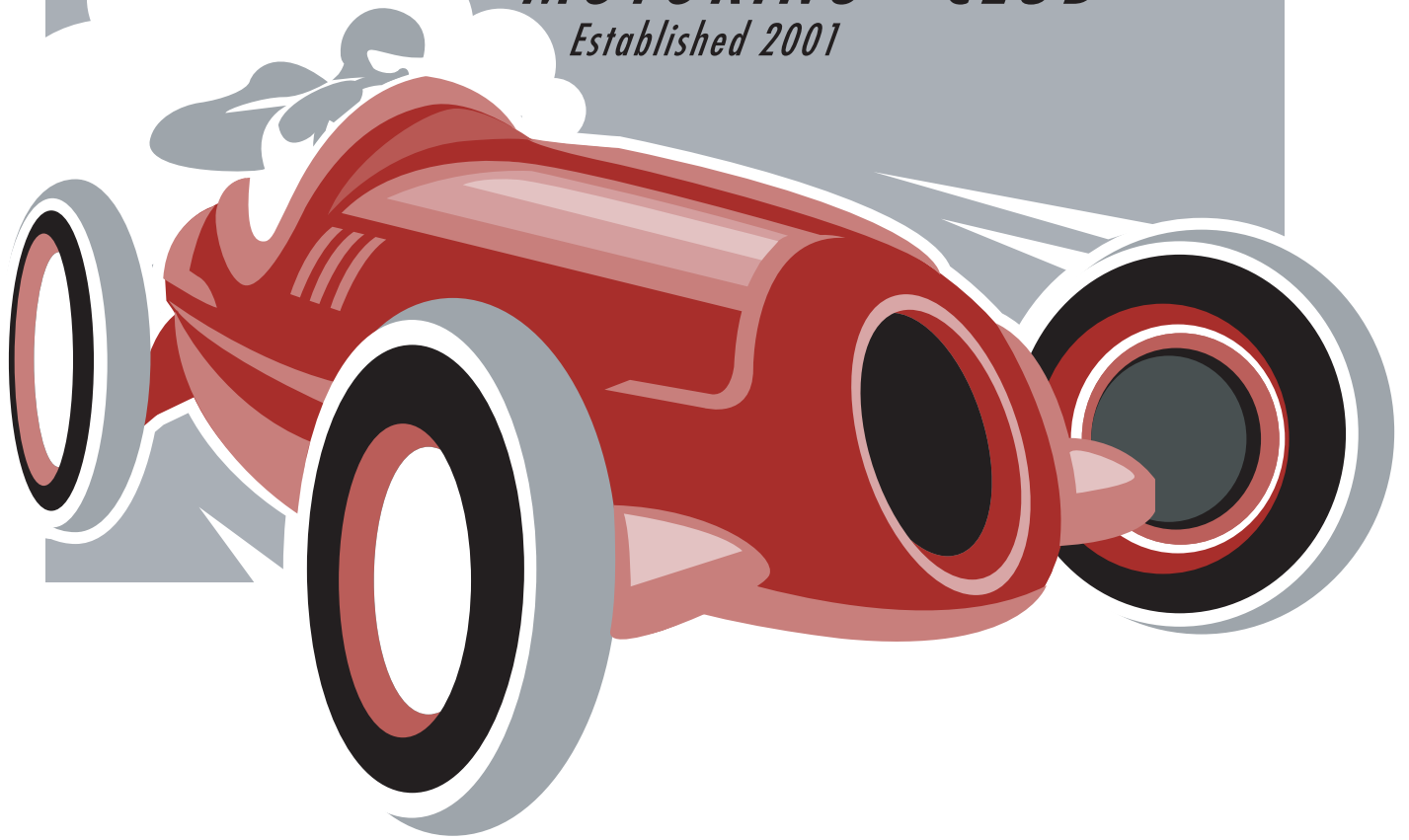
Client: Bridgehampton Motoring Club
Designer: The Logo Factory

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TIPS FOR WORKING WITH A PRINTER

Converting spot colors to CMYK.

Colors may not match exactly if you attempt to print spot color artwork as a CMYK (four color process) job. This may be in issue if your original logo was setup as a spot color design, and you're utilizing an online printer many of whom tend to print ALL their material in CMYK. To compensate for this, many printers and designers will simply change the colors to CMYK digitally and in your original file formats. This may lead to your original colors shifting significantly. A more accurate method is to use the Pantone Spot to Process Formula book. This allows you to choose CMYK equivalents to your spot colors which are as close to the original as possible. Ask an experienced designer to do it for you. Keep this in mind. Certain spot colors do not convert exactly.

Gang run printing.

If your printer is using a 'gang run' – grouping your job with a number of other pieces on a large sheet – expect varying colors and print quality from run to run. This type of printing is designed to be cheap, not precise, and you're printing for less press, not paying for exacting color standards. Be realistic in your expectations. This is particularly true of discount printers you'll find online. If you're asked to upload your artwork in a pixel based format (tifF, JPG, etc) you can be assured that this is how your project is being handled. It is not recommended for anything other than 'quick and dirty' printing, but if pricing is your major concern, these services provide an adequate alternative to high quality printers. Our recommendation? Use quality printers for your staples – letterhead, business card, etc – while utilizing discount online printing for your throwaways – flyers, sale sheets, etc. The level of quality you're after will also depend on your market segment. If you're sending material to *Fortune 500* level companies – the higher the quality the better. If you're advertising cut-rate pricing on consumer goods, a lower level of quality will suffice.

Bleed artwork.

From a design perspective, letterhead, business card and brochure artwork that bleeds can be visually appealing, but can add dramatically to the cost of printing. While many clients love the look of full bleed designs, the cost is often prohibitive. When any artwork is placed on a printed piece, and the artwork is located on the absolute edge of the paper, it is said to 'bleed',

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH A PRINTER

referring to the artwork 'bleeding' off the edges of the page. In order to get images, color fields or artwork to 'bleed' off the edges, we have to print the artwork on paper that is larger than the desired size and cut it back. This can add significant cost to a printing job – larger paper, larger press and the additional step of trimming the paper to final size.

Changing inks is a snap.

Your printer can change spot colors on the press easily, regardless of what is 'tagged' in your digital file. The PMS number has no effect on the ink used – it is simply a notation to indicate to your printer what color SHOULD be used as originally conceived by the designer. Your printer can set up the press in any way required, substituting any colored inks for the ones originally proposed. Once again, check the swatch book beforehand.

Resolution is always an issue.

If you're printing a 4 color process project, and are also using pixel based images, insure that the digital files you're supplying your printer are in high enough resolution. While some online printing services will accept images as low as 150 DPI (dots per inch), it's recommended that your digital files are no lower than 266 DPI (300 DPI and higher for high-quality glossy reproduction). If your images are in a low or even medium resolution, you run the risk of ending up with 'blurry' or out-of-focus images in your printed piece. See our File Format reference chapters for more on this.

PROTECTING YOUR LOGO

Copyright and trademark.

Once you've gone to the appreciable expense and effort to have a logo designed, you'll want to protect your new identity from interlopers - folks who might copy your logo and use it for themselves. Yes, it happens. Will it happen to you? Maybe. Better to be safe than sorry and in order to cut infringement off at the pass, you'll want to protect your logo with one, or both, of two methods - copyright and/or trademark. To do either, we first need to understand the difference between the two;

Copyright.

Copyright protects creative works of expression fixed into a tangible medium of expression.

Copyright means, quite literally, "the right to copy." and in order for any work, including logos, to enjoy copyright protection, it must reach a requisite level of creativity. Since copyright was never designed to protect a name, colors or the design of a logo, some simple logos do not have the required level of creativity to be considered copyrightable. However, many illustrative ones do. Unless stated otherwise, by a "work for hire" agreement, contract or written assignment, copyright is automatic upon creation of the work, and belongs to the creator of the work.

Trademark.

Trademark protects business names, slogans and other items used to identify it in the marketplace.

A trademark is quite literally a "mark of trade" and any protection offered is designed to prevent confusion in the marketplace. Accordingly, a logo - if original in its particular marketplace - can generally be registered, or treated, as a trademark and enforceable as such. That's why you can have Apple (computers) and Apple (auto glass) co-existing in the marketplace even though both use an Apple as their logo. While registering a trademark with the government is not a prerequisite of claiming a TM - you acquire some rights by using the mark in trade - it is *de facto* proof should a claim of infringement arise.

THE POOR MAN'S COPYRIGHT

And why it doesn't work.
Whether you're poor or not.

Some of you may have been told about the so-called 'poor man's copyright' – that is, using the US Post Office as a method of copyrighting your artwork, and I suppose in context, your spanking new logo design. It often pops up on design forums as designers advise each other on methods (short of hiring a lawyer) of protecting this or that artwork.

How it's supposed to work.

Here's how a poor man's copyright is supposed to work – you take your artwork, logo or written piece, place it in a sealed envelope and mail it to yourself, registered mail. The thought behind the process is that the US Post Office (as an official representative of the feds – itself questionable) has now 'date stamped' your artwork, proving once and for all the date that you're claiming copyright. You can then put this unopened letter in a safe place, only to be opened as an 'ah-ha' moment in a court battle with the unscrupulous hack who's now laying claim to your work. Must admit, it appears pretty sound. Trouble is, it probably won't work, as your legal opponent will be able to prove quite readily in court that a poor man's copyright can be faked (thus rendering it's legal value moot). How? Breathtakingly simple actually.

Why it doesn't work.

You can send a registered letter to yourself in an unsealed envelope, and then place whatever you want in the envelope and then seal it. Any lawyer worth their salt could argue this in court and if that's all you got, your ownership rights are sunk. It's highly unlikely that any judge would be willing to accept this as evidence of anything other than your ability to send a letter to your home address. Here's what the US Copyright Office has to say on the matter in their series of copyright FAQs –

I've heard about a "poor man's copyright." What is it?
The practice of sending a copy of your own work to yourself is sometimes called a "poor man's copyright." There is no provision in the copyright law regarding any such type of protection, and it is not a substitute for registration.

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THE POOR MAN'S COPYRIGHT

Snopes debunks the poor man's copyright here (while noting that this method may be of some assistance in the UK, although the page that originally made that statement – on the UK Patent Office web site – has disappeared). Considering that you can officially register a copyright with the US Government for $45 a pop, using the 'poor man's' method is only going to save you a few bucks anyway.

Official copyright registration.

While copyright is automatic upon artwork creation, there are some fairly valid reasons for shelling out forty-five bucks. Again, from the Copyright Office web site –

Many choose to register their works because they wish to have the facts of their copyright on the public record and have a certificate of registration. Registered works may be eligible for statutory damages and attorney's fees in successful litigation. Finally, if registration occurs within 5 years of publication, it is considered prima facie evidence in a court of law.

There are other methods of proving copyright and more importantly date of claim – publication in a dated periodical (newspaper, magazine, etc) for example – and every use of your artwork accrues additional ownership and ability to prove when you created the artwork (ie: before the person who ripped it).

TRADEMARKING YOUR LOGO

Securing trademark rights.

What is a logo in trademark terms?

A logo is a type of trademark that consists of a design that is generally used by company or person and placed on its products or printed material related to its services. The logo may be a design by itself, a design with letters or words, or a design consisting simply of stylized words or letters. In contrast, some trademarks consist solely of letters or words without any design, but these would not be considered logos.

Here are a few step-by-step tips for protecting your logo in the United States, noting that protecting your logo in other countries is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Step 1 - check that your logo is available.

Ideally, you will want to make sure that your logo is available for your adoption and use and that no one else is already using your logo, or a design that's extremely similar. To do this, you will want to perform a trademark search. There's a very pragmatic reason for this - if someone has already adopted your logo or a highly similar version, and you proceed to use your version, you may be infringing on their trademark. It's even possible that you may get sued for trademark infringement. While you can perform your own trademark search either by searching the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's records, it's probably best to hire a trademark attorney who can not only conduct the search but who can better define the search criteria.

Step 2 - secure the rights.

Once you have determined that no one else is using your logo, you will want to secure the trademark rights to your logo. There are essentially three ways that you can do this. First, you can begin to acquire trademark rights just by using your logo in connection with your products or services. Keep in mind that these rights are relatively limited as you only acquire rights in the geographic area in which you are using your logo. If you are only using your logo to conduct business within one state - and don't want to expand to to other markets - then you can file an application to register your

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TRADEMARKING YOUR LOGO

trademark with the Secretary of State's office for your particular state. The third way is to file a trademark application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. If you are planning to do business in more than one state, then this is the way to go. If your trademark application is approved (i.e., registered), it will provide you with trademark rights to your logo across the entire United States. Regardless of the method you choose, you would be wise to consult a trademark attorney to ensure that you are proceeding properly to ensure that you obtain the most protection possible, as trademark applications can be rather complicated and subject to esoteric procedures and rules.

