



MARKETING INSIGHTS

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The Dos and Donts of Branding Part 2—A Logo is much more than a Shingle

Your logo should reflect who you are

The main function of a logo is to create and reinforce company or brand identity. A logo is a symbol that often includes a name, and sometimes a tagline. Logos should reflect the identity and the character of an organization. Logos should give a hint of a company's style and attitude, and the qualities it wants to be associated with.

Your logo should stand out from the crowd

A logo should be distinct, easily recognizable as yours, and memorable. Logos like these can generate instant recognition of a distinctive brand, positive or negative. Effective logos make it easier to build a brand when they convey the unique attributes of the organization they represent in an original way.

Distinctive logos build loyalty

Few brands with nondescript logos are household names; conversely, a great logo is only one of the building blocks for success. Great logos can take on a life of their own in the sense that some people love stickers and others wear T-shirts sporting the logo. Logos like that not only create free advertising – they create binding loyalty in the people doing the advertising.

Your logo reinforces what you stand for

It makes a promise about your company or brand to your customers and prospects. It can be a guiding light (along with the tagline) in times of uncertainty.

Like a coin, a logo (and a tagline) has two faces: one turned to the market, the other turned to your employees. A great logo is a bonding agent for employees that can engender pride and a sense of belonging. They too can become devoted champions when they talk to people outside your organization.

1. Examples of Great Logos



Apple is a great example of a distinctive brand, and of a logo that served as a bright beacon for both its employees and its customers. It generated fierce loyalty even over the tough years because it said: we're smart, we're fresh, colourful and different. All that in one symbol (supported by a good tagline).



Microsoft used similar colours in a window shape but it doesn't say nearly as much about the company and its products as the Apple logo.



The Linux penguin is another great logo – don't we all love cute and cuddly penguins? We do but Linux is not a brand, it's an ideology. Linux products have never been marketed seriously (they're the free work of enthusiasts), so the logo isn't familiar to most people. Nor does it represent the product, which can be anything but cute and cuddly.



One of the most distinctive logos ever. It says: I'm the Australian Airline. It's so good it overcomes a shocker of a brand name. It's so distinctive it hardly needs a tagline.

Great logos stand the test of time

Smart companies don't change their logos on a whim since they understand the vital importance of clear and consistent branding. A few long-established companies have never changed their logos, and some have become priceless assets. Against a backdrop of increasing sameness, they've simply grown more distinctive.



Others had to be modernized, but only once or twice over many decades.



There is a time in a company's life when a logo change is needed, but that decision is often postponed until it becomes too difficult and too costly to make the change.

2. Examples of Nondescript Logos

Boring logos are the norm, it seems, even among large companies. In many cases, they miss the opportunity to make the logo more distinctive with a strong tagline, or at least gives us a hint about the nature of their business.



Technology companies are among the worst offenders. They either think everyone knows who they are and what they do, or they think we don't need to know.



Nokia's logo is the exception. It makes the point about connecting people in an original way, without hinting at mobile technology. The tagline 'Connecting People' is a waste – better would've been a line that tells us how Nokia does it better than its competitors.

3. Logos can be hard workers

You'll want to use your logo in different situations and across various media, from your website to ad campaigns to business cards and letterheads to presentations and packaging. This is where an adaptable logo pays off, one that looks at home in a variety of settings.

Some logos are so adaptable they become stars in successful advertising campaigns, the symbol creating a link to the brand that is instantly recognizable. Target's advertising is instantly recognizable because the 'target' symbol plays a role in all its campaigns.



Here's an example from a Dutch Bank advertising its Internet banking service.



1993, ABN-AMRO



Internet Bankieren.

ABN-AMRO commercial ad
2001, Internet Bankieren
volgens De Bank

Here's another example



4. Logos that fail



The merger failed as well, Daimler selling Chrysler a few months ago at a substantial loss. It wasn't because of the logo but why would you encumber the shining 3-pointed star brand with the weight of a company that has nothing in common with your own?



The symbol has potential but clashes with the stark letters next to it instead of embracing them. The separator for the tagline stresses the lack of cohesion, and the tagline is far too long. 'The Power to Know' would work better on its own.



The logo adds nothing more than a little colour to a name that's far too long. The bank tried to become ComBank a while back but apparently had a change of heart.



This is not the logo of an airline, but that of US communications carrier Sprint who rebranded and became Embarq. It's a classic example of a confused logo, and of a company name adding more confusion to the false impression the symbol gives. We can only wonder why they couldn't see that.



If your reaction to the London 2012 Olympics logo is shock and horror, rest assured that you're not alone. It breaks just about every rule in the design book - is that why it looks like a broken vase? If it weren't for the Olympic rings and the word London, we'd have no idea what it was about. With a lot of imagination, we might work out that the broken bits say 2012. The casual observer shouldn't have to work that hard, nor should she turn away with a headache.

The London Olympics logo is the result of a competition and, what we said about taglines, also seems to apply here: committees are not the best source of creative ideas or good design.



Instituto de Estudos Orientais

Instituto de Estudos Orientais. We'll just leave the interpretation to you.



'Ultraviolet Man Summer Pop' is a fragrance for men devised by Paco Rabane. The logo is a mess but perhaps it appeals to the target market where it competes with products like 'Intimately Beckham for Him'.

Calvin Klein's fragrance 'CK in2u' speaks the language of the SMS generation. It won the "Best New Fragrance Name" category in a recent survey of US brand names.

5. The Challenge

It's not as hard as you think to come up with a good, fresh logo, nor does it take \$11 million as rumours have it the Commonwealth Bank logo cost. This is creative work, and more money can't buy more creativity. It's about a sharp mind in the right groove, an eye that sees possibilities and an artistic hand.



EDINBURGH 50,000
THE FINAL PUSH. JULY 6, 2005
THE LONG WALK TO JUSTICE

Pure genius, probably done on a shoestring.



Simple and highly effective, definitely done on a shoe string.



Great Design. Makes you want to go.



How hard is that? And how many times has it been copied?

6. Summary

Graphic designers are many and often very talented. The better they're briefed, the more likely they'll create the right logo for your business. This is where a company like Technoledge comes in: it starts with getting the basics right, understanding what makes your business different, and working out how to reflect your special attributes in the brand, the tagline and the logo.

Once the key principles are clear, the graphics will follow.

In Part 1—[A Minefield of Names](#), we examine brand names from successes and disasters.

In Part 3—[Taglines and Fault Lines](#), we look at why some are brilliant and others flop.

In Part 4—[Art vs Process](#) we explore the importance of branding to SMBs and look at cost-effective ways to achieve results.