New fonts can give your logos a fresh look

The latest fonts help your designs look current

By Dan Antonelli

I confess—I'm a font junkie. Buying new fonts is one of my favorite activities. I get so excited about using new fonts that I'll inevitably try to use them on the next dozen or so logos that I have to design (whether they are appropriate or not!). Of course, a lot of clients don't appreciate the various nuances of each new typeface, but as designers, it's important to keep our font library fresh.

I sometimes get a little stale in my font selection for logos, and although my clients never complain, I feel that it can make my portfolio of logos appear too similar. Given the logo volume that comes out of here (last year we designed over 50 logos), it's difficult to not have some logos carry certain design traits that are inherent of my style. But hopefully, other than repetition of fonts, they are not too similar.

I do have a dozen or so faces that certainly get beat to death. On my Mac I have a "core" set of fonts that are turned on all the time. Some of these core fonts include Goudy, Garamond, Futura (all of them), Helvetica Neue, Frutiger, Gill Sans, Copperplate, Bank Gothic, Eurostile, Eras, Trajan (currently the most overused typeface on the planet) and Friz Quadrata. These are all popular typefaces, somewhat "safe" fonts because your clients have seen them before, and they are not too trendy.

But while safe font selection for logos may be most appropriate for corporate logos, they can sometimes feel a little stiff and less

Sources for Fresh Type:

There's some really great type coming from various foundries these days. Some of my favorites include:

Adobe
888-724-4508
wwwadobe.com

Bitstream
800-522-3668
www.bitstream.com

House Industries
800-888-4390
www.houseindustries.com

Letterheadfonts
www.letterheadfonts.com

SignDNA
530-795-1637
www.signdna.com

Signfonts.com
877-730-4395
www.signfonts.com

Our use of *ITC Century* for main and subcopy is a safe choice for this Wall Street Executive Recruiting firm. It's familiar, legible, and has a certain established look and feel. It works well in this situation for a corporate logo, but may not be as appropriate for a contractor or small business. There's a lack of personal touch in this font selection.

This uses my old favorite—the Futura Family (Adobe Systems), but I added *Stanford Script* from Letterhead Fonts (www.letterheadfonts) for *Paul*. It loosens the logo and gives it a more personalized look. We wanted it to almost look like Paul was giving his signature to the work.

It's hard to be your own customer

Recently I decided my own logo was in need of a redesign. The old one was safe, albeit uninspiring with basic colors, and a slight modification to *Futura Condensed*. Of course, it had to have a triangle in there, too. It's not my finest work. Given the direction of my company, I also felt it did not represent what we did, and more importantly, what we are capable of. Self-examination, while difficult, only leads to improvement of your work when you take a hard, honest look at it. I found this particular redesign to probably be my most challenging exercise. It's difficult to be objective because obviously you're so closely tied to your own company and identity.—*D.A.*

Here's the horizontal format. It utilizes Adobe's *Baker Signet* for main and subcopy. The new design is fresher, with an icon that can be perceived as a G or as an arrow. We prefer to look at it as an arrow to signify movement, or taking businesses and either turning around their image or bringing them to a new direction. We kept our tagline the same. We could not come up with a more succinct way to say exactly what we did.

The *G* in Letterhead Fonts' *Sarah Script* formed the basis of our original icon. We modified it to look more like an arrow.

Here it is in a vertical format.

Another piece of the logo and branding is this icon that we use in conjunction with some of our collateral.

More *Stanford Script* for *Media* helps to make this logo a little more playful, complimenting the stiffness of Adobe's *Frutiger* for *Second Wind*.

This logo is for a woman who built and sold these unique portfolios. I hand drew the book, and used *A&S Snapper Script* (SignFonts) for the main copy with *Bank Gothic* (Adobe) for the subcopy.

This client adds his personal touch to his catering business. The name of the company lends itself to developing a logo that carries the idea of him putting his signature on their work. So we chose Letterhead Fonts' *Sofia Script* for the main copy. Very classy, yet legible and a beautiful bounce gives it a fresh, personal look. Certainly, we could have dropped in *Keunster Script* or heaven-forbid, *Commercial Script*, but every other catering business uses the fancy thick and thin scripts for their logos. His business is personal—the other scripts carry a certain stiffness that doesn't represent the client and his business appropriately.

A good option for a condensed sans serif is House Industries' *House Gothic*. Here it is used for all the copy. The family contains a great variety of condensed, normal and extended versions with various descender and ascender options.

The playful bounce of *Sofia Script* plays off the stiffness and boldness of the main copy. It has somewhat of what I would call a "Jersey-Style Late 80s Look," but I think the icons freshen it up a bit. The logo was designed for use on a red truck. I generally don't advocate heavy outlined letters for main copy unless going on a dark background. Otherwise, the distance legibility becomes questionable.

For some reason, Adobe's *Trajan* has become extremely popular when using all caps for titling (the font has no lowercase letters). This Rich-Dombey-inspired logo also uses Adobe's *Keunstler Script* for subcopy, which is kerned out. Normally, that's a bad idea to kern a script out, but it works in this instance.

The main copy here is Bitstream's *Stencil*, and the subcopy is SignDNA's *Chicago Script*. The circular copy is *Square Slab*, also from Bitstream. This logo was designed to work on the client's red trucks.

A new font that I've been using a lot of is Adobe's *Caecilia*. The family has a nice variety of weights. It's a great face for body copy as well, in brochures and print mediums.

Here we mixed a number of Adobe typefaces. *NJ and Wedding.com* used *Mona Lisa Recut Solid*, and *Baker Signet* for the subcopy. The *W* is from Adobe Bickham Family, which is a beautiful collection—and is also underutilized as well.

We all know the retro look is so popular these days, so when I was asked to redesign this client's logo, I thought that might be the best approach. There aren't too many directions to go with a name like this. You can't push corporate—that would look silly. So we used Letterhead Fonts' *Bell Boy* for the main and subcopy. We carried this look through when we designed his Web site, brochures and stationery, too.

Here's another logo using *House Gothic* for all copy. Although the logo on an angle is somewhat old school, I'm making a concerted effort to bring it back into vogue!

personal for small business logos. (see *Bristol Consulting*) When designing for a small business, you usually have the opportunity to insert some fonts that are perhaps off the path a bit, and a little more creative.

Of course, the problem with trendy fonts is that while they look "cool" now, how might they look five years from now? Exercise caution or you may create a logo that looks dated in a few years. Certain fonts go in and out of vogue, and can almost have a date stamp on them that identifies a period in time from which it was cool to use it, but then got "oh so yesterday." The goal is to balance the client's needs with your own creative needs and design a logo that will have some staying power. On the other hand, if your logo design is too good, they'll never come back for a redesign either! •SC

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There's more on www.signcraft.com

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