Step 3 - protect against unauthorized use.

After you have acquired trademark rights to your logo, you will likely want to protect it against the unauthorized adoption and use by third parties. This is known as enforcing your trademark rights. The best way to do this is to have a "trademark watch" in place. A trademark watch will alert you when third parties start using a logo that is too close to yours. You will then be able to decide whether you need to take action such as sending a cease and desist letter or instituting a trademark infringement lawsuit.

USING YOUR NEW LOGO

So you've taken delivery of your new logo. It's everything you hoped for and a great representation of your company, product or service. Now what? How do you use your new company visual identity and get it 'out there'? Good question. It's only by repeated use will your logo gain any 'traction' and be connected to your company by established clients and those that might be. Here's some suggestions, as well as some examples, of how you can use your new logo. Some are free and can be accomplished by yourself quickly and easily. Others might require the services of an outside vendor. All of our suggestions will help get your new logo noticed.

Stick it in your e-mail.

If you communicate a lot with your clients electronically, you probably send a lot of e-mails every day. The 'signature' section at the bottom of those e-mails is a perfect place to start sending your new logo all over the place. We're not suggesting that you create a full-blown e-mail template (though you can if you like) as these can be unwieldy and often times the people

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receiving your e-mail will have their 'view images' option turned off. A simple JPG file, GIF or PNG of your logo is unobtrusive, won't bother anyone while still building its recognition.

Slap it on your website or blog.

If you have a website or blog, slap your logo on the header as soon as you get your hands on digital files. Should probably stick it in the footer as well. For that, you'll need a PNG, JPG or GIF of your new design. You'll probably want to make your logo nice and big, but there are some sizing issues you'll need to think about, particularly when it comes to the aspect ratio of your spiffy new logo. Read using a logo on websites & blogs for more on that. If you don't have a blog or a website, probably time to get one. Read online marketing through blogs for some practical advice. It's focused on designers, but most of the concepts still apply, regardless of what industry you're in.

Announce it to the world.

If you do run a website or blog, there's no better place to announce your new logo to the world (truth to tell, unless you're running a huge corporation, your blog is the only place that your new logo will seem newsworthy). Publish a blog post. Tell a little about the evolution of the design. What it means. Why it's the most important logo in the history of ever. Once you've done that, go to your Twitter account and tell everyone about the blog post. You don't have a Twitter account? Probably time to get one of those too. Ditto for Facebook. Speaking of which, if you do have Facebook and Twitter pages, time to add your new corporate identity to your profile. Read using a logo on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube for more on that.

Plaster it on every scrap of paper.

If your business is in any way typical, you'll use a lot of paper to shoot information around. Internal memos. Photocopies. FAX cover sheets. All of these have spaces crying out to plaster your logo over. Nothing terribly dramatic. A small version of your logo printed at the top, or bottom, of your photocopy paper. A nice black and white bitmap of your logo (a linear setup) on a FAX cover sheet. You give out invoices? There too. Shipping memos? Uh-uh. Your logo should be featured on every slip of paper that

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leaves your office. And even those that don't. Brand recognition means recognizing a brand. Get yours recognized. By everyone.

Get yourself some business cards.

Remember when we said that a new logo should be plastered on everything? You'd be amazed how many people undergo the expense of designing logos, only to forgo getting business cards and other stationery items that feature it. The rationale usually involves having cards left over from earlier days, when the company didn't have a logo, or a design that wasn't particularly inspiring. If you're in that boat, toss the old ones out. They've served their purpose, and it's time to get new ones. The cost of printing letterheads and business cards is nominal, relatively speaking, and well worth the expense. If stationery design wasn't included with your new logo workup, then it's time to get it done. Business cards and letterheads are how most people will come to know your new logo. Envelopes aren't too shabby either.

Trinkets.

The term collateral design refers to everything else. Trinkets (often referred to as premium incentives) that feature your new logo. Think T-shirts, baseball caps, pens, coffee mugs. Used to be that these cool little marketing items were off limits to the small and micro-business due to minimum orders (you'd have to order 100 coffee mugs to give three out to your pals, your wife/husband or your kids) and cost prohibitive setup charges. No longer. With services like Zazzle and Cafe Press, you can set up whatever 'products' you want, without any minimum restrictions and few, if any, setup costs. You can order one of each (for your own personal use) or you can order several for gifts and promotional giveaways. Another nice feature is that these platforms allow you to set up your own store so when your new logo is all the rage, you can sell stuff. There are some design restrictions, and really custom collateral material will still need the services of an old-school vendor, but online product sites will certainly suffice at the beginning, when your funds may be light.

Re-do old marketing material.

If your business is new, and your logo design is but part of an overall

USING YOUR NEW LOGO

launch, you can safely ignore this one. You'll need to start building an inventory of brochures, postcards, presentation folders and other marketing material with your new logo. Everything doesn't have to be produced at once (though it's not a bad idea, for consistency's sake, to have it designed by the same designer of design company, in relatively short order) and you can produce material as needs arise, and budget allow. But what if your logo is a re-brand, a new version of your earlier corporate identity that had grown long in the tooth? Eventually, you'll have to replace all those brochures, flyers and pamphlets that aren't current with your new 'look and feel' too. How quickly, and how radically, you replace this material depends solely on your budget. And how different your new design is from its earlier incarnation. If you've only changed the visual aspect of your company logo, and the name remained the same. No issue. Replace your advertising material as stocks dwindle, or new needs arise. If you've changed your company name, it's time to change everything. Right now. This massive, traumatic overhaul is one of the reasons we suggest you take a lot of care when naming your new company. It's not a good idea to change that without a great deal of forethought.

CHANGING YOUR LOGO

It happens many times. You take a look at your logo design and it doesn't have the same oomph that it did a few years ago. Maybe it was a great logo design idea at the time, but now it's looking a little tired. Or maybe it was created under a time (or budget) crunch that precluded a complete or thorough work up. Bottom line – you're sick and tired of your logo and want to change it. Can this be done? Certainly. Are there risks involved? Absolutely. Do we recommend changing your logo design in mid-stride? Well, yes. And no.

New brand. New excitement?

Changing an established logo should be approached with a great deal of caution and forethought. As in many business (and life) decisions, you have to weigh the pros and the cons, and decide what is the best solution for your particular situation. A new logo design makeover (executed correctly) can infuse your company brand with new excitement (even major corporations change their identity once in a while). New blood. A new lease on day-to-day 'team spirit'. You may have changed your market focus and need a logo that is more in line with, and appealing to, your current demographics. A logo makeover can certainly do that. A logo that was nifty cool at the time (remember all those 'swooshy' logos at the end of the nineties?) may have become unacceptably dated – you need to dial-back the swooshes and bring to market a logo that is more 'solid' and conservative. More in line with your current business goals. Maybe you opted for an overdone and overused icon in development stage, and that's started to look like a whole bunch of other people. Bottom line, your custom logo design doesn't look so custom after all. All good things to be sure. So yes, your long-in-the-tooth company logo can (and sometimes should) be changed. Are there any rules (other than expenses, which we will deal with later)? Not so far as we know.

Re-design, makeover or logo repair?

If you have a hunch that your logo needs changed, you should decide if you want a logo makeover (a new design) or a logo repair. Your logo may just need spruced up. A little font tweak here. A little simplification, or perhaps a more technically proficient rendering. This is the least traumatic and allows for slow integration into your branding material. You can use up your stock of already printed business goods (letterheads and business

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cards for example) as you port the new look onto your branding, advertising and marketing materials. A logo repair usually involves a re-rendering of your artwork so that your new (and slightly improved) logo can be utilized in various media and reproduction media. Once your logo has been re-rendered into new editable format, your logo designers can then improve the various design components, colors and fonts with very little upset to the overall brand of your company. The deciding factor about a logo repair, as opposed to a complete overhaul should not be based on your personal 'feeling' about the design. It should be based on your market's understanding and recognition of your logo.

Slight change an effective way to rebrand?

It's pretty safe to say that Nike is not going to change their 'swoosh' anytime soon. They've spent hundreds of millions of dollars to get that logo into the public eye. The Nike recognition factor makes the logo impressive, NOT the design. A drastic change would impede that recognition factor too dramatically. in order to score a few design points. However, even Nike is not beyond trying to spruce up their image. The accompanying 'Nike' font style has been altered many times, in an attempt to keep up with changes in taste and design sensibility. The same can be said for the Microsoft Windows logo. When first introduced in 1995, the logo was a graphic representation of a flying window (hideous). When the new Windows XP operating system was introduced a few years ago, it also featured a logo makeover – the Windows icon had become much more refined, 3D and included a much more appropriate font. It still had enough of the old Windows logo to remain in the same design family, but was sleeker to (hopefully) reflect the vastly improved (again, hopefully) operating system. Apple computers also evolved their famous Apple icon from a rainbow-striped version to a solid, and much 'classier' modern icon in the late nineties. With the advent of their OS X system, the Apple icon became a 'gel' version, in order to fit into the Apple marketing flavor – a flavor so successful that the Apple.com look and feel is the most copied design on the Internet today. The Apple icon has remained pretty stable over the years, but its treatment has changed on several occasions in order to maintain the logo's strength (the fruit of knowledge from the Bible's Genesis) while adapting to the corporation's current marketing focus. All in all, it's pretty safe to say that if Apple, Microsoft and Nike aren't opposed to changing their logo, then your fears, while understandable, can be put

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CHANGING YOUR LOGO

aside. It's also worthy to note that they 'modified' their logos, rather than scrapping the look and recognition they had already achieved.

Changing our logo.

On a much smaller scale The Logo Factory has changed our logo design several times. Our first logo (circa 1993) was a Tim Burtonesque simple design. When we went online in 1996, the design was boxed, and included the term Media Works. After a few years I decided that the Media Works was redundant, and was overkill on the 'Factory' concept. The box was too restrictive and neither the purple nor the teal reproduced well on web safe colors (duh!). Any stationery and letterhead design was incredibly expensive to reproduce (the yellow window and black box guaranteed 4 color printing). The logo also didn't fax well, and was too complicated for small sizes. A years back we overhauled our own logo slightly. We kept the house, the font (both are part of our trademarks) and dispensed with everything else. That logo was still recognizable as the old TLF brand, but is vastly more versatile and adaptable. Keeping the change minimal we were still able to utilize our shirts, mouse pads, hats and other soft goods that we had in inventory. When it came to new production runs, we simply replaced the embroidery and silk-screens with the new TLF 'look'. It wasn't until 2009 that we re-worked our logo into the cog version we now use.

The massive logo overhaul.

It's a pretty safe bet that you can perform a major overhaul of your logo once. That can be interpreted (and explained) as an improvement. Forward thinking. A new birth of your company. Any more changes and you're starting to look a little schizophrenic. Flaky and unfocused. You may look like you're unsure of who you are, or more importantly, who your clients are. While a logo makeover is relatively painless, a total overhaul can (though not always) represent a sizable expense and trauma to your marketing endeavors. While a successful logo overhaul can bring enormous worth to your company, the risks (and potential expense) can be high. What's the difference between a logo makeover and a logo overhaul? If a logo makeover can be viewed as a few coats of makeup on your logo, a new hairdo, an overhaul is an entire face lift. With the associated risks.

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LOGO DESIGN
FILE FORMATS

*Preparing and using your new logo "assets."*

At the end of the logo design process, and when you've finished working with your designer, you're going to receive many different file formats of your brand new logo. Understanding these file formats can be crucial, especially for the do it yourselfer. This is particularly true when you begin to utilize your logo design in various forms of marketing design and reproduction. Designers and design firms can vary significantly in which kinds of file formats they supply, and even in which method they utilize to create your logo design. Armed with a little knowledge, you can avoid unnecessary charges, both in production and reproduction, or avoid working with a design house that will supply the wrong files completely. We've put together a digital files primer, a File Format Survival Guide if you will, so that you'll know which files are useful, which formats are difficult to reproduce, and which kind are completely useless. We'll show you why logo template software is inadequate for most reproduction methods, and how a logo laden with special F/X is going to cost you thousands down the road.

File formats and your logo.

For all intents and purposes you should have 2 types of formats of your new (or old) logo design. You should have access to both a vector based version (these should have one of these the file extensions EPS, AI, CDR and in the case of Flash animation, either FLA or SWF) and a pixel based version (these can vary wildly in size and resolution but the most common versions will feature the extensions JPG, GIF, PNG and in the case of Adobe Photoshop, PS). These formats have a variety of uses, and knowing which one is which will save you hours of unnecessary grief when it comes to working with designers and printers, as well as creating your own 'do it yourself' advertising and internal documents. In order to understand how to effectively use your logo, we'll need to introduce you to the two different file formats that are used by practically every application you'll ever use in your marketing, advertising and promotional efforts.

