

5 steps to great logo designs

There are big differences between small business and corporate logos

By Dan Antonelli, President and Creative Director, Graphic D-Signs, Inc.

At my agency, we're fortunate to get a very wide range of logo design work—from the landscape company to the computer consulting firm. It certainly keeps things interesting as we continue to create brands for many types of businesses whose primary usage for their brand vary greatly.

As we market this type of work to our clients, we use our web site to break up our logo portfolio into two categories of style, Small Business and Corporate. Although nearly all our clients are small businesses, the style we choose to employ depends on a number of factors.

1 Anticipated Usage: Is the primary usage for this logo going to be on a vehicle? Or is it only going to be used

on print and/or web marketing? Those are two radically different usages. If primary usage is an outdoor medium, then that same logo will work fine in print and Web usage. Generally, the same can't be said if you're designing first for print usage. Often, that logo will not translate well into an outdoor usage. So if we have a client who's looking for a high impact partial wrap, we'll need to design a simple, easy-to-digest logo with minimal details.

2 Icon and Typography Selection: Once you've figured out the logo's primary usage, you can design accordingly. For print and web usage, you certainly are afforded more flexibility when it comes to typeface selection. You can choose fine and lightweight





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fonts, or heavy and boldfaced ones. But those same fonts won't work for you in an outdoor medium because of the inherent distance legibility issues.

On an outdoor medium, the main impediment to creating a memorable logo is time. Time is a luxury not afforded outdoors (which, incidentally, is the reason why most vehicle wraps fail). You have only a fraction of time to get the message to the viewer, have it understood, and make an impression.

Choosing bold, high-impact, easy-to-read fonts for your primary and secondary copy is critical. The same needs to be true of your icon or graphic. If the viewer struggles to comprehend the icon, or if they can't make the connection with the icon and the nature of the business, then the design fails in its primary mission. There needs to be a direct connection between what the icon communi-

cates and the business type.

3 Advertising budget: Why is the budget important? Well, consider the successes of some larger corporations and then imagine if the same design or approach were tried for a small business.

Consider Nike. Imagine if you had a shoe company come to you and you tried to sell them the 'swoosh' for their logo. What does a swoosh have to do with sneakers? Nothing, of course. However, Nike has what most small businesses don't have: tens of millions of dollars to put the swoosh everywhere and reinforce in the consumer's mind that yes, the swoosh is related to sneakers.

Unfortunately, small businesses don't have this luxury. Therefore, it's critical that you avoid meaningless icons that have no relation to the nature of the business.

4 Audience: You should also examine who the primary audience is for the logo. Consider age, demographics, and even whether the target audience is male or female. And obviously, whether the company's products or services are intended for consumers or other businesses.

This is something that, many times, our clients don't initially understand. They believe they need to like their logo. Often we must explain to them that unless they are in our target audience, we're not going to design for their personal tastes or preferences. Those preferences may run contrary to what our target audience expects to see.

5 Image: Lastly, you must consider what image you are trying to project in the logo. Does the small business client want to appear like they have 20 trucks and are well established? Or maybe they want to look like a larger corporate-based franchise. Some want to project a small, personal image. And then you have the small professional firms who need to look like much larger entities.

Here are a few example logos we've undertaken in the last few months. You'll see the different approaches we've taken to each, all based on the factors we've talked about here. We've found that considering these important points helps us deliver the client the best value. •❧



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