Creating a Logo

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What is a Logo?

A logo is a graphic design that customers use to quickly identify your products and that you use to convey some of the values of your products or business. It represents your brand, but is not a brand by itself.

Logos can be simple or complex. Sometimes a logo is only the company name using a particular style of font or color lettering. Examples would be Coca-Cola or Xerox. Sometimes a graphic design becomes the major company logo, as in the Mercedes circle and star or the apple with a bite missing for Apple Inc. The Cornell University logo consists of an emblem and the Cornell name in particular font style.

I Need a Logo: Now What?

» **Logo Examples**

Unless you are skilled as a graphic artist, I recommend that you work with someone who has experience in designing logos. The information in this bulletin is to give you some background for interacting with the designer.

It can be difficult, in the beginning, to decide what you need to represent in your brand. For starters, what will your business name be? What font should the name be? Perhaps you are wondering if color would add much, and if so, what color should you use? Here, we will describe to you some of the basics in designing *a logo*.

Your logo should be able to be used in many ways and not designed with one use in mind. For example, could your logo be placed in a black and white newspaper ad? Would it be functional as a letterhead on paper? This does not mean that your logo must fit all contexts, but instead you should decide what exactly it is that *you would like to do* or *might need to be able to do* with your logo.

Goal

The goal is to create a logo that is appropriate for the product, uniquely recognizable, memorable, and flexible in various contexts.

You are creating a logo that conveys everything that you want your brand to represent in the consumer's mind. It is part of positioning your brand in the consumer's mind and helping them to remember your business and its products.

Parts of a Logo

1) Logotype – This usually is the name of your company or brand shown in a font (letter) style. The font style will be used consistently whenever the company name appears on a label, in an ad, or on letterhead. Some logos use only the company name.

2) Icon – This is a graphic design of some sort. Maple leaves, sugar house, and forest scenes are common maple logos. Whatever you decide your icon is, the most important thing to keep in mind is it is your own and should not closely resemble other similar products' logo. It should be unique and distinctive. Distinctive icons, such as the Nike "schoosh" can represent a brand with no words at all.

3) Slogan – This is usually your pitch and can be optional. What makes your product special? What did you decide you wanted the consumer to associate with your brand? Quality? Friendly service? Organic? Location? This would be the brief statement you have designed to encompass these aspects of your product – for example, "Quality so great you'll just *KNOW* it comes from the Adirondacks." Even if you have a slogan, it is not always necessary to include it.

Considerations

Now you have decided on a name for your brand and understand the components of a good logo, but now what? Do you simply use that name, surround it with some graphic, slap on a slogan and call it a logo? NO. There are various elements of good design that you should consider in designing your logo.

Font, color, size, and placement, for example, are all important aspects of a logo that contribute to the appropriateness of the logo. Some colors, for example, may already be positioned in the consumers' minds. Yellow and red (combined), for example, may remind consumers of the fast-food chain McDonalds, and thus these colors may bring up associations in the consumer's mind of a certain type of food, speedy service, or a corporate business. As you can see, considerations such as these are important in designing your logo.

Font for Logotype

It is important that the font for the name is appropriate and fits nicely with the icon you design to represent your brand. The logotype should be distinctive and appropriate for the

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Goal

What Goes Into a Logo?

Font Considerations
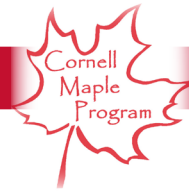
products, but should not distract from the icon and the product itself. The font should be clear and easily readable.

As mentioned earlier, it is important that the font is flexible and can be used in a variety of media. This means it should easily lend itself to being placed on a product, in a newspaper ad, on an internet website, or perhaps even on a T-shirt or some other marketable product that you may develop in the future. Thus the font itself, its size, color, and placement should be quite flexible. If you are printing your own labels from a computer, you will have a more limited font selection than will a commercial printer.

The font should correspond to how you and your consumers view your company and its products. Informal? Luxurious? Crisp and clean? However you have decided you would like your brand to be viewed, your font should reflect this – a personality of sorts. Perhaps caps should be used or all lowercase letters or a mixture. Maybe italics or bold type fits your brand. In general, simple, clean fonts will work better for maple products. For example: **Maple**, Maple, **MAPLE**. Delicate fonts with flourishes or dramatic style, for example *Maple*, Maple, **Maple**, may be less representative of a traditional food product.

