LOGO DESIGNING *Hints & Tips*

Extracted from
TIME FOR A SIGN
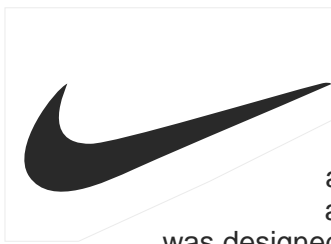By: M. P. Esmail
(MD) Sign Industries Ltd.

A logo is a symbolic graphic mark commonly used to represent a business entity, a commercial enterprise, a corporation or any organisation or association, or a group or even an individual for a particular project or for an instant promotion that requires public recognition. A logo can be a purely graphic image or simply company initials or products or a composition of all these elements. A logo without alphabetical text comprising only a simple graphic symbol in minimal colours can be more effective than a logotype with text, since symbols are more of a universal language and always easier to remember and interpret. Symbols are widely used in traffic and safety signs without text for the same reason of universal readership and recognition.

A powerful logo instantaneously displays the strength of the company and also unites all of its branches and associated companies under one symbol. The projected image of the logo is intended to reach the targeted consumers of its products and services, hence the simpler the logo, the easier it will be for the consumer to remember. The psychological impact of a brand-built logo is so powerful that consumers surrender their absolute confidence to the brand, and the logo plays a key role in this relationship. For example, just the sight of a McDonalds 'Big M' can make a child feel hungry. The importance of a good logo therefore supersedes all other advertorial considerations, exceeding even that of its corporate building and its fleet and in general their entire setup. This is because the structure and its investment will be stationery and hardly noticeable, but its logo will reach out far and wide to the consumers and the supplier will be recognised by the logo, not by the building or what it contains therein.

Therefore the job of logo designing must be done by professionals and not by amateurs who are not trained in the field of brand identity, concept, target focus and impact of colours, shape and symbol on consumer psychology and emotion, reaction and behaviour of purchasing habbits. The absence of such basic knowledge can be detrimental. I don't have anything against amateurs as many professional were amateurs in their early time, and amateurs can also come up with a hit as the famous 'NIKE' swoosh' logo was designed by a college student Carolyn Davidson in 1971 while creations by professionals are not always a hit.

Logo designing can be interesting and a challenging pursuit. The logo should be unique, look professional and with a longer life span avoiding need of redesigning in near future as many logos do change with time. Most of the designers in Tanzania began working in design and graphics field at an early age simply as artists and more as a hobby or personal interest which later on gradually turned into profession. However, many such designers have not attended any professional training specifically in the area of logo designing and think that their ability to use some graphic package is sufficient. In my observation, many of our local logo designers get too excited while creating their designs and tend to overdo it and most of them have some common wrong habits and addiction when creating a logo making the end result as gross and at times even awful. I have outlined a few of such wrong practice and misconceptions.

Once a designer **hands over his 'logo' design to his client,** it will be out of his hand but the designer should know that his work will later on **go through many hands** and will be reproduced through many different methods and process for years to come. Therefore, it is extremely important for designers to be aware of post production process and consider all facts such as consistency in output by various methods, application, cost implication, impact, life span, resizing factors, simplicity and visual clarity of the image whether reduced or enlarged. The rule of the thumb here is "the simpler, the better". Use minimum colours and minimum elements. Also make sure that logo is created in vector format and in monochrome, then the colours should be added as required.

Why some logos are weak and do not represent well.
One common reason behind this scenario is that some business owners owning a computer with hands on some basic graphic package or even a word processing software wants to do the logo design by

them selves in order to save money or give the job to a young relative who may have been titled as very clever, smart and very artistic natured who then does the job as a favour, or the task given to non competent people or even to their stationery printer to come up with a logo. A teenager can come up with a brilliant logo but it does not mean the same will work for the client to promote his products. The dilemma is that many laptop owners who make their living as a freelance graphic designers claim to have the expertise to produce professional quality logos. They set their charge based on the customer and not on their labour, time and scope of work and with so many designers around, how do you judge your designers skill when you hardly know anything about graphic designing and brand identity yourself?

The hints and tips below will guide you to spot the weakness of a design and that of your designer and corrective measures to refine and sharpen the final image.

Primary problem
The primary problem can be the customer and not necessarily the designer.
1) Uncritical: The customer is contended and uncritical with whatever is presented to them by their designer. The client should be focused, demanding and fussy until they are completely satisfied.

