

An effective logo is easy to grasp

If a logo needs explanation, readers miss the message

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Software:

Adobe Photoshop 7.0
Eye Candy 5: Impact for Photoshop
by Alien Skin Software
Macromedia FreeHand MX

Platform/OS:

Macintosh 1.8 GHz G5 Dual Processor
OS X v10.4.4
3GB RAM

As designers, we're often asked to create new logos based on a client's existing logo. Oftentimes, the logo has not previously been designed professionally, or if it was, has not functioned properly. For logos without obvious connotations, we're often given a very odd explanation of how the previous logo has come to fruition.

And sometimes, I have to scratch my head and say to the client, "Huh?" I mean, I think I'm a bright guy, but the explanations and obscure symbolism they sometimes describe makes me wonder how they ever might have thought *anyone* could decipher their logo. Even someone who is obsessed with them like me.

We then bring the conversation back to why it is indeed an ineffective brand and identity. I explain the need to redo the logo because it fails to meet the marketing objectives for which they are hiring me. Say we're hired to design a Web site for a beautiful, high-end company. They give us a logo that clearly is not beautiful and high-end. We have to explain that it will be difficult to achieve

their goals with the site because their current logo doesn't communicate their stated goals.

So we lay it on the line: Get a new brand. Start fresh moving forward, and allow us to lay the foundation for a better identity for the business—or we're probably not going to be able to assist you. More than likely they haven't had a professional tell them anything about their logo. A few articles ago, [*Overcoming the "I Don't Need a Logo" syndrome*, in the November/December 2005 issue of *SignCraft*] we explored why no one's told them they need a new logo.

So our mission becomes how do we design an obvious, simple-to-decipher logo and brand for this company—one that is recognizable and communicates their core message without being common, and/or boring. Sounds simple enough, right?

I think as a firm, we've grown more astute in this approach. Perhaps it's simply because we're getting larger clients. We're also working with several illustrators, which allows us to offer more options.

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Lightstream Electric The client gave us a lot of latitude here, only telling us that he didn't want to look like every other electrical contractor. Jeff came up with the graphic, and I worked on the typography, opting for colors that are a little more unique, and not often used together. We also printed their four-color stationery and business cards. Their vehicles were to be lettered with the logo as well, so legibility remained an important consideration.



LightStream Electric

LEADERS IN RESIDENTIAL ELECTRICAL SERVICE



RIVERVIEW POOLS

— IN-GROUND POOL EXPERTS —

Riverview Pools This simple graphic is easy to recognize. I think it represents the business type well. Just by seeing the icon you know it has something to do with water. We also added a tagline to the name to further clarify the main copy. Obvious color choices here, but, what other colors work for a pool company? Jeff helped with the design of the logo and the icon.



PENSACOLA TRACTOR & EQUIPMENT

Pensacola Tractor The client has a retail store, and his outdoor signage needed to be read and understood quickly. Fresh, modern typography helps make an obvious, but appropriate graphic work better. Colors represent their main brand, New Holland. My illustrator Will simply drew this tractor based on an actual tractor from the New Holland Web site.



QLA

QUALITY LAB ACCESSORIES

QLA This company sells dissolution products, which are what pharmaceutical companies use to see how long pills take to dissolve. So their primary products are these vessels that hold the pills and various dissolving solutions. Will drew the vessel, and I worked the typography, customizing the Q and the A. The circles (to the left of the vessel) have roots in the client's former logo, which originally represented the five partners of the firm. In this instance, we were able to keep the origins intact, but it can now graphically represent pills dissolving.



In Home CONSTRUCTION

BUILDING QUALITY, INNOVATION AND STYLE

In Home Construction Here's a simplistic graphic with more sophisticated colors in the quadrant. This communicates a more refined image for this California-based general contractor. I don't think you could express "in-home" more simply. Our resident illustrator, Will, developed the icon and I worked the typography.



Earthscapes This client wanted us to design a simple, yet corporate identity. Jeff Devey Jr. developed the lowercase *e* icon, and I worked the typography. We then used the *e* as a ghost on their stationery and truck lettering. Jeff Chudoff at Arizona Designs [www.arizonadesignsinc.com] executed the truck lettering.



Montclair Realty
THE NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERTS

Montclair Realty This is one of my favorite recent logos. The style of the home is indicative of Montclair, New Jersey where the business is located. The two bright colors were chosen for their uniqueness among the client's competitors. The use of color is so critical when establishing a brand for your client.



Ridgewood Closets This is an obvious graphic, with roots from the client's existing logo. Colors represent wood tones used in the closet. Creative use of typography creates more of a brand image. I didn't like the *W* in this font (Mostra) so I used two *V*s and kerned them to create the new *W*. One important advertising medium for the client is his vehicles. This will be bold and distinctive.

Let's look at a few recent logos and see if we've been successful in our mission. I'd also like to thank my illustrators Will Harmuth and Jeff Devey, Jr. who assisted with the artwork in some of these logos. •SC



Dan Antonelli owns Graphic D-Signs, Inc. in Washington, New Jersey. He is the author of *Logo Design for Small Business* and *Logo Design for Small Business 2*. His Web site, www.signshopmarketing.com caters to the marketing needs of sign shops. He can be reached at dan@graphicd-signs.com.