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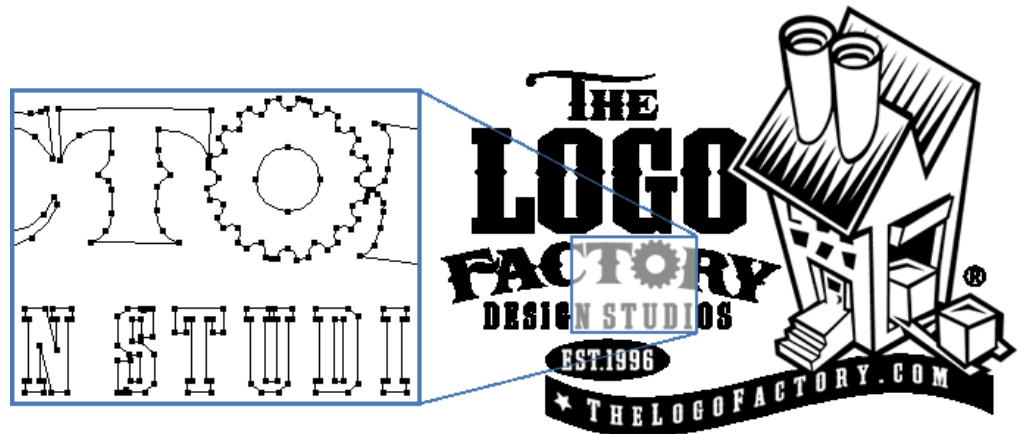
Vector based images SHOULD be the starting point of any professional logo design process. These file formats are created by high-end drawing software such as Adobe Illustrator and Corel Draw and are the industry standard for any graphic design project. What are vector based images? Simply put, they're incredibly small, scalable and editable images that allow designers unlimited freedom when it comes to logo design and illustration. Vector files usually feature the file extensions EPS, AI, CDR, SVG and SWF (used in Flash animations).
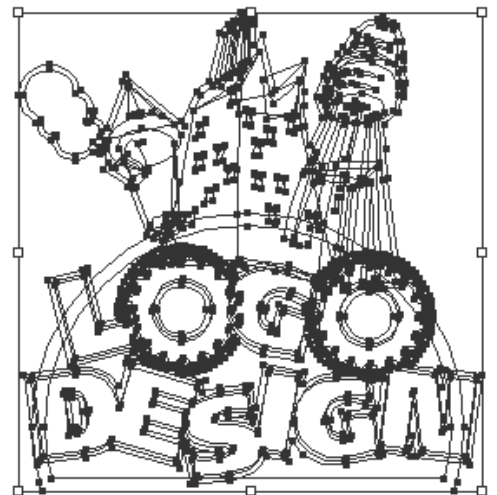
In absolute terms, a vector graphics file is your logo, broken down into a series of geometric shapes, consisting of outlines that are curved and joined at X Y coordinates or points. These coordinates and shape outlines

VECTOR-BASED FILE FORMATS

are stored as mathematical equations, creating small and portable file sizes that are infinitely editable. In the simplest terms, you can imagine a vector shape as a rubber band, wrapped around nails that have been pushed into a pegboard. The vector shapes work pretty well the same way. Move the nail and the 'rubber band' shape will change. In terms of logo typography, letters are also converted to vector shapes and referred to as outline fonts.

Color and vector formats.

We now have a feel for what vector shapes and images can be formed. But what about inside the vectors? What about colors? Easy. Every vector shape can be filled with a different color. That's pretty well it. Of course, there are different kinds of colors that we can add – solid, screen and gradient – but the principle is always the same. What's the advantage of this? Because vector shapes are based on mathematical equations, even colors are stored this way. Once this information is converted to numerical amounts of color your EPS file becomes exceptionally reliable when color matching and accuracy is a must. Because of this shape and color accuracy – vector files are also used as your 'source files' – that is, the original artwork from which all other file formats can be created, including your electronic pixel based images.

Printing and vector formats.

When it comes to stationery design, the most common form of printing for business cards and letterheads is spot color reproduction. Spot color printing uses per-mixed inks that are combined during the printing process to form the complete image. This is much more accurate than full color, also known as 4 color process, printing but can, generally speaking, only be achieved when your logo is in vector format. Let's take a look at a spot color setup using our imaginary Logo Design Factory.

VECTOR-BASED FILE FORMATS

Once our Factory logo is setup with two colors, it is ready to print as a two spot color logo. This is the method you'll likely use when printing letterheads, business cards and other standard stationery design items We'll take a closer look at spot color printing in the next chapter.

Full color vector formats.

That's not to say that you MUST use spot colors if using a vector version of your logo. You can use as many colors as you'd like, and the same basic premise applies. Below is a version of our example Factory logo, this time using red, black AND Orange. Just like our spot version it is adaptable and scalable (but would require four color process printing for traditional offset reproduction).

Editing vector based logo formats.

Editing your logo isn't a major issue – as long as your designer has access to a vector based image. As vector images are made up from groups of shapes, each can be edited as an individual piece (locally) or the entire logo can be changed all at once (globally). To illustrate how this works, we took our nifty Factory logo and 'exploded' it into the various bits and pieces that make it work.

MyGreens

a fresh field experience

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VECTOR-BASED FILE FORMATS

Each one of these 'bits and pieces' can be edited – color, size, key line, etc – individually and without affecting the rest of the artwork. Such changes are 'non volatile' (they can edited independently of each other and can be changed back to the original version). This means that you, or your designer, can change type, colors and layout without having to worry about degradation of the image. Keep in mind that editing of any vector image requires access to professional drawing software (ie: Adobe Illustrator) and a fairly decent understanding of same.

SPOT COLOR PRINT REPRODUCTION

PMS 185C **BLACK**
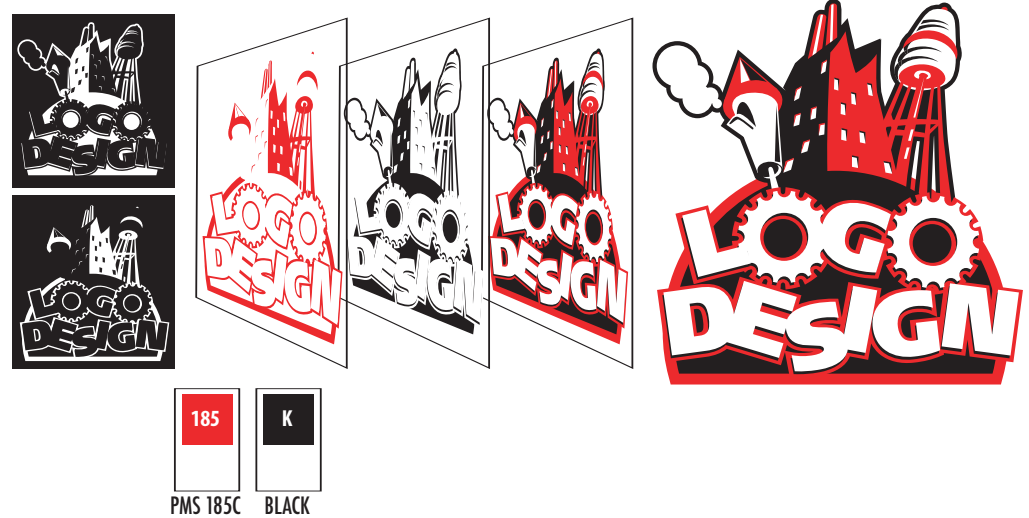
The concept of spot color logos is actually quite simple Using premixed ink swatches (such as the *Pantone Matching System*), a designer or printer is able to select the exact color tones desired in a particular logo. This is very similar to using color swatches of paint at the local hardware store, in order to select the color of your wall at home. And just like the paint swatches at the hardware store, spot colors have their unique numeric code – a PMS number, followed by a letter – C (for use on coated or 'shiny' stock) and U (for use on uncoated or matte finish stock). Using these color swatches and numbers, your printer will take the file, and output a metal plate for each color.

These plates are applied to the press, inked up with the appropriate color, and then the paper is run though it, with one impression for each color. What comes out at the other side is your completed image. In certain circumstances, spot color reproduction can be more economical than that featuring a four color process logo (unless your printer is "ganging up" various jobs on one large sheet and printing the entire shooting match as a CMYK job). Where spot colors really shine is in matching colors exactly. As the ink colors are based on exact matching formulas, color accuracy and control are optimal. Using Pantone Numbers in your logo has the added advantage of being 'industry standard'. Anyone working on any additional artwork will be able to match the colors featured in your company logo design exactly without having access to the original artwork. Spot colors are also more flexible than you'd think. When working with your logo, your

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designer can still add the 'appearance' of more colors by adding screens and tones of a particular spot color. If handled correctly, this shouldn't be a concern – it will not increase the reproduction costs of your company logo, while giving the appearance of more colors than we're actually using.

Pros of spot color logos.

• Cheaper to use. Using spot colors in your logo is generally cheaper in the long haul. Spot color printing usually costs less (for the simple reason that the paper requires 1/2 the number of impressions as 4 color process, and can be printed on a smaller sized press). This is true of items that usually can't be ganged up - envelopes for example.

• Color accuracy. We've already discussed how color accuracy is a nice feature of spot colors. It's probably worthwhile to note that there are some exceptions, namely the fact that some colors will vary significantly between the coated and uncoated versions. If color matching is critical, you may have to set up two press runs, using two sets of inks – coated and uncoated – that have been adjusted to match. This is particularly significant in the printing of your stationery design, where many people opt for glossy (coated) business cards while their letterhead remains matte (uncoated). This is not the case will all colors, and some colors shift more than others (Yellows and Oranges which require the reflectivity of the paper to create their hues are particularly sensitive). There's a couple of workarounds for this issue – convert everything to 4 color process, or use matte business cards as well. Unfortunately, not all spot colors translate 100% accurately in 4 color process colors so we need to be very carefully when changing colors from one palette to another.

Cons of spot color logos.

• Requires a vector based version of your logo. While not exactly a 'con' (vector versions of your logo are far better for reproduction) and this shouldn't be an issue as long as you have all the correct formats of your logo accessible The version you're looking for is a vector based EPS (Encapsulated Postscript) or AI (Adobe Illustrator). This does become a very big 'con' if you don't have a vector version of your logo available and want to print something as spot color. In that case, you'll have to have a vector based version created.

SPOT COLOR PRINT REPRODUCTION

Enlargement

Print zoom
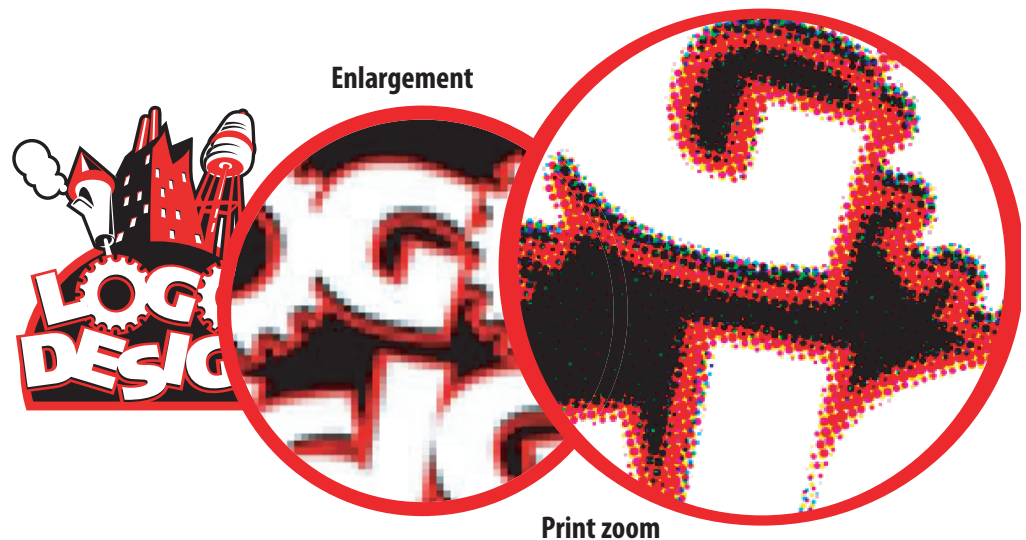
If you only have access to a pixel based format, and your logo appears to contain only two colors, upon closer inspection (above – left) you'll see that the image requires thousands of colors to reproduce correctly. In order to reproduce ALL those colors in print, you'll need to use 4 color process printing (close up – above right) whereas if you had access to a spot color vector version, you could utilize the more economical two color approach.