2) A big appetite: Another problem that lies with the client is their own demand and inclination to include more elements and show more products in a logo naively thinking it will create a better impact as being self explanatory of the products and services offered and override the designers professional opinion.

3) Fire brigade operation: This is a common situation where the designer is not given enough time to come up with unique and creative image as very often the amount of time required to create exclusive design is grossly underestimated. The designer is therefore made to work like a fireman responding to an emergency call and therefore the job is quickly wrapped up by some generic designs decorated with some clipart.
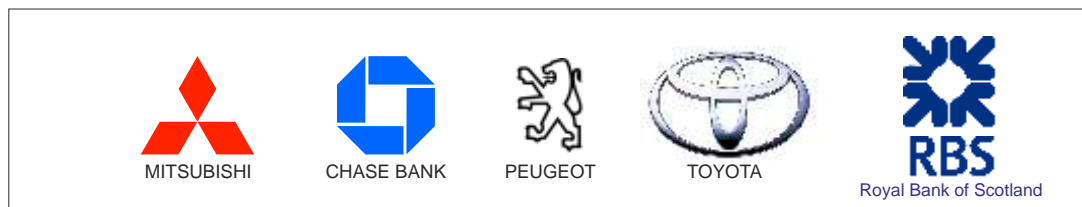
Secondary problems
1) Misconception
Using products as base of the logo.
Products, company name, service or initials and at times even a tag line can be used as logo, but the belief that use of product or name written as text is mandatory and logo will be incomplete without such products is not correct. On the contrary, logo without products tend to be more effective.
Non product elements can also be used as logo or part of logo.

Examples:

| MITSUBISHI | CHASE BANK | PEUGEOT | TOYOTA | RBS Royal Bank of Scotland |

2) Eternity
It is a general belief by many that once logo is registered, it can never be changed. This is not true. Many international companies have changed their logo with time, growth of business and market response. Sometime it is necessary to modify or change the logo to announce change in management structure or amalgamation with other corporation or some major change. It should however be borne in mind that since a logo has been in market place and already recognized by consumers, it will be counterproductive to change it frequently. Brand building will then again require new investment and new budget.

Example: Pepsicola *(changed logo 11 times todate)*,

Microsoft & Google have all Changed Logo

3) Rainbow spectrum
Wrong belief that more colours will add life to logo.
This type of logos may look colourful and appropriate for rare applications only, but reproduction in latter time will be difficult and expensive, more over it is not at all adaptive for a corporate image except in rare situation.

Many companies whose logos were initially colourful later on decided to cut down on colours.
Example - APPLE Computers

FIRST LOGO   1976   1998   2001   2003 & CURRENT
1976

4) Hitches
Logos tossed with fancy fonts may look typical amateurish and can be an eyesore which does not give much mileage. On the contrary, this practice must be avoided.

5) Clutter
Incorporating company name, symbol, products and tag line in one logo.
If at all names or initials are used, then it should dominate the logo and products should hence be avoided or minimized or a mutual balance be sought. Don't add all branding elements in one single logo. A logo is supposed to simply make your company memorable,

don't attempt to fit every aspect of a business into one small logo.
Sometimes only company name in custom fonts alone can be used as a logo
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6) Story board
The designer or client wants to show wide range of product line or services all compressed in one tiny logo. Its like a family tree from fore fathers to great grand children in a thumbnail. This happens when emotions overtake profession and one gets carried away to show more and more in less and less resulting in loss of focus in the final image.

7) Short-cut
A common tendency in some designers who are exhausted of unique and original ideas jump for a safe play and grabs the trend of throwing in a 'swoosh' or a chamfer or a bevel cut or worse a glow effect. **Swoosh** are becoming too common and so be unique and creative rather than picking up remnants of other designers. Ignore common trends and be original, its the best policy.

8) Imposition
a) Fonts - Some designers have the ego of imposing their taste over clients requirements. Don't be itchy of using this cool new font that you just found without considering whether it is truly appropriate for the clients image and his product line and services. A flashy font used for a club and liked by client cannot be used for a bank which is normally more conservative. Avoid being sentimental in professional practice.

b) Colour - It would be utterly wrong to pick on a colour which is your favourite or superstitiously your lucky colour. Always focus on client's need. Amateur or professional, one has to put their heart in to the job and be objective with the focus to promote the client, and designers personal taste should not contaminate with professional requirement.

c) Hallmarks - Completely avoid creating logos with a distinctive touch of peculiarity with the intention to be recognized as your work just by the look of it. This habit will eventually result your logos to be monotonous and the vibrancy will be drained out of it.

