

Overcoming the “I Don’t Need a Logo” syndrome

What do they really need—a sign or an image?

By Dan Antonelli

One of the changes I’ve seen in my business as I’ve transitioned from a sign company, to a full-service graphic design agency is that fewer people come to us and say they don’t need a logo. In fact, most come to us because that’s exactly what they need. It’s not as hard a sale to make, because they’re coming to us for that, and then, of course, want all the other things that follow: their Web site, brochures, stationery, etc.

But this wasn’t always the case. Don’t misunderstand me—we still get lots of folks that don’t want a logo, or don’t think they need one. But clearly, ten years ago, most business owners who came to us said they want us to letter their vehicle or make them a sign. At that point, we’d try to make a pitch on

creating a logo or redoing their “logo.”

So what’s changed over the years? How did it get easier? Certainly, we’ve gotten much better. That’s always a good thing. We have a large body of work. I’ve written two books on logo design, which never hurts to mention to potential clients.

We’re constantly working at improving our designs, and pushing the envelope a little further. Of course, you could be the greatest logo designer in the world, and still hear the same refrain of “I don’t need a logo; I just need my truck lettered.”

You know better. The problem is, they don’t. How do we get them to see the light?

First, let’s try to understand the mindset of the business owner who’s come to us. What are they really asking for from us? It’s not a sign or lettering. Those are merely mediums to communicate a message. What they’re really asking for is effective advertising to present an image of their business.

I’m going to repeat that because it really can’t be broken down any simpler: *they want you to present an image of their business.* The problem is – they just don’t know that yet.

Why don’t they know what they really need? There could be many potential reasons:

“No one else has ever told me I need a new logo...” And why might that be? Let’s examine who’s dealing with their logo while they are running their business.

Does the silk screener care about his logo? Usually not - he’s in the business of silk screening - not marketing. Does the printer care about the logo? It’s not his job either. His job is to print things for businesses. He’ll get paid to print that business card and stationery, regardless of how bad it might look. Does the Yellow Page ad salesman care about his logo? Nope—it’s not his concern either. He’s there to sell ad space.

So what makes you so special? No one else has told him his logo does not represent his



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business and communicate his message effectively. That could be very true. The problem is that no one has really cared nor had **his** business in mind. Maybe no one has because it's not their business to care. That's the difference.

If you want to instill trust in the client, you need to approach things from the perspective of recommending solutions that will help grow their business. If you simply give them what they ask for, then why should they go to you when Mr. Quickie Signs can do the same thing?

"My Business has been successful for years with this logo..." This logic has been used countless times by business owners as a justification for perpetuating their identity crisis. Problem is, they don't know they have an identity crisis. Why? Again, because no one's told them! Blessed are the clients who come to understand that their success may have been hampered by a poor identity and image. We always say, "Wow—it's very impressive the growth your business has taken with this current identity. Imagine how much more successful it could be with the proper identity and branding that we can offer you."

Of course, what we'd like to say is, "Wow, that's truly amazing because your image is horrible and I know I'd never hire a firm that presented itself like you do." Try to put a positive spin on it. Yes, clearly their logo may really, really need help. Tread carefully and watch your choice of words. Highlight the positive outcome down the road instead of trashing their current logo (which their nephew did, by the way.)

Many business owners, especially those in business for several years, may be looking to "take things to the next level." Take the landscapers, for example. They are trying to get higher-paying jobs—and raise the expectations of potential clients by maybe rethinking how they are presenting themselves.

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FROM MY CLOSET **TO YOURS!**





I always tell my landscape clients that after we're done with a full branding campaign, they should immediately raise their prices by 5 to 10%. Their image will give the perception that their prices are now justified.

Lack of marketing and advertising education

In dealing with most small business owners, it's interesting to see that many have little or no actual education or experience in marketing and advertising. Their whole depth of knowledge on the subject, in some instances, could be relegated to what little they know about Yellow Page advertising.

However, get a person who has a degree in marketing, and who's starting a business, and clearly he or she will know the value of a strong identity. But most landscapers, contractors, etc. do not have a business background that stresses the importance of branding and identity development.

So, it's up to you to educate them on the value of the logo. You have to show them the real benefits of having a polished presentation, and more importantly - how that ultimately translates into higher-paying jobs and increased sales. They may want to know how much this will cost—but the better way to look at it is rather how much money it will make for them. You're not there to "hurt" them, but rather to help them expand and grow their business.

Wow, that's a lot for just a logo! Just a logo? Would you say that Nike has "just" a logo? Let's consider what we're proposing to them. As Rich Dombey says, "We no longer turn truck doors into logos, but rather we turn

logos into truck doors."

Let's use \$1,000, a round figure for a typical small business logo. That's an extremely fair price, and one that sometimes is easier to sell at that price, than a lower one. "We sell a lot more logos now at \$1250, then we did when we used to charge only \$350", says Rich, whose logo design sales this year should top over \$50k.

Let's breakdown the \$1,000 logo design charge into a yearly expense for the business owner. We like to say a good logo should have a shelf life of approximately ten years. Divide that original \$1,000 over the course of ten years, and we're talking about a mere \$100 per year.

Can any business owner honestly believe that the image and identity of their business does not warrant such a miniscule expense? If they can't perceive the value of what you're proposing, start running.

Change your shop's focus, image and direction

I've written numerous articles about changing the perception of your shop. That's certainly one of the steps to take. Examine your own identity and image—including your Web site. (Still don't have one? That's not a good sign for potential clients.) How about your signage, vehicles and stationery? Everything that you're preaching to your clients about being important must be reflected in your own branding. How can they trust you to establish consistent branding when you can't even handle it in your business?

This isn't rocket science - but it's astounding how few sign people really understand this. Yet, these are the same people who complain that they "can't get those kind of numbers in my area." It's very simple - if you don't want to sell red Helvetica on white corrugated plastic, then don't sell red Helvetica on white corrugated plastic. •\$¢



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