• Color conversion issues. While it's true that spot colors are extremely accurate when it comes to traditional printing, there might be some issues when its comes to converting colors for web based use (RGB colors used in website design and Flash animations of your logo) or for four color use in brochures and catalogs. Most spot colors, if approached carefully, can be matched almost exactly. Alas, certain colors will be a 'as close as possible' scenario – and even then we're talking negligible differences that only a trained eye can see. This is also true of most online discount printers who print most of their material as 4 color process 'gang runs' (they print your business card and stationery on huge sheets that you share with dozens of other jobs. 'Nit picky' color conversion with this kind of printing is generally moot anyway – due to the varying ink densities required by the different jobs you're sharing the sheet with, color accuracy tends to be spotty anyway). Gang printing of this nature is fine for quick-and-dirty printing (use it ourselves in a pinch) but not recommended if you're after exacting color standards on your brand new business logo design.

THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

SPOT COLOR PRINT REPRODUCTION

Spot color printing tips.

Once you've finished having your logo, stationery and/or brochure designed, it 's now on to getting them printed. Many of you will choose to work directly with a local printer – especially if you're a 'do it yourself' kind of business owner, but may be new to working with offset printers and some of the industry jargon involved. Here's a few pointers on working with your printer with a spot color printing project, and how to help insure there's no surprises when your new letterheads, business cards and/or brochure are delivered.

• If you're hiring a printer to print spot color material, and BEFORE printing, ALWAYS check your colors with a Pantone Swatch Book. This is the only way to insure that your colors are to your liking. This is the 'industry standard' for matching colors so if your printer tells you that they don't have one, select another printer. Fast.

• Always ask for a 'press proof' of your job. While it's sometimes difficult to get a color proof that's completely accurate when using spot colors (most proofing systems are set up for CMYK and 4 colour process) it will give you a rough idea, and also allows you to check for typos and spelling errors.

• If you're printing on a combination of coated (glossy) and uncoated (matte) papers – typical with 'glossy' business cards and letterheads – keep in mind that the coated and uncoated surfaces may shift the colors and the colors may not match exactly across your stationery design package. Your printer can adjust for this by using different color inks for each part of your print job, but this may increase the price of the print run.

• Colors may not match exactly if you attempt to print spot color artwork as a CMYK (four color process) job. Many printers will simply change the colors to CMYK in your original files – this is haphazard at best. There's a Pantone Spot to Process Formula book that allows you to choose CMYK equivalents to your spot colors. Use that beforehand, or ask an experienced designer to do it for you. Keep in mind that certain spot colors do not convert exactly. Also, if your printer is using a 'gang run' – grouping your job with a number of other pieces on a large sheet – expect varying colors from run to run. This type of online printing is designed to be cheap, not precise, and you're not paying for exacting color standards. Be realistic in your expectations.

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THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

SPOT COLOR PRINT REPRODUCTION

• Your printer can change spot colors on the press easily, regardless of what is 'tagged' in your digital file. The PMS number has no effect on the ink used – it is simply a notation to indicate to your printer what color SHOULD be used. They can set up the press substituting any colored inks for the ones originally proposed. Check the swatch book beforehand.

FOUR COLOR PROCESS REPRODUCTION

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK
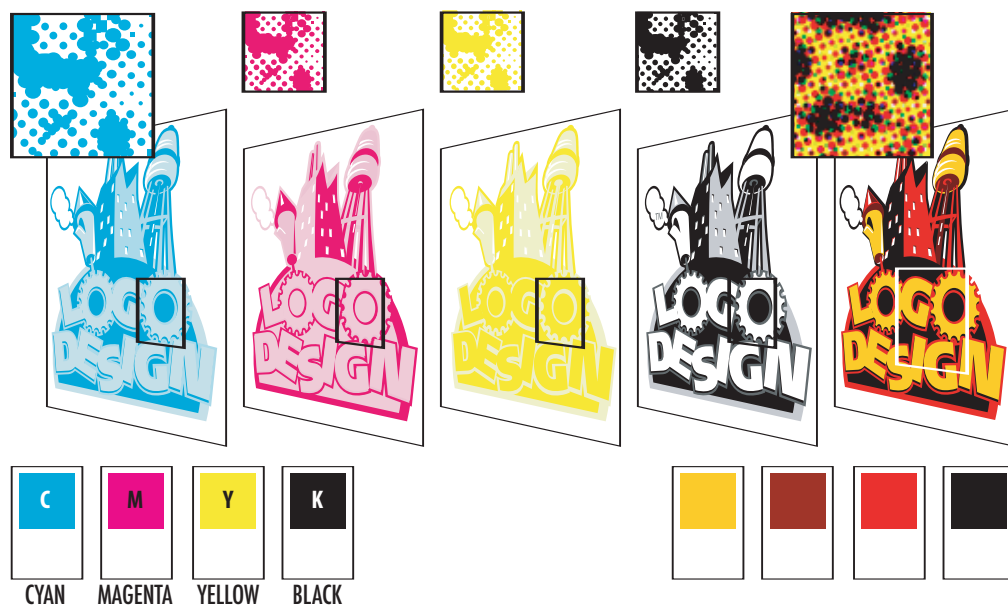
While monitors use RGB (Red Green Blue) to preview full-color images, traditional printing uses CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black) also known as four color process printing (or simply four color or full color). In this method of printing, the design is set up so that it uses percentages of the 4 base inks listed.

When these varying amounts of the 4 base inks are printed one over the other, the resulting variations will print as new colors. Rather than having the color tones premixed like that with spot color logos , we are basically having the inks mixed 'on the fly' on the press instead. Four color reproduction is generally more expensive than spot colors and color accuracy is largely dependent on the skill and professionalism of the shop printing your material. It should be noted that the color created by 4 color process printing are not solid colors at all, but rather a series of dots (see main image right). This is most noticeable in the photographs reproduced in your local newspaper. Four color reproduction can utilize either vector based or pixel based versions of your logo (as long as the image has adequate resolution).

Pros of four color logos.

• Unlimited colors & choices. For all intents and purposes, there are no

FOUR COLOR PROCESS REPRODUCTION

limitations to the colors you can have built into your new company logo. Unlike spot color logos which have to use tones and screens to create the effect of additional colors, process logos can use any color that the designer or client desires.

• Special F/X friendly. While not recommended for the primary version of your corporate logo, there will be the occasion that you'll want to throw some special F/X at your logo. Lens flares, drop shadows, glows, etc. Most of these special F/X filters require pixel based images to work, and pixel based images generally require four color process to print (it should be noted here that many special F/X also require an RGB palette to work, and when converted without any color correction can appear dull and lifeless when printed as CMYK. Your designer will help you if you choose to get this route).

• Adaptable in print. When adding your logo to a printed piece that is to be printed using 4 color process, it's generally just a matter of slapping your logo into the artwork and you're done, whereas logos created in spot color can require color correction before hand.

Cons of four color logos.

• Usage restrictions. Certain uses of your logo may require heavy-duty conversions or the employment of logo repair services in order to work, including (but not limited to) vinyl plotter signage, some silk-screen applications, spot color reproduction, etc. While there are workarounds for most of these uses (signage, for example can be printed as digital output, and some T-shirt printers do offer 4 color process silk-screening). It's always better to begin any project with an eye on future uses of the logo so that you don't paint yourself into a corner.

• More expensive. The reproduction of 4 color process material is generally more expensive that spot color due, quite simply, to the additional printing steps and material required. There are exceptions – discount online printers for example – as they tend to 'gang' four color material together. However, the money you'll save with this type of printing is often overshadowed by the lack of quality. Overall, look to spending a premium when printing your marketing material, including the business staples like letterheads and business card design. You'll have to decide whether the ah-ha factor is

FOUR COLOR PROCESS REPRODUCTION

worth the additional expense.

• Color matching can be 'iffy'. Unlike spot color reproduction, which uses premixed inks, 4 color process printing occurs on the press. Accordingly, the accuracy of color is, to a certain degree, left in the hands of the press operator, and depends on the ink densities of other jobs being printed at the same time. This factor is negated somewhat by the fact that it's much easier to obtain an accurate press proof of a 4 color print job, while proofs of spot color work is generally a 'best guess'.

Four color printing tips.

Here's a few pointers on working with your printer with a 4 color process printing project, and how to help insure there's no surprises when your new letterheads, business cards and brochure are delivered.

• If your printer is using a 'gang run' – grouping your job with a number of other pieces on a large sheet – expect varying colors from run to run. This type of printing is designed to be cheap, not precise, and you're not paying for exacting color standards. Be realistic in your expectations. This is particularly true of discount printers you'll find online. If they require that you supply artwork in pixel based formats (tif, JPG, etc) you can be assured that this is how your project is being handled. It is not recommended for anything other than 'quick and dirty' printing, but if pricing is your major concern, these services provide an adequate alternative to high quality printers. Our recommendation? Use quality printers for your staples – letterhead, business card, etc – while utilizing discount online printing for your throwaways – flyers, sale sheets, etc. The level of quality you're after will also depend on your market segment. If you're sending material to *Fortune 500* level companies – the higher the quality the better. If you're advertising cut-rate pricing on consumer goods, a lower level of quality will suffice.

• If you're printing a 4 color process project, and are also using pixel based images, insure that the digital files you're supplying your printer are in high enough resolution. While some services will accept images as low as 150 DPI, it's recommended that your digital files are no lower than 266 DPI (300 DPI and higher for high-quality glossy reproduction). If your images are in a low or even medium resolution, you run the risk of ending up with 'blurry'

FOUR COLOR PROCESS REPRODUCTION

images in your printed piece.

• Always ask for a 'press proof' of your job. Most proofing systems are set up for CMYK and 4 colour process so you'll be able to get a fairly accurate 'first peek' of your job as it will end up. Getting a press proof before hand also allows you to check for typos and spelling errors.

• Colors may not match exactly if you attempt to print spot color artwork as a CMYK (four color process) job. Keep in mind that certain spot colors will not convert exactly and may not match material that you've previously printed as spot color.

B/W VECTOR-BASED FILE FORMATS

In this age of color (4 color CMYK printing is much less expensive than it used to be and the web is a color rich environment) the use of your logo as a black and white grayscale image is often overlooked. As we're trying to be perfectionists when it comes to the consistent high-quality use of your new design, any halftone or linear black & white usage should also be viewed as extremely important. Like most aspects of using your logo, having access to a vector based version is critical when it comes to creating high-quality BW versions that can be used when color reproduction isn't available. We'll use the logo our studio created for the My Greens grocery store as our example.

Black & white grayscale (halftone) logos.

A black and white grayscale (also known as halftone) image of your logo (below right) is a version that is consists of screens and tonal ranges which are made up from varying sizes of black dots. In practical terms you can think of newspaper photographs where, due to the relatively low resolution of the printing, the dots are visible. When creating a grayscale version of your logo, it's often not a matter of changing the colors to black & white by

B/W VECTOR-BASED FILE FORMATS

using a 'save as' feature of whatever desktop design software we're using. Often, colors lose their contrast when automatically converted to black & white and the tonal range that was so apparent in the color version is lost. In many cases, our designers will have to create separate black & white files, adjusting the tonal quality of different areas of the logo for maximum impact. This is only practical if we have access to a vector version of the image that we're converting. Many pixel based logo versions created by 'paint programs' (Adobe Photoshop for example) allow us to adjust the contrast of an image, but these changes are usually 'global' (the entire image changes) rather than 'local' (specified areas of the image) that are available with vectors.

Black & white linear logos.

A black and white linear version of your logo is a version that is made up of solid black (below). There are no halftones (screens) or grays and is the best type of logo for use on low-resolution reproduction (FAX cover sheets, check artwork, etc). This type of image is almost impossible to create (at least with any measurable amount of quality) without access to a vector

image. In order to create a linear version of your logo, we have to remove all colors, and adjust certain portions of the logo into black or white. This isn't simply a matter of turning color 'off' using our handy-dandy design

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B/W VECTOR-BASED FILE FORMATS

software. Rather, we have to create entirely new versions of the design and adjust it visually, by eye. This becomes especially critical when producing 'reversal' prints – versions of your logo that print on dark backgrounds. Simply 'flipping' black into white will not create a reverse image of your logo, but rather a negative image (similar to a roll of photographic film). In cases like these, we'll need to adjust certain elements of the logo, and add white outlines to others. None of this is possible without a vector of the original image.

Black & white resolution & scalability.