9) Tag Lines and attribute lines.
Combining 'tag line' as part of the logo.
Tag line should be independent and not to be incorporated as part of any logo.
This practice should be avoided unless absolutely necessary or when brand building has been done at a much wider spectrum to an international level. Tag line should be such that it should not leave any lose ends nor become obsolete with time.

Example: CRDB bank uses a tag line, *''The Bank that listens''*, and it ends there. But what after listening? Does it deliver?

AVIS rent a car uses the tag line, *''We try harder''*.
For the last 30 years I see the same statement of '<u>we try harder</u>', still trying ? When will they accomplish

Partnership
And then there are tag lines that makes me feel sick when they say as 'they are our partners', like a Pharmacy or hospital would say, '*your partners in good health* or a phone company to say, *''your partner in communication*, henceforth a bank to say '*our partner in finance'* and so forth.
Are they going to share their profit with us ? Do they even know us ? These tag lines irks me.

10) Tints & Gradients
Use of gradient or fading colors in a logo.
This may look great on a computer screen but will have a lot of weakness in production process.
The output of such logo for outdoor purpose can only be done by digital printing which has limited outdoor life whilst screen print process may offer a longer life but very expensive to produce one or few pieces. Avoid using gradient colours and halftone image.
28) Watermark and phantom image embedded in the logo.
This practice should be avoided completely. There is no way consistency will be maintained in future reproduction of the same logo.
Example: TCRA Logo

Gradient colours. Glow. Watermark. Unique rare fonts. ascender, shadow Tag line....all in 1 logo

11) Deckle edge
Avoid rough edge to simulate hand torn effects. Make your logo with straight line edge or smooth radius curves and clean lines of unwrinkled flow. Any image with deckle edges will be extremely difficult and expensive to recreate in 3D effects when required in any future application especially if it will be internally illuminated output and small cut out image.

12) Puncture
Logos with effect of perforation marks or a pierced area will also create problem in reproduction in future applications. Avoid this practice.

13) Depression
Avoid effects of depression or punch mark in part of a section. This effect will be difficult to reproduce with same intensity as the original.

14) Fonts
The reproduction of any graphic image created with rare or artistic fonts can become a nightmare for future production as the font will be unknown to the ad. agency or to the printer and fonts will either be substituted by default following an error prompt or will have to be

retraced which may then lose sharp edge or curves hence the retraced font will not be an exact replica of the original font. Use commonly available fonts and attach separate font file in a separate folder when sending to a service bureau. If custom fonts are used, modified or created, then they must be converted to curves or outlines. As an additional courtesy, include name of the font somewhere for the convenience of future users. As much as possible, use San Serif fonts and not fonts from the Serif family as the little edge corners becomes difficult to recreate in most reproduction methods.

Serif Fonts   **San Serif Fonts**

AHM   AHM

15) Extravagant
Absurd and excessive usage of Pantone colours or use of unique and rare colours. Designers should be aware that the logo will be reproduced multiple times in future by different process and exact colour may not be available by all process without compromising or incurring a lot of expense.

16) 3D Extrusions
Designers who are ecstatic with their own ability in graphics relentlessly extrude images to create 3D and embossed effect where not necessary.
Avoid 3D fantasy unless absolutely required.

17) Proportion
Incorrect proportion used between main image and other components.
Since the proportions are fixed between image or mark and name, one element may appear very inappropriately smaller compared to the other. This situation will become more apparent when logo is enlarged or reduced for a different application
Example: TPA

18) Ascenders and descenders
Unusually long ascenders and descenders projecting upwards or downwards respectively will create problem if the logo will be created as a cutout or in 3D to be hoisted as a sign on a rooftop or a hoarding (bill board) as it will require additional reinforcement and the bracing support will be visible creating an eyesore.
Example: old vodacom

19) Perceptibility
All elements whether image, mark and especially text should be such that legibility and sharpness can be maintained when it is shrunk to smaller size.
The logo may have to be reduced to a very small size to fit on a button, a pen or key-chain an other promotional items as a free give away. The logo should remain equally sharp and legible. Therefore text character will create a problem unless it is only initials or just a mark. Avoid logotype with long names and other decorative effects like ribbon curls and grid effect.

20) Equation
Incorrect geometry used in the logo proportion that distracts appeal and limits custom size production. Often not symmetrical in mirror offset image.

