

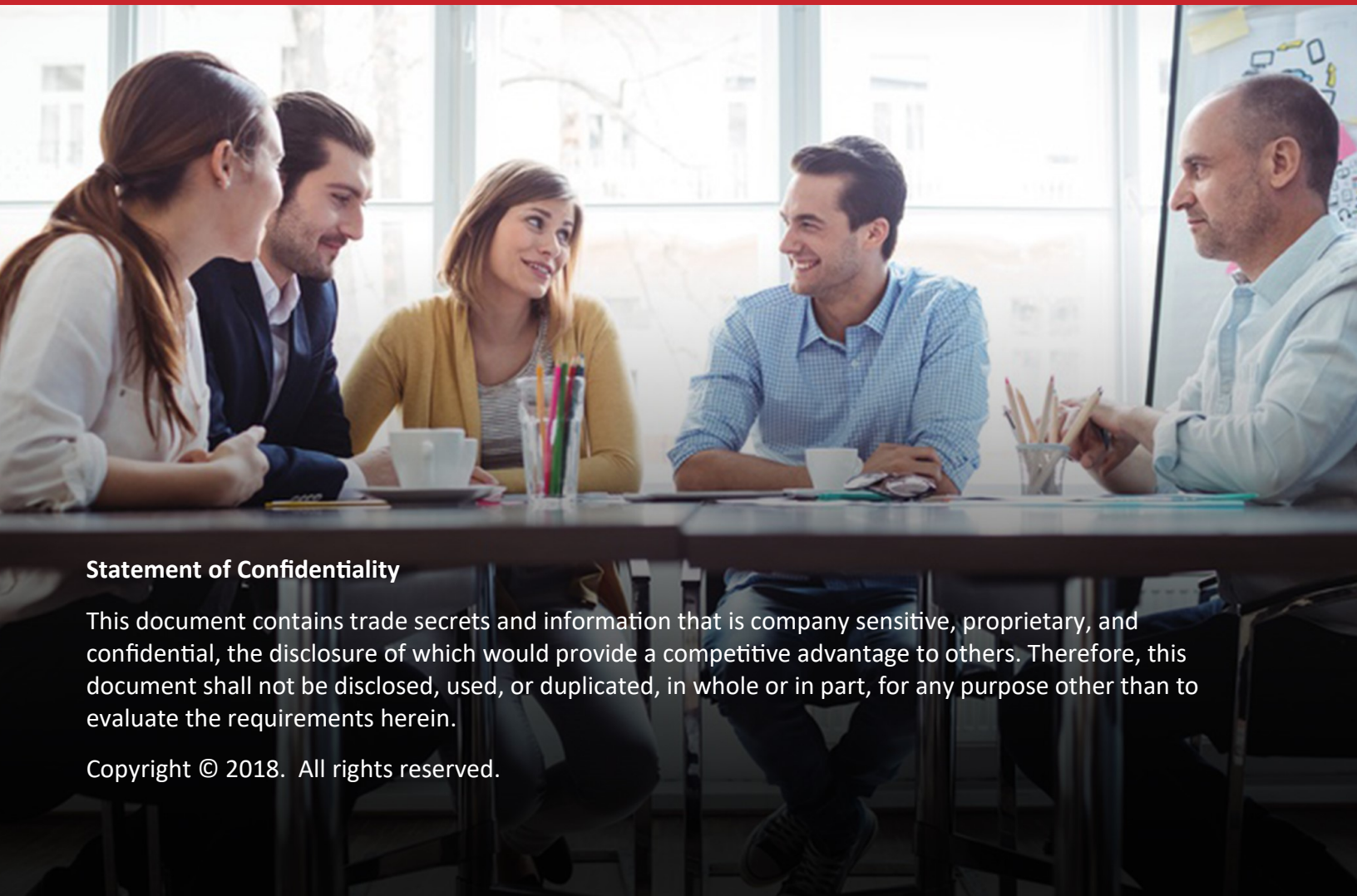


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CONCEPTUALIZING YOUR COMPANY LOGO

Recommended Best Practices and Strategies



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INTRODUCTION

TO CONCEPTUALIZING YOUR COMPANY LOGO

In the modern business world, a logo is arguably one of the most powerful - and recognizable - pieces of branding that a company can possess. While the term originated from logos, which translates from Greek to 'word,' it now describes a visual substitute for a word or name.

As time has passed, the logo has become a key factor in most marketing. The most effective logos have become instantly recognizable, able to draw forth memories and impressions of what they represent even when written words are out of context or absent. However, results like these take some effort to come by, and so to achieve the visibility that you want for your business you will have to be sure that you adhere to a few tried-and-true practices while designing your logo. We'll go through them step by step.

Just remember, a logo can be a very powerful tool, and the wrong decision can break a company's branding just as easily as the right decision can make it.