Linear vector

Linear bitmap
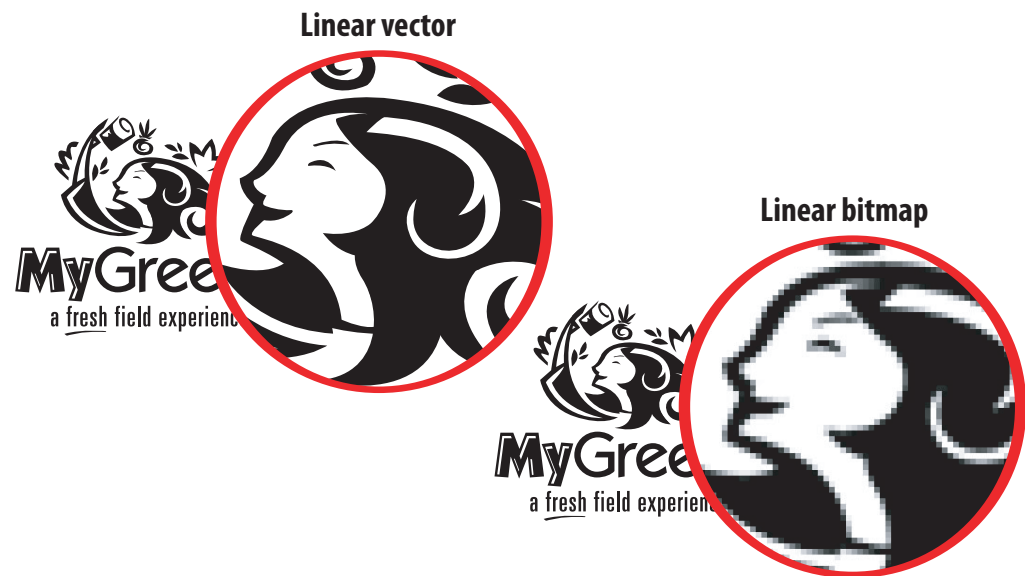
Print resolution issues with black & white images are identical to those of spot color and four color logo design artwork. If we have a vector version of your logo, we can scale up or down without any concerns. If not, the usable image will pixelate on a screen and appear 'fuzzy' in print.

THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

SCREENS & TONES

PANTONE 185 CVC

PANTONE BLACK CVC
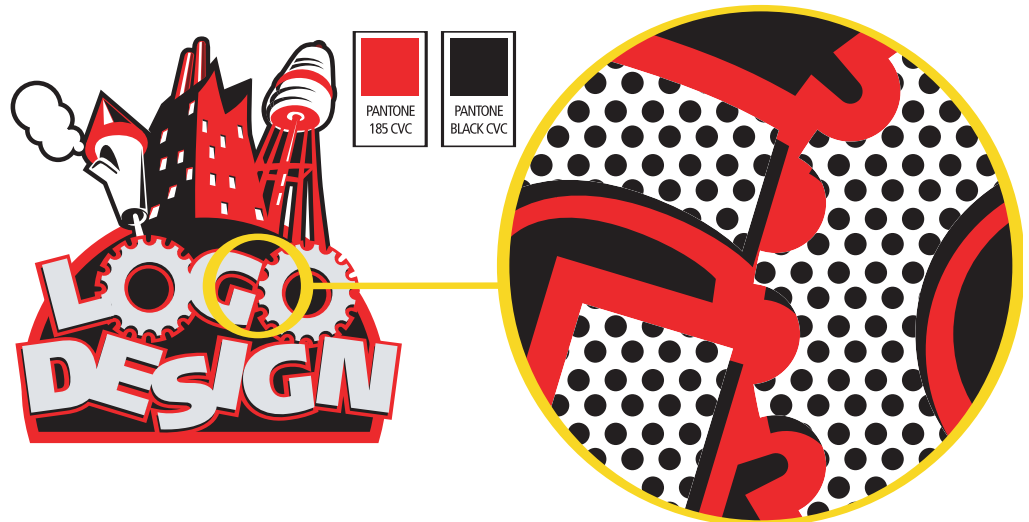
When working on your logo using two spot colors, your designer may choose to add screens and tones of a particular color. If handled correctly, this should not be a concern – it will not increase the reproduction costs of your logo, while giving the appearance of more colors than we're actually using. In reality, the 'new' color isn't new at all. It is merely a percentage of the color that's already present, and doesn't require any additional printing costs.

Let's take a look at the image above. As this is vector based artwork, we've dropped two solid colors into our Factory logo. It is a two color spot logo using red (PMS 185) and black (PMS Black). Say we wanted to add silver to our logo. Not a problem. We can simply 'pour' a percentage screen of black into that vector shape (as shown above in the letter G and O in the closeup). This tone, or screen, is created with various sizes and densities of dots all made up of black. This is same principle involved in creating grayscale logo images. Because this is a vector based image, the physical size of the image does not matter. The letters we add silver to will be always be filled with the maximum resolution of dots and print accordingly. This feature of an vector based image is a great advantage over pixel based images, which are severely limited in the ability to change colors quickly and accurately, as well as use at larger than original sizes.

OUTLINE FONT VECTORS
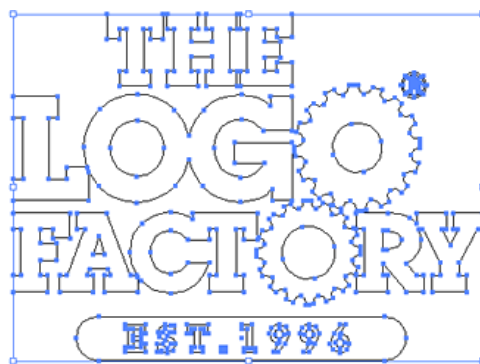
The vast majority of logo design projects include typography of some sort, usually in the form of the company, product or service that the logo is supposed to represent. Most of us understand what fonts are, most personal computers having a selection of various font styles to choose from. In graphic design, particularly logo design, we approach fonts and typography a little differently, and produce artwork that includes outline fonts. Outline fonts are quite literally, outlined letters that have been turned into vector based artwork, rather than the editable form that we use in other documents. There's several reasons for this, but before we get to that, let's take a look at what outline fonts are, beginning with The Logo Factory name, as typed out in our basic corporate font, ITC Lubalin Bold into a starting Adobe Illustrator document.

The type is fully editable. We can kern the individual letters (adjust the spacing between). We can change the size, fix spelling and just about anything that can be done in a word-processing program.

Why don't we just leave the typography as editable type? Several reasons. The most important is that in order to open up this file on another computer – at our local printer let's say – they would need to have this font installed on their machine. And even if they happened to have this font, it would have to be the exact same version, or our kerning could change

# THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

OUTLINE FONT VECTORS

when their version is loaded. Spacing can change between platforms (Mac to PC or vice versa) and between software – Illustrator vs. Photoshop. There are also licensing issues which we'll deal with in a bit. How do we deal with this? Simple. We can convert the font to an outlined vector version as shown in our main example above. Like so.
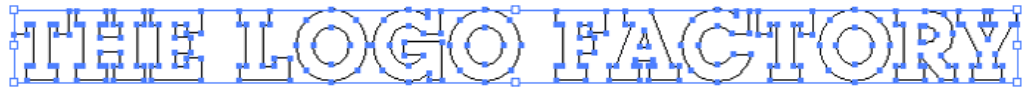
Once we've converted our fonts into vector format, we can edit it as a graphic. We can select individual letters. We can group them together. We
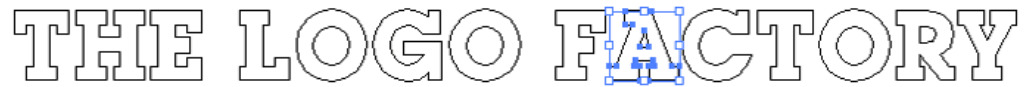
can treat these outlined fonts as we would any digital artwork. In the context of logo design, we can now incorporate these outlined fonts into a final logo. Here's what our logo looks like in vector, with outlined fonts added to our cog graphic.
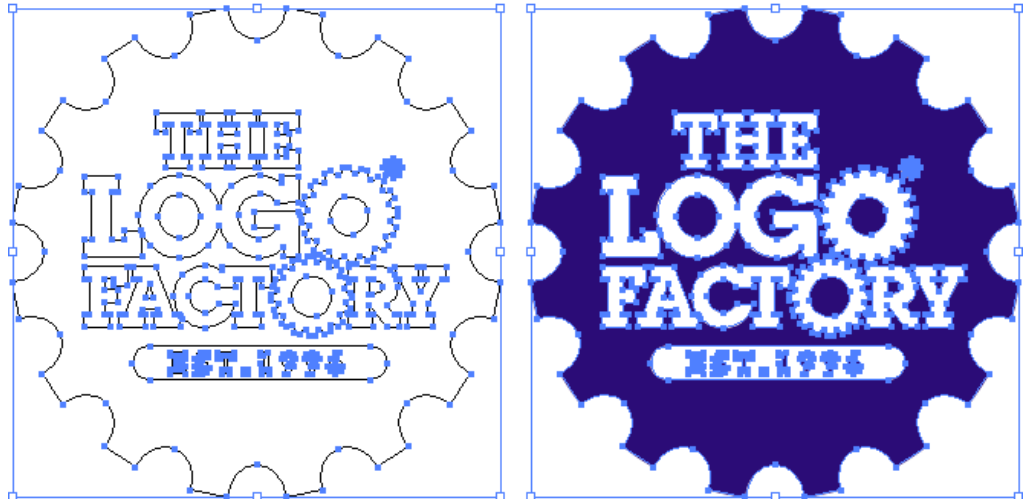
These vector shapes can be resized, edited, customized without any worry about compatibility with other computers, software or platform. We also don't have to worry about having the appropriate font set installed, as the letters no longer require it. It's worthwhile noting that outlined fonts are not bullet-proof, and often require a little bit of hand-editing.

OUTLINE
FONT VECTORS

On the downside, these outlined fonts are no longer editable as they were at the beginning of this exercise, and any future spelling fixes or word changes will require access to the original font set. Which will have to be converted to outlined fonts once completed. So why not simply send font sets around with artwork? That's usually restricted by licensing.

Fonts and licensing.

Whenever someone purchases a font set, they are usually only buying the rights to use the set. Usually only on one or two computers. Copying the font set and supplying it to a printer, or client, is copyright infringement. In order for the printer, or the client, to have access to the original fonts, they'd have to buy their own copy (the spacing and sizing issues discussed earlier notwithstanding). Even most free font sets have commercial usage restrictions and provisos. As well as the advantages discussed earlier, converting fonts to outline gets around these legal issues too.

BITMAP (PIXEL) BASED FILE FORMATS

When your nifty new logo is designed, you'll want to use it in a variety of sizes, some small, some large. Shouldn't be a problem – as long as you have a vector version to work with. Because vector based files are based on mathematical equations, they can be used at any size. Vector file formats *always* output at the highest resolution of the device you're using to print with, so you'll always be assured of the best reproduction quality available.

Bitmap images and sizing issues.

While vector based versions of your logo can be enlarged without any image degradation, bitmap images must be used at the same size (or smaller) than the original 'source' file. If you attempt to enlarge a pixel based image, it will pixelate (the actual pixels that make up the image will

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BITMAP (PIXEL) BASED FILE FORMATS

become visible). In practical terms, this will lead to your logo appearing 'blurry', dirty or fuzzy. Because they are created using tightly packed pixels, these images (JPG, PNG, TIF, BMP) must be in the resolution of the output device that they're being used on. On a monitor that equates to 72 dpi (Pixels or Dots Per Inch), but in offset printing that requirement balloons to a minimum of 266 dpi. What's the problem? Well, pixel based images should not be enlarged as the pixels will be visible. Simply changing the print resolution of a72 dpi image to a 266 dpi image will not address this problem – you'll still end up with the effect seen in our diagram.

Screen and print resolution.

What does this mean in real terms? Well, lets take an full screen image from the web at 800 pixels wide at 72 dpi screen resolution. That's a big image and translates to approximately 11 inches total width. However, when converted to 266 dpi that image can be only be used to a maximum of 3 inches wide in a traditional print job such as letterhead and business card design (many quality printers will recommend 300 dpi, further reducing our maximum size to 2.5 inches). How do we get around this? Simply go back to our vector version, scale it the to the size required (or larger), and create

Pixel based (bitmap): Resolution when enlarged

Printing: Four color process required

a bitmap image from that. The same principles apply to logos that only use two spot colors as well. Here's a look at our example logo, this time featuring red and black in a bitmap format. If we try to enlarge it, the image degrades rather significantly. And we'll need four color printing to reproduce it.