21) Internet use
a) Consideration should be given on final file size of logo for internet use in uploading and downloading time.
b) Consideration should be given for quality if logo will be downsized, resample or inflated.
c) Consideration should be given on pixelation of image if logo will be enlarged.
Solution: Always create logo in vector format to avoid such problem.

22) Software
Corel Draw and Adobe illustrator are the most common vector based programs. Adobe photoshop and Corel Photopaint are raster based program and therefore not ideal for creating logo. Microsoft Word, Pagemaker and other word processing programs should be avoided completely when creating primary image as a logo.

23) Conversion
For Web-based application, convert logo to PNG and not JPG because JPG will not have a transparent back ground.

24) Copy cats
Nasty habit of some designers to copy and modify logo of other designers or corporation or downloading from internet and then claim credit as their own work.
This is not only unethical but also illegal. Sooner or later this act will be busted resulting to unwanted embarrassment and lawsuits.

25) Provision
Different output methods must be taken into consideration when designing a logo.
Keep in mind that the logo will be reproduced by many and in any or many method including cutout, channel lettering, laser cut, CNC engraving or routed, waterjet cut, sand blasted and Glass frosted, thermoformed, press moulded, etched, printed by multiple methods such as offset, digital, pad or screen printing, image sublimation, TV advertisement, rubberstamp or even stitched by embroidery on garments and provision must be made for such post productions process at the initial stage. A good designer will consider all these facts and a good logo is the one which can survive in all of these production process without compromise or much difficulty.
Example: Mitsubishi. Chase. TATA. SONY. NIKE

provision should also be made if logo will be printed on a non contrasting or a dark solid background or in black and white, monochrome or grayscale output as done in some newspaper. This requirement will become inevitable and so its importance need not be over emphasized.

26) Ignorance
Many amateur designers are ignorant of terminologies and consider all corporate trade image as 'logo'. They hardly know the difference between a mark, logo, mascot, monogram, emblem, crest, coat of arms, ideogram, symbol, icon, pictogram, trademark and other branding and marketing elements. Designers must know their meaning and its appropriate applications. Some examples are shown here.

MARK	LOGO	SYMBOL	MASCOT	CREST	TRADE MARK ©	COAT OF ARMS
TOYOTA	TOYOTA	SWASTIKA	AUTOZONE	MANCHESTER UNITED	NBL	TANZANIA GOVERNMENT

		EMBLEM	ICON	MONOGRAM	PICTOGRAMS
SIGN INDUSTRIES	SIGN INDUSTRIES		TWITTER	Natasha Balabanova *Stylist*	

Ignorant of difference between Pantone®, Spot colours, CMYK, RGB, RAL and other coloring properties. Our local Designers and clients hardly know anything beyond Pantone colour system and demand all colours to match Pantone® system regardless of application, process and substrate on which the image is to be printed. The chart below can be used as a quick guide for colour applications.

OUTPUT Methods	Colortype
Offset Printing	Pantone (PMS), & others
Digital / Desktop	CMYK
Cine, Monitor, TV & Video	RGB
Powder coating & Paint	RAL

Spot colour can also be used in offset and digital printing of advanced models.

The colour shade is bound to differ when printed on different substrates using different methods or with change of printing ink. Same result cannot be achieved between water based, pigmented, solvent, eco solvent and latex inks. Therefore be prepared to see some variation of colour in your logo which will be sensitive to the ink or material on which it is printed. The flexibility to compromise will solve disappointment. Normally Panton colour chart has a suffix C or U to indicate effect on **c**oated or **u**ncoated stock. On a digital printer, once the output colour is approved on a particular substrate, the printing and colour parameters should then be saved as a 'profile' for future production to achieve the same shade every time printing is done on same substrate and same resolution.

Ignorant on difference between raster and vector image and no knowledge of vectorizing, digitizing and bitmap tracing. *(see the section 'software' for further information)*

Nasty habit of flattening the image depriving post production personnel in accessing layers if any re-scaling or modification is then required. But if logo is sent to the client as a proof or in a mock up before receipts of payment, then it should be flattened to safeguard designers interest and protection intellectual property. Designers identity as a scuttle image can also be stamped over as a semi transparent mark.

27) Cocktail
Mixing of corporate, fantasy and funky characters in one logo.
Young artists who get too excited have tendency of such mixup and it should be avoided. Create logo as per the clients company profile and not your own whims.

With these details, I hope it has helped both, the customer and designers to be able to comprehend the very basics in Logo designing and I wish all the best in their efforts.

Most sincerely

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comments to
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