Cornell University settled on Palatino as the font style to be used on letterhead, signs, and diplomas. Palatino was chosen for its classical, conservative, dignified characteristics.

Ultimately what is important in choosing a font for the logotype is that it works over *time*. This requires some foresight to ensure that the logotype will not become outdated by changes in what your customers prefer.

Color Considerations

Color in Logo
Both the logotype and the icon may incorporate color. But how much color should you incorporate? And what colors are appropriate? Forest green and brown relate well to the woods and to the maple product, but can seem subdued and dull and won't stand out on the shelf. Bright colors, especially reds and yellows attract attention. Colors can affect behavior. Reds and yellows in a restaurant cause people to be in a happier mood and they eat more and faster. Colors used in a certain ratio can become part of the signature of the business. McDonalds uses more red than yellow, Kodak and DHL use more yellow than red. The UPS brown with yellow lettering is closely integrated into the company image because this color combination is not so common. This allows UPS to ask in its advertising: "What can brown do for you?"

Cornell red, as in Big Red, is a particular shade of red on the Pantone color system. This differentiates Cornell red from Ferrari red and Harvard crimson. It is the red we have to use with the Cornell logo and what we chose to link these bulletins with the institution.

From warm colors to bold colors to pastel colors and tinted colors – the range of color choices is essentially endless, and it is up to you to choose a color that fits well with what you are trying to convey. Again, like font, color choices should be appropriate not just for *that time* (a currently popular color fad), but instead *over time*. These are all aspects of color that should be taken into consideration, but use of color is a complex topic about which you should get advice from your designer.

Icon or Graphic

Size of Entire Logo

The size of your entire logo should be flexible. This means that your logo should adapt well to being amplified and displayed on a larger scale or to being shrunk down to fit appropriately into an advertisement or business card. By making your logo flexible, this allows you the opportunity to expand what you do with your brand and its placement in the marketplace.

Placement of Logotype and Icon

The size of the logotype and the icon (and optionally a slogan as well) should be proportional to one another in perceived importance. For example, you should think carefully before making the logotype too large compared to the icon. This does not mean that the icon must be the same relative size as the logotype or vice versa. Instead, the sizes can vary depending upon what you would like to emphasize and be memorable to the customer. It takes effort to get customers to link an icon with your company. In the beginning and maybe for the long run it is best to emphasize your company name.

Perhaps the words in your logotype are more prominent and recognizable than the icon you have created to accompany it. It is also possible that the icon may be what should be emphasized, in which case it may be in your best interest to downplay the logotype size and prominence. Whatever you choose, it is simply important that some thought is put into considering the various sizes of various elements in your logo design.

Review

A Review:

So just to review, here is a list of some key things to keep in mind when designing your logo:
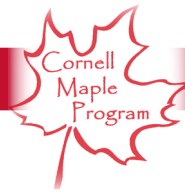
1) Unique

2) Appropriate
- Font
- Color
- Size
- Placement / Arrangement

3) Effective
- Various parts of the logo can work alone
- Memorable

4) Flexible
- In context
- In size
- In color (black & white, partial color, etc.)

» Logo Examples

» Example: Cornell University

For many years Cornell University used as its logo a shield along with Cornell University. The font style and a particular color of red were required. (show as a graphic) A style manual was created to illustrate all the approved uses of the logo. Then a company was hired to create a new logo. The shield was replaced with a red box with "Cornell" inside it. This lasted only a few years because many businesses from JC Penny to the Copenhagen Airport also adopted a box with the company name. The new Cornell logo was not distinctive and was related to non-university businesses. It was replaced with a slightly modified version of the earlier logo.

» Example: Cornell Pure Maple Syrup

Lew Staats created the first design used on containers for syrup produced at the Uihlein and Arnot Forests. It shows researchers standing at a sap tank and at trees with some other graphics showing research tools and a data graph. Cornell University was in fine print. All of these designs and graphics had little relevance to our major customers, who were visitors to campus. We redesigned our container label using a maple leaf outline to represent the product and Cornell's clock tower as an icon of the university with the university name displayed more prominently. Our main customers like the change.