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IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE AND THEIR NEEDS

In order to catch the attention of the sort of people you are trying to attract to your business, you will first need to learn how to speak their language and translate it into your design. Different audiences are made up of different personas, and will therefore respond differently to different elements and style choices. These responses are often heavily informed by the culture and personality of the audience member.

Due to this, you should examine your own approach and determine who you could target most effectively by drawing upon your own company's personality. Your prospects will be drawn to the company that is most compatible with theirs. So, to catch their attention as quickly as possible, your logo needs to clearly communicate your company culture and values.

Before the design process can begin, you have to have your company culture well defined. Otherwise, you're trying to paint a house before the walls are put up -- in order to best communicate your company's persona through a visual medium, you need to know what values define your company.

This is also a good time to formulate who makes your “ideal customer.” This is a profile of the qualities and traits that one of your best-fit audience members would display, and is a construct that many marketing and design professionals rely on to shape their approach. By identifying who it is you are trying to cater to, you are better able to shape your voice and image to appeal to them.



PRO TIP: Try listing all of the words that you want to be associated with your company.

For instance, maybe you want your audience to view you as ‘dependable,’ ‘knowledgeable,’ and ‘professional.’ Creating this list will provide you with a blueprint of sorts, as your final logo should ultimately communicate these qualities.

Again, this will influence the audience you attract. If you would rather attract fancier, more upscale clientele, your logo should present you as a fancy, upscale provider - while on the other hand, organizations with a more laid-back approach are more apt to seek out a laid-back provider. This tendency provides you with the opportunity to experiment with different designs and how they compare to some of the current industry conventions. Are there certain color conventions that others in your line of business use, or do their logo designs share a specific style? We’ll discuss why this may be next.

It is also important that, as you make these comparisons, you make your logo your own. If it’s too similar to what’s already out there, it won’t stand out...but in the same vein, if your logo is too different than what the industry trends towards, your message may be lost in the confusion. In this way, balance is critical to your logo’s design.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR DESIGN OPTIONS

There are many different kinds of logos out there for you to adopt, in terms of design. These are all options that are available for you to experiment with, although you may find that one approach matches the rest of your branding and company culture better than another does.

Type-based

A type-based design is made up of the identifying name of the company the logo represents, usually stylized in a unique, distinctive typeface or font. These fall into two different categories, lettermarks, and logotypes.

Lettermarks are those logos that simply take a lengthy name and shorten it into a memorable set of initials, and use a striking typeface to make those initials stand out even more. This approach has been used by International Business Machines and High Tech Computer Corporation to great effect. If your business has a longer name, you may consider using this approach to make your branding simpler, catchier, and thereby more likely to make an impression. Just ask IBM, or HTC.

Logotypes are similar in that they are primarily text-based, the main difference being that the business' full name is used. There is no shortage of companies who use this approach, the most famous of which probably being Google. If your company has a short, distinct name, this approach may work best for you.



Illustrative

An illustrative logo, also known as a pictorial mark, incorporates an image of something relevant to the brand into the logo itself. This association can sometimes be very clear and overt, while other times it is somewhat disguised in the design. A true illustrative logo will contain nothing but the image. While these logos rely on strong brand recognition in order to be effective, they are especially effective in overcoming a language barrier. For instance, Twitter's logo is easily recognizable and sums up the nature of Twitter itself -- simple, and to the point.



An abstract logo is a type of pictorial mark that meets more specific considerations. In order for a logo to be considered abstract, the design has to have little or nothing to do with what the associated business offers. These logos will typically only have any meaning through their association with a given brand, and so they become a clear symbol exclusively associated with that brand. Hewlett Packard Enterprise uses a simple green rectangular box as their logo, providing a perfect example of an abstract logo.



**Hewlett Packard
Enterprise**



Hybrid/Combination Marks

Hybrid logos are the result of two of the other approaches to logo design both being utilized to create a single result. The end result is quite often very memorable and engaging. Think of Microsoft and their current logo. While the Windows image and the name Microsoft can each carry their own weight individually, the combination of the two sums up the entire brand, and allows for customization to brand individual offerings.



Emblem logos often fall under the hybrid category, as they take a font and place it inside or alongside a symbol or image. As a result, they have a professional and classic appearance. The Wordpress platform often uses a simple emblem as a part of its branding. Simplicity tends to be better with an emblem logo, as it is easier to reproduce on marketing materials with any quality control.



As with any technical field, there are many specialized terms to describe different bits of design, especially when it's for the Internet. During the logo design process, it may be helpful to have a grasp on the *terminology*. This will allow you to better communicate with any professionals you may enlist to assist you in your logo design and implementation.

3 LEVERAGING BASIC PSYCHOLOGY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Without a doubt, psychology has a powerful influence in marketing activities. Marketing is designed to resonate with the different characteristics and preferences that an audience has, and this is especially true of logos.

As a result, specific design choices will emphasize a particular perception of the brand that the logo in question represents. Of course, many of these perceptions are culturally dependent, but in the grand scheme of things, the Western world shares many of these impressions throughout its many cultures.