So why do we need pixel based bitmap versions of our logo at all? Any form of electronic reproduction (i.e.: adding your logo to website or blog layouts, as well as using it on social media networks) cannot use vector based

BITMAP (PIXEL) BASED FILE FORMATS

images (with the exception of Flash animations which utilize vectors and Small Vector Graphics) but requires bitmap formats like GIFs , PNGs and JPGs. Because of the way they're created, pixel based bitmap images lend themselves to special effects more readily (although this can create reproduction problems and a skilled designer can create special effects using vector images). Also, many office software products utilize pixel based images when importing artwork. At the end of the day, we still need pixel based bitmap versions of our logo, but these should always begin life as our vector image.

Converting bitmaps to vector versions.

What if you don't have a vector version of your logo? You're going to have to get one. A skilled designer can convert a bitmap image to a vector format, but it requires skillful hand tracing and editing and even then may not result in a completely accurate version of your logo. Auto tracing images via software is hit and miss. Usually closer to miss. There are companies (such as The Logo Factory) who specialize in logo repair services – taking a low resolution bitmap image and creating the proper and necessary logo file formats. This service obviously results in extra charges. Better off doing it right from the get-go.

B/W PIXEL BASED FILE FORMATS

This is the typical black and white version of most logos that originally started in color. Vector based halftone images use a series of black dots to make up the grays and tones that have replaced the original color information. If we have a vector based version of your logo, we have no issues. If we only have access to a pixel based bitmap image, our choices are a little more restricted. Firstly, the image will have a background (a bounding box made up from the logo footprint) which will make placing the image on backgrounds difficult (one method is the creation of a 'clipping path' in Adobe Photoshop). We can't enlarge the image as it will 'pixelate' (above right). Printing a black and white image from a pixel based halftone can certainly be accomplished, as illustrated above, but it will not have the sharpness of a vector version.

Black and white linear resolution.

The same principles apply to linear versions of our logo (a continuous tone version of your logo in which all tones and screens have been removed). As the pixel based linear bitmap version of our logo requires what is known as 'aliasing' (in order to make up curves, the image requires pixels of various gray tones to give the appearance of smooth edges), a bitmap version of your logo will still require a full tonal range to reproduce. Not a terribly big deal, but it will create the fuzzy edges that are shown here.

PNG FILE FORMATS

PNG with transparent background

JPG with background bounding box

PNG is an acronym for Portable Network Graphics. PNGs are bitmapped (raster/pixel based) image formats that can be used instead of GIF images or JPGs. PNG logo images are superior to other pixel based formats as they employ a 'lossless' data compression system. We'll use the logo for Big Island Color, as developed by The Logo Factory, for illustration purposes.

PNG FILE FORMATS

Transparent backgrounds.

One of the main advantages of a PNG formatted logo is the ability for the image to have a transparent background, unlike JPGs which do not feature transparency (requiring a background color for its 'bounding box'), and a superior alternative to GIF images which do, but sacrifice a substantial amount of image integrity to do so. PNG format also features Alpha channel transparency (the ability to turn off the complete background surrounding a logo image, or to make the image transparent to various levels ie: drop shadows) which is more adaptable than Index transparency (the option to turn one color off). Earlier versions of Microsoft Explorer have some issues with previewing PNGS with a Alpha channel transparent background, but there are code fixes available to address the problem. About 50% of the images featured on our website are in PNG format.

Electronic use only please.

PNG colors are palette-based (8 bit, 24 bit RGB or 32 bit RGBA colors), grayscale, RGB, or RGBA. The higher the bit rate, the larger the file size with increased download time. 32 bit images are not recommended for most website applications. The PNG format was created specifically for use on websites and in browser based e-mail and is generally not applicable in traditional offset printing (PNG formats do not support either spot color or CMYK four color spaces). When using JPG images, there are some issues with certain colors previewing correctly (reds are particularly bad for this) and using a PNG format can fix that.

JPG FILE
FORMATS
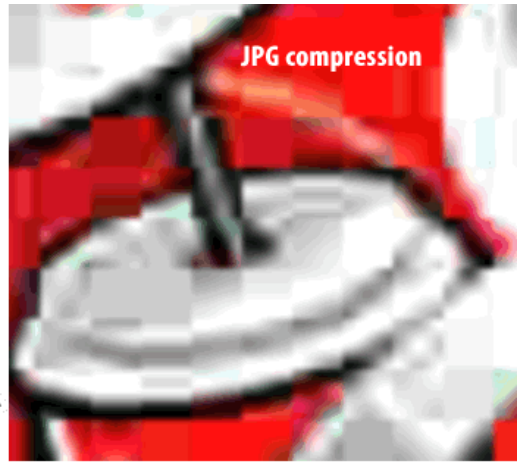
The original name JPEG (pronounced *jay-peg*) is an acronym taken from the Joint Photographic Experts Group which created the standard, but has been abbreviated to JPG for file-naming consistency. JPGs are the most common image format used on the internet and when e-mailing images and photographs back and forth. It's not surprising that JPG is also the default format of most photo capture devices and digital cameras. Using a JPG format when placing your logo on a website or for some other pixel based application is quite acceptable, with some minor caveats.

Unlike a PNG which is 'lossless', a JPG is a 'lossy' format which means the file size compression rates can be altered, but with differing rates of image degradation or 'loss'. Higher image compression rates result in smaller file sizes (for faster download) but with more appreciable loss of image quality and integrity with higher rates. With higher image compression, JPG images start to feature 'abstracts', clumps of pixels that can appear 'dirty' or 'fuzzy'. This is particularly true of colors in the red spectrum and in large, solid areas of color, not typical in photographs where it is less likely that these 'abstracts' are noticed. Finer detail can be lost with higher compression rates and smooth tonal blends will begin to 'band'. A logo is quite different than a photograph, so we need to take a look at the effect of JPG compression as it applies specifically to logo design. We used a logo we developed for Sips Media to create JPG images using various compression rates, as well as a lossless PNG format.

JPG FILE FORMATS

PNG format

JPG 60% of original

JPG 30% of original

JPG 10% of original
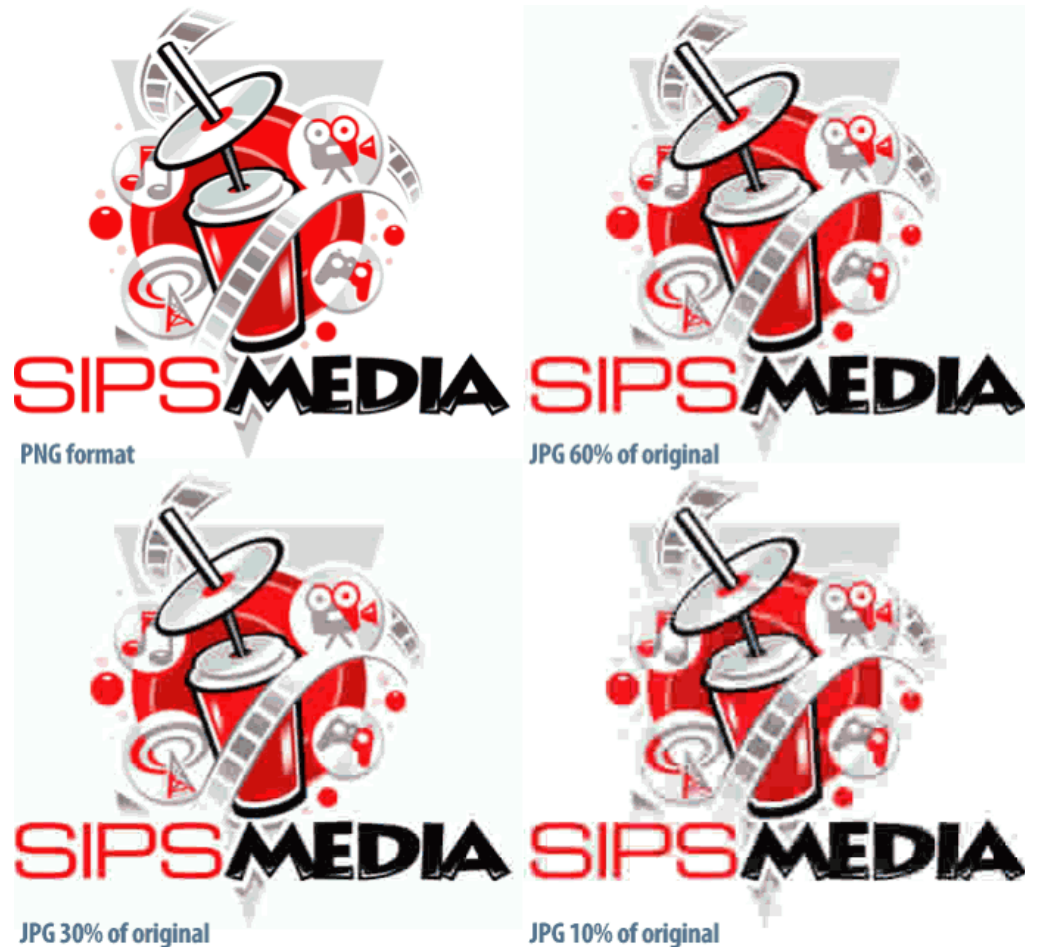
JPG and PNG comparison.

As you can see, the PNG image is superior to all the others, but the JPG images, even with fairly high compression rates, are still quite acceptable for most applications. It is only when we compressed the image by 70% did we begin to see any noticeable image breakdown. Keep in mind that this is an example for this particular design, and your logo may not compress as well, or image degradation may not be noticeable even with maximum compression. If you've decided to design your own logo, you'll need to experiment with compression rates for optimum results. You'll also have to decide which is more important – download speed of your website, or the integrity of your logo that's featured on it.

THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

JPG FILE FORMATS

JPGs are natively in the RGB color space, and are intended primarily for viewing on TVs and computer monitors. When converted to CMYK four color process images (with adequate resolution) for traditional offset reproduction, your logo colors may shift dramatically. This is particularly true with special F/X (lens flares, glows, etc) that are added to RGB images in software applications like Photoshop and Fireworks (one of the reasons we advise against them). Background image transparency is not available with JPG images, so if you need your logo to sit on various colored backgrounds, better go with a PNG.

CHANGING LOGO FORMATS

2 COLOR　　4 COLOR　　GRAYSCALE BW　　LINEAR BW　　SPOT (PRINT)　　CMYK (PRINT)　　RGB (WEB)

Throughout our technical logo design tutorial section, we've taken a look at the properties of the two different image formats – pixel based bitmaps and vector based logos – as well as the various methods of reproduction, and the limitations of each type. But what if we only have access to one format or another? How will that effect our marketing efforts and the creation of material that showcases our new corporate identity – say letterheads, business cards and brochures? And what happens if we need a format that we don't have?

Possible format conversions
Vector based logo artwork
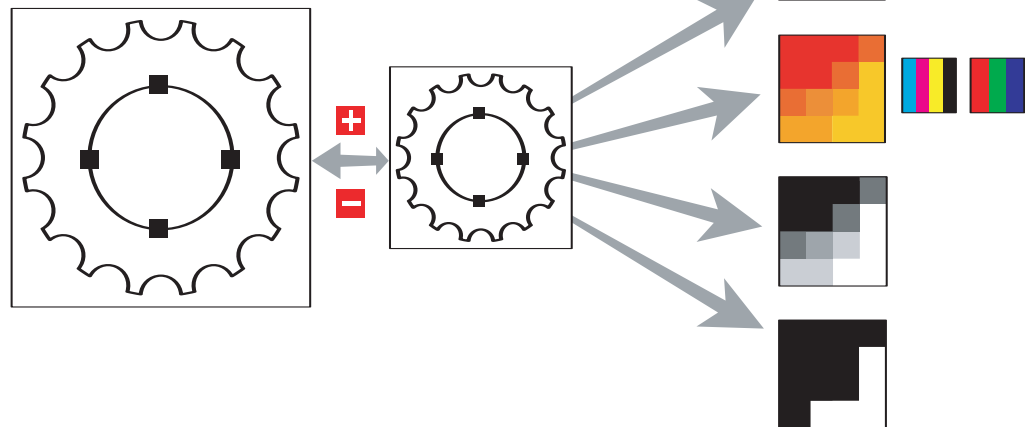
Let's assume we have a vector based format of logo. We're pretty much home free (above) – The Logo Factory (or any other design company) can create any format you will require, with a minimum of headache (and charges). We can enlarge your logo, convert from monitor friendly RGB to full color CMYK and back again, change our color setup to spot color and then into one color black & white linear or grayscale. We can set up pixel based bitmap images of any size, and any resolution. Every eventuality can be handled and using our new logo won't be an issue.

