The 5 Elements of Effective Logo Design

Why does your business need a logo?

A logo is a significant part of creating and marketing your brand. Your brand communicates to your customers who you are and why you are relevant to them, while marketing is the way in which your organization manages this communication. A logo is important to both of these concepts because it acts both as a visual representation of your business' brand identity, and as a recognizable identifier for your services and/or products.

Determine your identity

The first step then is to determine your brand identity. Ask yourself these questions:

• What industry is my business part of?

• What services/products does it offer?

• Who are my customers?

• What is my Unique Selling Point, i.e. why should a customer choose my company over another?

Once you can answer these sorts of questions you will have a greater understanding of your brand and can start thinking about how best to represent it as a logo.

The 5 Elements

Relevant

Firstly, your logo has to be relevant. It doesn't have to be a literal representation of your business, but should have some relevance to the particular industry, as well as make it clear to potential customers why your business is relevant to them.

When Starbucks was first established in Seattle in 1971, the three founders wanted to reflect coffee's maritime history along with Seattle's seaport connections. The name Starbuck's is taken from the seafaring adventure Moby Dick, while the seductive siren was chosen to represent the brand. The company is now so confident in her iconic status that the name has been dropped entirely from the logo.

Visible

Secondly, your logo needs to be visible. In a crowded marketplace it needs to make an impact and stand out from the crowd.

McDonald's Golden Arches were initially a physical part of the restaurant design. When viewed from an angle they looked like a stylised M. They were made a part of the logo in 1962 and since then have spread across the globe to 119 countries. The bright yellow colour and simple shape make this logo both striking and highly visible.

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Distinctive

Thirdly, your logo needs to be distinctive. If your potential customers can't remember or describe your logo to other potential customers then you have a problem.

Apple Logo, old and new: Although simple, the Apple logo is an immediately recognisable symbol of the brand. This is in stark contrast to the original Apple logo which was highly complicated and frankly rather boring.
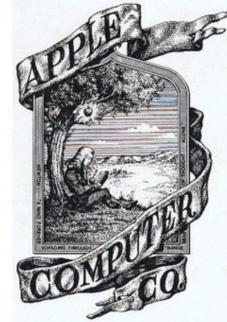
Adaptable

Fourthly your logo needs to be adaptable. Will it work as well in black and white as in colour, will it scale or is it so complicated that detail will be lost at small sizes?

The Nike "Swoosh" was introduced in 1971 to go on its sports shoes. Since then it had been used on hundreds of different sports products, from soccer balls to baseball caps to electronic wristbands. Whatever colour it is in, and however large or small it is reproduced, it is still instantly identifiable.

Timeless

Finally, your logo needs to be timeless. It shouldn't look out-of-date yet shouldn't be so trendy that it will age badly.

The London Underground logo started out in 1908 as a red disc with a horizontal blue bar through the middle, with the respective station name written on it in white. In 1917 the red disc became a circle, and other than a change in font, the logo has remained the same ever since. For a design that is nearly 100 years old it is just as effective now as it was in the Edwardian era.
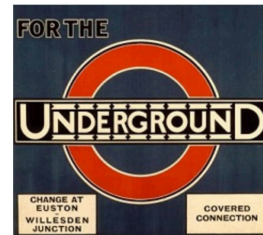
One Final Tip

Design by committee may sound like a good idea, but it will only make things more complicated in the long run. Stick to a small team of 3-4 people at the most.

Article Source and Images: The Logo Company

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