Colors

Color holds quite a bit of sway over how the subject is perceived, and the traits that are therefore associated with it.



White

Simplicity, Cleanliness



Black

Mystery, Sophistication



Red

Passion, Energy, Aggression



Yellow

Warmth, Intellect, Caution



Blue

Confidence, Integrity



Grey

Authority, Security



Green

Freshness, Wealth, Life



Orange

Innovation, Creativity



Purple

Wealth, Nobility, Dignity



Brown

Rural, Organic



Pink

Love, Fun, Playfulness

Using these colors to enhance how your logo is perceived can help you to not only become more memorable to your audience, but can also express your company culture. This is especially true when used in tandem with particular design choices concerning shapes.

Shapes

Like colors, different shapes and designs communicate and inspire different things within their observers.



Vertical lines - professionalism, as well as balance, strength and efficiency. Can also be seen as domineering and aggressive.



Diagonal lines - liveliness and dynamism, but can also be seen as a sign of a volatile spirit and untrustworthiness.



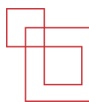
Horizontal lines - tranquility, trust, and community. Can tone down the negative impressions that vertical and diagonal lines may leave.



Curved lines - happiness (like a smile) and movement, as well as support, protection and care.



Circles - endurance, stability, and unity.



Squares - balance and reliability, but can be seen as boring.



Diagonal lines - liveliness and dynamism, but can also be seen as a sign of a volatile spirit and untrustworthiness.

Typefaces

Unsurprisingly, the tendencies that shapes show often carry over to typefaces as well, angular fonts acting the same way as diagonal lines do, and curved lettering appearing friendlier to its audience. The different designs lend a different voice to your audience, your logo's appearance causing it to be read differently in your audience's head.

Take this document, for example. Would you be reading it the same way if it was written in *Comic Sans*? There's a pretty good chance that the answer's a resounding "no."

As you combine these shapes and colors to create your own logo, you can either strengthen these perceptions by combining them, or you can possibly create an entirely new response.

Of course, you don't want to overdo it and make your design too complicated. 95% of the top brands in the world incorporate one or two colors into their logo, and only 5% use more than two. Keeping your logo simple has some functional benefits as well.

Not only are simpler logos easier to commit to memory and recognize later (thereby better serving their purpose) but they are also easier to adapt to the restrictions certain outlets will place on them. Having your logo rely on the colors in it to be recognizable means that the logo is unrecognizable if it's ever printed in black and white.

It's also a good idea for your logo design itself to be simpler, rather than complex. Apple Computers learned this the hard way - before featuring their partially eaten apple, their logo was an incredibly detailed and complicated drawing of Sir Isaac Newton under his fabled apple tree.

4

FINALIZING YOUR NEW LOGO

As you finalize your new logo design, you should still look at it critically and review your creative decisions. After all, it's going to be your business' representation. It should be present on every piece of communications your company produces, both internally and outward-facing. This means that your logo absolutely needs to be easily replicable on all of your marketing materials.

Think of it this way - *could your final design be recognizable on both a pencil and a billboard?*

You also have to be confident that your final logo can clearly sell your message and business to your prospects, as well as remind your staff of their workplace culture. If something about it doesn't work, or doesn't properly represent your brand and industry, it's time to go back to the drawing board.

Leveraging Opinions

To ensure that your new logo hits the mark, it helps to crowdsource impressions of your potential designs. Try running a few focus groups to gauge the reaction your new logo will get, what works about it, and what aspects need to be addressed further.

At the very least, launch your new logo internally before sharing it out with the world. Not only will your employees, the life and soul of your company, have a say in their representation, it also gives you the chance for fresh eyes to look over the logo and catch something that was missed. The Internet is full of examples of easily-misinterpreted logos that convey a much different message than was originally intended, as a quick Google search can show you.



"I strive for two things in design: simplicity and clarity. Great design is born of those two things."

-Lindon Leader

Implementing Your New Logo

Like any part of your branding, a change to your logo isn't something that you can do piece-by-piece. The key to any successful branding is consistency, so you don't want the new version of your logo on some of your marketing materials and the old one still on others.

Once you're ready to launch your new logo, go all out. You want it to be plastered on every single one of your marketing materials, highly visible on your website, and incorporated into any swag you have to offer. Your audience needs to be re-trained, in a sense, to associate that image with your brand. Repetition is one of the more effective ways to do so.

A LOGO HAS POWER, DON'T WASTE ITS POTENTIAL

When your company is brought to the attention of a prospect, one of the first things they will likely see is your logo. Therefore, it is the first indication they will receive of your company's personality, values, and beliefs. It is crucial that your logo presents you accurately, in order to attract clients who will be compatible.

For more insights into logo design and use, check out our blogs on building a brand, composing a guide to your branding, and how to go about creating your ideal logo design.

If you need help coming up with a logo for your business, or with any of your other marketing endeavors, we are here to help. Reach out to us at directive.com, or give us a call at 607.433.2200.