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CHANGING LOGO FORMATS

Possible format conversions
Pixel based (bitmap) logo artwork
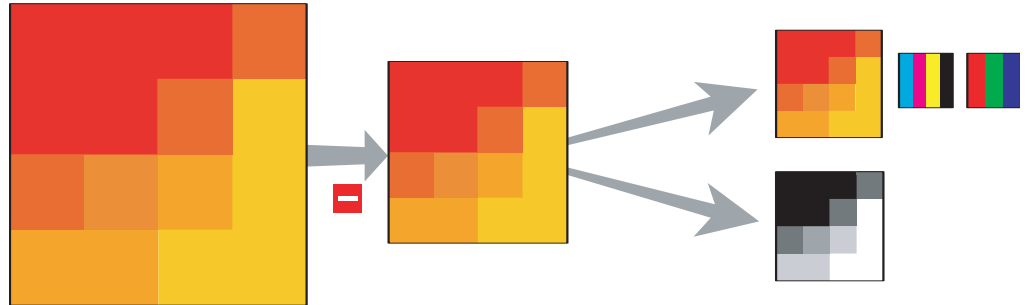
Now let's pretend we ONLY have a bitmap version – a JPG or a PNG for example. We've used spiffy do it yourself software (which use bitmap logo templates as their library of images for you to use), or went for that 'new logo for your web site' $99 McLogo special. What can we do, without resorting to format repair (and the resultant charges)? Let's take a look at the conversion chart (above). We can convert our logo from RGB to CMYK and back again. We can convert our logo from color to black and white (halftones). So far so good. We can reduce the size of our logo for use on websites and blogs and when it comes to using making an avatar from our logo on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, we're pretty well golden.

But now, let's look at what we CAN'T do. We cannot prepare the file for economical spot color printing. We cannot effectively change the colors without some serious messing about in Photoshop or Fireworks (and even then, our results will be iffy). We cannot enlarge our new logo at all (without the image pixelating). We can't move elements around. Looks like we're stuck. Well, maybe not stuck, but if we want to edit our artwork at all, we're going to need to convert it, creating a vector version so we can utilize the conversions that are available. At The Logo Factory, we coined a phrase for this a few years back - logo repair - an effective, but sometimes expensive method of creating the correct formats.

Creating professional logo "assets."

In order to 'fix' your logo format problems, we first need to create a vector source file from which we can generate ALL the various file formats you'll need (take a look at our file format reference guide for all the various types

CHANGING LOGO FORMATS

Bitmap format

you'll need). In order to create vector versions of your logo design artwork, our designers literally have to 'trace' the artwork by hand (below), using vector based drawing software such as Adobe Illustrator.

Tracing vector formats.

There are a few automated solutions for tracing logo images, but these are generally not adequate for truly professional logo design results.The


Vector tracing
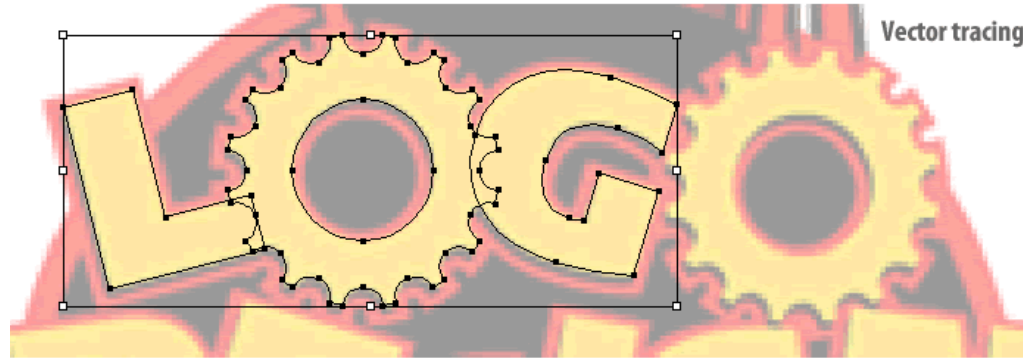
artwork created by auto trace software (Adobe's Live Trace for example) usually requires extensive editing to remove redundant points and areas that have not converted correctly. The time required to 'clean up' the image negates any time saved by auto-tracing. Automated solutions also require a large bitmap image for even the most marginal results. And while high-resolution files also make repair easier, we're dealing with file format problems, and the likelihood of this quality file being available is quite slim. If all you have is a bitmap version of your logo, chances are you snagged it from your website.

CHANGING LOGO FORMATS

Adding color to vector formats.

Once our designers have finished hand-tracing your logo, we'll end up with a series of vector shapes that we can now edit together or individually. We
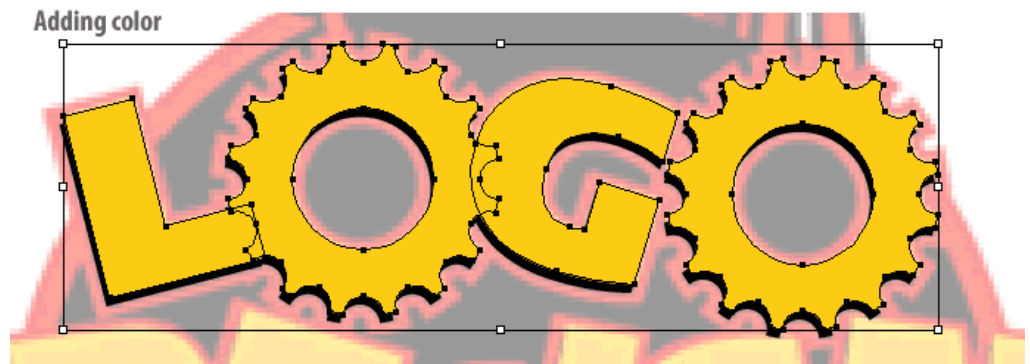
Adding color

can change colors by simply 'pouring' color inside the various vector shapes (above). We can change the various components of the image, add new text, remove or add elements. The sky's the limit. The logo can now be adapted and converted to a wide variety of uses and applications. We can set up the logo for use in spot color reproduction or, if the application warrants it, use the logo in 4 color process printing. The logo is now completely scalable as the resolution of vector file formats is, for all practical purposes, unlimited. At this point we'll be able to create as series of source files of your logo – known as 'logo assets' – that can be used for years to come, in almost every use imaginable. As these formats are 'industry standard' they can be utilized by any designer you choose to hire for the production of your marketing and advertising material. The process described here would also apply to a project where logo design ideas gathered during the time-honored process of napkin 'doodles' are the starting point.

# THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

FILE FORMAT GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

Whenever you hire anyone to create your logo, you'll end up with some, or all, of these types of file formats and images. This quick reference guide illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of each. While there are exceptions to every design 'rule', this guide will serve as a fairly comprehensive outline of format uses for your new company logo. Note – the file extensions listed assume that files have been correctly named.

FILE FORMAT GUIDE
QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom
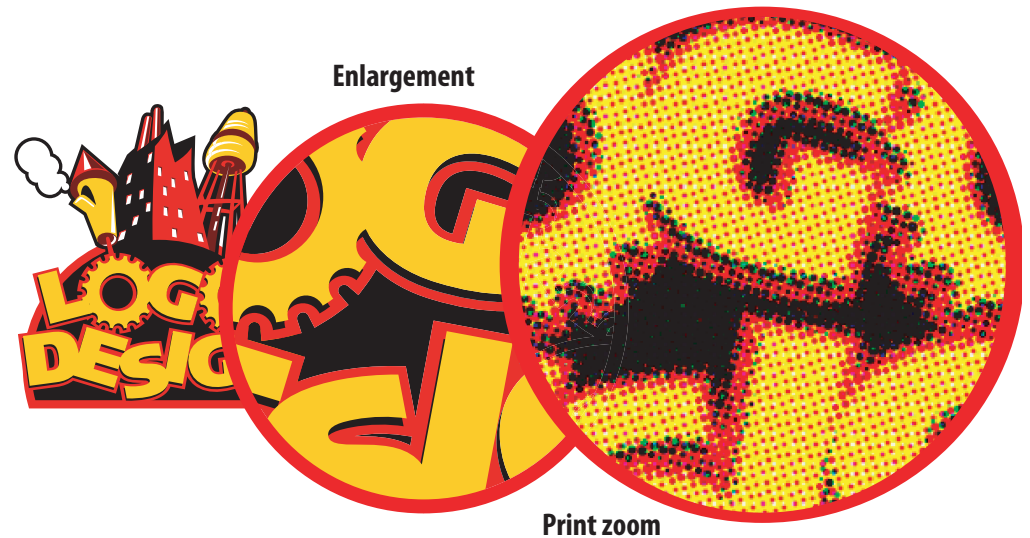
Full color vector.

File extensions: AI, EPS.

If your logo was created in full or four color CMYK, you will require four color process printing to use it on any color material. If you need to enlarge your logo it will not be a concern as vector based images boast unlimited resolution. While you might pay a premium for your marketing material, you should have no file format concerns.
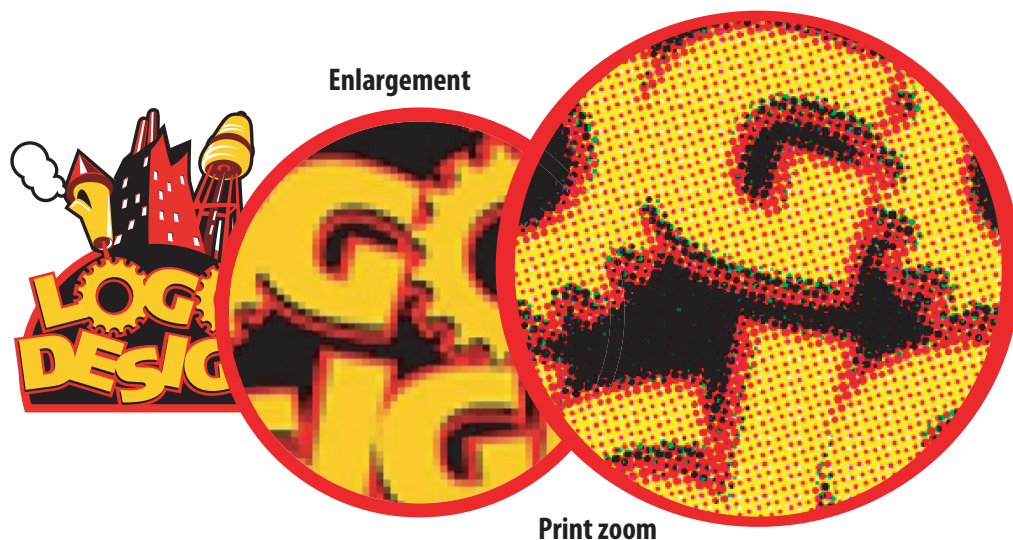
Preferred for: Traditional printing – business cards, letterheads, brochures and color advertising.

Can be used for: Digital plotter (signage), file conversion (to pixel based images), scaling, silk screen, inclusion in Flash animation.

Not applicable for: Web, Black & White reproduction.

FILE FORMAT GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom

Full color bitmap.

File extensions: GIF, JPG, TIF, PS, PNG.

Only having access to these formats isn't such a good scenario. You'll still need 4 color process printing for any traditional stationery design material (such as business card and letterhead), but you'll require a resolution that is sufficient for the medium being used (at least 266 dpi for print). This renders most web files (72 dpi) useless. Scaling of your logo is also an issue, as any enlargement past the default size and/or resolution will cause the image to degrade. You'll also need to insure that your image is in the correct color palette (RGB for screen, CMYK for print).

Preferred for: Web usage (RGB) 4 color process printing (CMYK – if high enough resolution.)

Can be used for: Internal low resolution printing & addition to office software docs. Suppliers of marketing incentives that allow you to upload files to their server (Cafe Press for example) can use this file (with adequate resolution). As they 'gang run' your printing, many online discount printers will require this 4 color format of your logo for use in business card and/or letterhead printing.

Not applicable for: Enlargement and/or large images, format conversion.

FILE FORMAT GUIDE
QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom

Spot color vector.

File extensions: AI, EPS.

The most common (and versatile) type of logo and format. Can be printed using economical spot color reproduction, while the logo can be enlarged due to the unlimited resolution properties of the vector file type. This is the type of format and logo combination that is recommended by most design professionals.

Preferred for: Spot color printing (letterheads, business cards). Enlargement and reduction.

Can be used for: Digital plotter (signage), file conversion (to pixel based images and 4 color process), enlargement, two color silk screen (mugs, pens and other premium incentives).

