



POINT OF VISION

**Frequently Asked Questions
about Logo Design**

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Q. What are the right reasons to redesign a logo?

The best reason to redesign a logo is to express more clearly a company's brand personality.

Many new companies, particularly in the middle market, create an arbitrary design for their first logo – something that looks cool. That's because they have yet to develop a framework for their brand. Over time, as a company hones its position and promise, and as it defines its voice, appearance and message, a brand personality emerges. And when that happens, it's time to take a fresh look at the corporate identity to make sure it expresses the essence of this personality.

A change in market focus is another "right reason" to revisit the logo. Suppose a company has become an international player. It must take care to ensure that its logo, or corporate signature, "reads" well in other cultures, and that it can be properly protected through trademark laws.

A third reason for tackling logo redesign is to redress any technical or reproduction problems that the current mark presents. That logo may have looked good when first presented in concept. Over time, however, it has not reproduced well when reduced to a small size or when presented in electronic media.

Finally, a company may simply decide that the existing logo appears stylistically out of date. Just as people grow and evolve, corporate aesthetics become more sophisticated over time. A software company may have started with five graduate students working out of a garage. But when that same company buys three large competitors

and becomes a global entity, it may well need a more sophisticated mark that portrays the firm as an established, influential market player.

Q. What are some bad reasons to redesign a logo?

We're always cautious when companies approach us to change their logo simply because they don't like it. Maybe they don't like the logo's colors, or they think it's boring or "not cool enough." Perhaps they've noticed that their competitors are following a particular design trend, and they don't want to look out-of-sync with the market. During the dot-com explosion, for example, many companies felt compelled to present themselves with elliptical orbits or swooshes, or starbursts and high-tech fonts – just to show they were keeping up with the times.

One other "wrong reason" for a logo redesign is the belief that a change in identity will somehow effect a change in corporate culture or operations. No logo is that good.

Q. What are the potential pitfalls of redesigning a logo?

If your current logo is well known in the marketplace, you might suffer loss of awareness or brand confusion by changing your mark. However, a long-term implementation plan can help reduce this risk.

Many companies underestimate the costs of implementing a new identity. A new logo and identity system usually means that every brochure, Web page, business card, directional sign, PowerPoint presentation, golf shirt, trade show booth and other materials must be updated in a short time period. In addition to reproducing these materials, a company also must invest in internal marketing and education to build an understanding of the new system – and to ensure that departments use it correctly.

The greatest pitfall, however, is not so much a pitfall as a missed opportunity. Creating a new corporate identity provides the perfect chance for a company to build a shared understanding of what the company stands for. It can serve as a point in history in which everyone, at every level, begins working in the same direction for the

same goal. The corporate promise, or brand, can be fully defined and communicated to every employee, with a clear rationale and guidelines for presenting the brand.

Without this brand framework, the new logo will be a meaningless symbol, because it will have no foundation in understanding.

Q. Are there ways my company can make our existing logo more effective?

Absolutely, and focusing on repackaging your current logo more effectively may be smarter than redesigning it.

At the very least, you must educate your employees about how to use the logo properly. Identity guidelines are a good start, although such documents are often written for marketing professionals. Consider empowering managers and staff with documents written for them specifically. If you take the time to explain how the consistent use of a logo has a direct, positive impact on the company itself, the return on investment will be a more consistent presentation of the company's brand – and fewer citations by the “logo police!”

A brand presentation guide may also help. This type of document paints a broad picture of how a company wants to look and sound. Ideally, it should also provide the rationale behind the guidelines. For example, a company that wants to look and sound warm and empathetic might choose a color palette of earthy colors. The brand presentation guide would display the color palette and explain why it was chosen.

Either way, success will hinge on employees understanding the value of consistency. If people don't recognize the benefits of a clear identity, they're likely to feel oppressed by the rules and, perhaps, ignore them. Companies must help employees understand that consistency strengthens the brand. And a stronger brand ultimately leads to greater success for the organization.

Q. How do I find someone to help redesign my logo?

First and foremost, look for a qualified firm with an extensive identity design portfolio. Ask around. It helps to identify effective corporate logos and find out who created them. You also can ask your company's advertising agency, PR firm or communications firm for a recommendation.

Be wary of full-service agencies that offer to do the work themselves. Many don't have in-house identity designers, and they outsource the work to a group of freelancers or a design firm they like. This can create two problems:

1) You don't have a chance to evaluate the designers who actually do the work.

2) In many cases, the full-service agency becomes a middleman between you and the designers. This game of "pass it on" can cause serious communication breakdowns and result in logos that don't express your company's brand personality.

An advertising or communications agency that thoroughly understands your company's brand may be able to design an excellent identity. But it's important to inquire as to who will actually be creating the logo. If the project is to be outsourced, investigate the previous work of the designers. And if you approve of the agency's choice, insist on meeting directly with the designers throughout the project.

Q. What kind of credentials should the design firm have?

The design firm you choose should specialize in corporate identity, communications and brand development. They should show genuine interest in learning about the company's corporate culture, market and business goals.

Design projects can be a great adventure or a complete nightmare, depending on the personality of the design partner. Find a firm that is flexible and fun – one that energizes the creativity of everyone involved in the projects.

Q. What are the most important steps to follow in a logo redesign?

You can ensure a smooth and effective redesign by following these six recommendations:

- 1) Establish a budget and share it with the design professionals who are being considered for the work. And ask each firm to fully demonstrate how it will approach your project, given the budget allocated. By disclosing your budget, you give the design firm useful parameters. And knowing your budget never precludes them from presenting a competitive estimate to win your business.
- 2) Clearly outline the working relationship with the design team. Get the details on workflow and deadlines. Know what can be expected from them, what they need from you, and when they need it.
- 3) Determine who will make the decisions. It can be an individual or a small advisory board of no more than five people. Avoid “design by committee,” which tends to result in inoffensive but uninspired design.
- 4) Get waist deep in your corporate brand. Constantly measure potential designs against the personality of your brand. Having a brand framework is the best insurance for getting a logo that works as a true company signature.
- 5) Be open to new possibilities. Suggest wild ideas, but consider the practical limitations offered by the design team. Not all great ideas are workable.
- 6) Develop a strategic plan for implementing the new logo. Prepare for reprinting or redesigning all corporate materials to carry the new mark. Create a program that educates employees about the new identity, get them excited about the change, and show them the importance of using it properly.

Q. How long does it take to redesign an identity?

Designing a logo usually takes six to 12 weeks, depending on the complexity of the assignment and the size of the design firm. Getting a logo trademarked can take two years or more.

Q. How much does it cost?

The cost will vary depending on the experience of the design firm and the complexity of the job. Fees typically range from \$5,000 to \$150,000.