Not applicable for: Web use, black & white gray scale & linear logo reproduction, use in four color process printing, Flash animation (needs conversion to RGB).

FILE FORMAT GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom
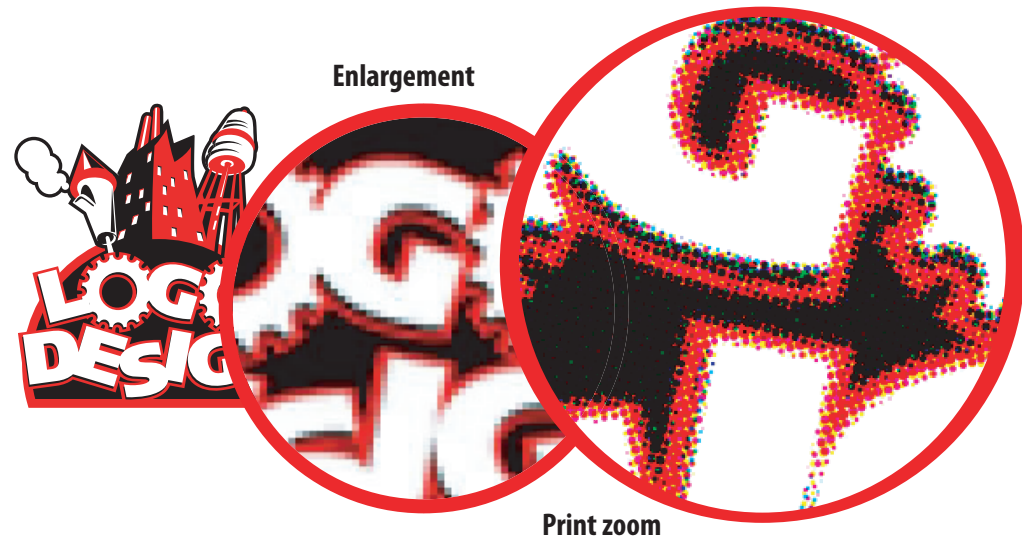
Two color bitmap.

File extensions: GIF, JPG, TIF, PS , PNG.

We can't really call this a 'spot color' logo as it requires many shades of black and red to print (see enlargement). And even though this company logo only features two colors visually, it still requires 4 color process reproduction to print. Enlargement, like all pixel based images is an issue. You'll also need to insure that your image is in the correct color palette (RGB for screen, CMYK for print).

Preferred for: Web usage (RGB) 4 color process printing (CMYK – if high enough resolution).

Can be used for: Internal low resolution printing & addition to office software docs. Suppliers of marketing incentives that allow you to upload files to their server (Cafe Press for example) can use this file (with adequate resolution). As they 'gang run' your printing, many online discount printers will require this 4 color format of your logo for use in business card and/or letterhead printing.

Not applicable for: Black & white reproduction, enlargement and/or large images, format conversion.

FILE FORMAT GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom
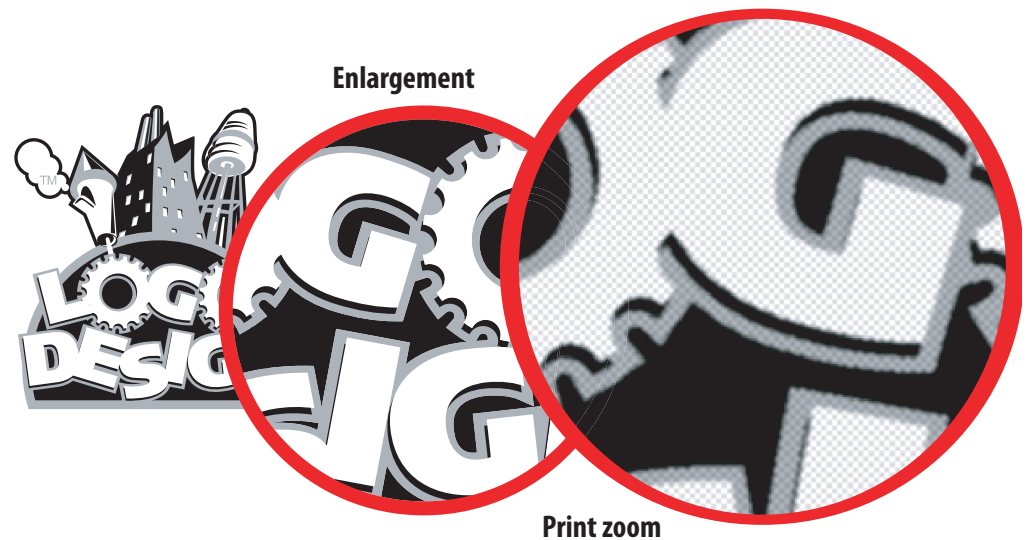
Black & white halftone vector.

File extensions: AI, EPS.

While this logo appears to have multiple shades of silver or gray, all the tones are actually made up of small dots of black. As the logo is vector based, we can enlarge it without any fear of image degradation. When the logo is printed (using one color reproduction) the tones will appear smooth (as long as the resolution is high enough).
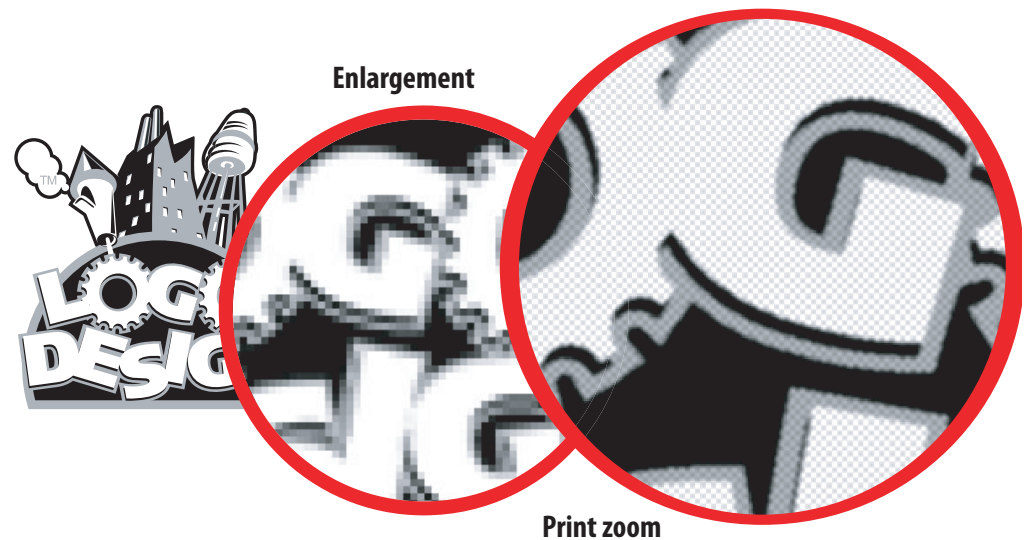
Preferred for: Traditional black and white printing, newspaper advertising, flyers.

Can be used for: Enlargement.

Not applicable for: Web.

FILE FORMAT GUIDE
QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom

Black & white halftone bitmap.

File extensions: GIF, JPG, TIF, PS , PNG.

While this logo appears to be made up a few shades of grey, in actuality it requires hundreds of tones to reproduce. While we can't enlarge this version of your logo, it can be printed adequately as a pixel based black and white version (as long as the resolution of the image allows). Converting a 72 dpi web based image will not be sufficient for any type of printing, including typical office desktop models.

Preferred for: Traditional black and white printing (if high enough resolution), inclusion in office software and internal documents.

Can be used for: Black and white photocopies.

Not applicable for: Low resolution black and white reproduction (FAX and Checks), high resolution black and white reproduction (unless image resolution is adequate), enlargement or format conversion.

FILE FORMAT GUIDE
QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom
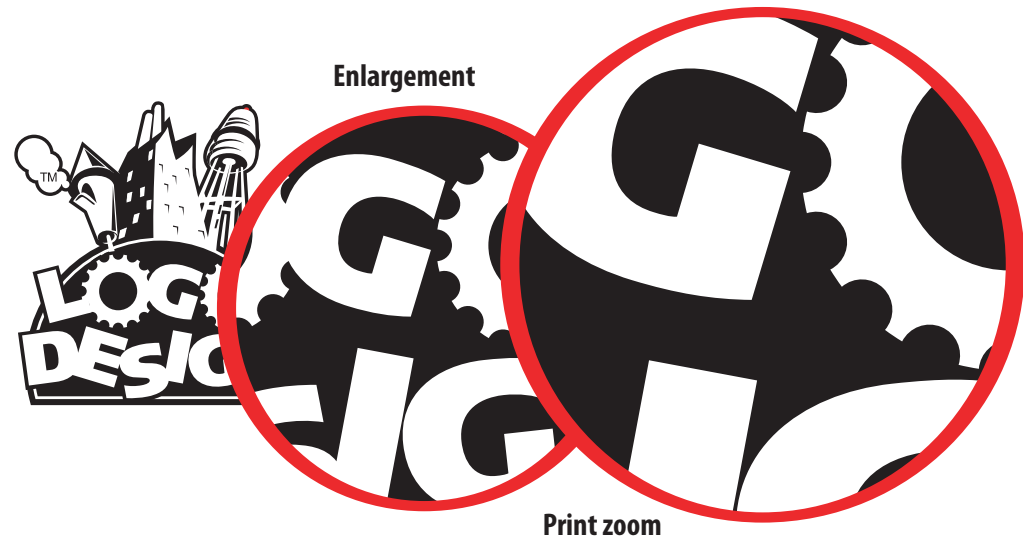
Black & white linear vector.

File extensions: AI, EPS.

This logo ONLY features 100% shades of black. It can be enlarged and the edges of the solid areas will remain sharp and clean. When it is printed (regardless of the resolution) this image will appear crisp and recognizable. You can safely use this image on low resolution reproduction (FAX and Checks, etc) and your logo will appear as well as can be expected.
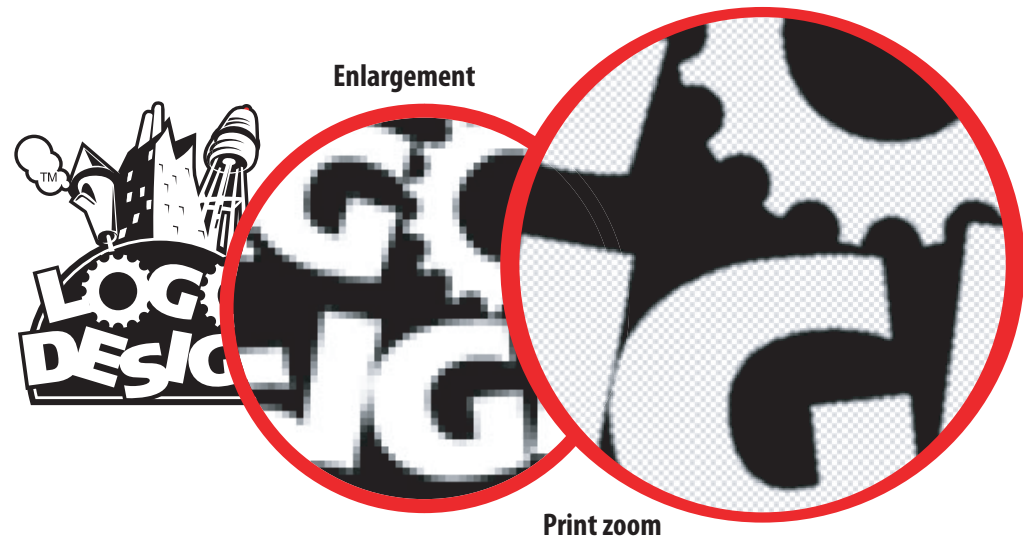
Preferred for: Low resolution black and white printing, one color printing, etching, one color silk-screening (mugs, pens, T-shirts, etc). Vinyl plotter.

Can be used for: Enlargement.

Not applicable for: Web or color printing.

THE GUIDE TO GREAT LOGOS

FILE FORMAT GUIDE
QUICK REFERENCE

Enlargement

Print zoom

Black & white linear bitmap.

File extensions: GIF, JPG, TIF, PS, PNG.

Even though this logo appears to be made up of black solids, because it is Pixel based, the image requires hundreds of shades of gray in order to preview correctly. This is known as 'aliasing' and is typical of all electronic images. Once again, we cannot enlarge this image without loss of quality and 'crispness' and even when printed as a one color BW, the edges of this image may appear soft or 'fuzzy' (above right).

Preferred for: Low resolution black and white printing, inclusion in office software and internal documents.

Can be used for: Black and white printing (with adequate resolution). Not applicable for: Web, color printing, enlargement or format conversion.

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