

Shapes That Tell Stories

Enterprise Story

When someone hears the words, ‘Apple’ or ‘Target’ they probably imagine in their minds a flat white apple with a small piece missing and a small red circle surrounded by a larger red circle. A logo is often most likely the first thing a person interacts with of a company or group. They have an enormous job which is to represent something much bigger than themselves.



“Logos aren’t just a symbol, it is an identity. A face to the name,” says Joey Dierdorf, a junior Political Science and Government and Studio Art double major at Wabash College.

Jacob Manternach, a Graphic Design major at the University of Northern Iowa believes that a logo is, “For visual identity. If you have a logo that someone can say your company by briefly looking at your logo and know all about your company, then you have a good logo.”

According to [Inc.com](#), strong logos must translate well across different mediums because they will be used in various ways. Every aspect such as a business card, name placard or post card should reflect the identity of a brand. It all starts with the logo being the visual base of a brand’s look and feel.



“I think that a logo is the topping on the cake for building a brand,” says Justin St. Louis, a freshman Political Science and Government major at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. “When you see ‘Subway’ you think ‘Eat Fresh,’ or ‘Walmart’ you think ‘Everyday low prices.’ Building a brand and identity is very complex, but the way you simplify that in a really simple and relatable way is by creating a logo that conveys that.”

Logos are the chief visual component of a company's overall brand identity, states [Chron](#). The logo appears on stationery, websites, business cards and advertising. For that reason, a well-designed logo can contribute to business success, while a substandard logo can imply amateurishness and turn off potential customers. However, a logo should cohere well with other aspects of a company's visual presentation: No logo, however well designed, can look good when surrounded by contradictory graphical elements or inconsistent fonts.

"A good logo is simple, sharp, and meaningful — the colors, fonts, and images/shapes should all be geared towards communicating the mission and purpose of that particular brand," according to St. Louis.



[Logo Design Love](#) notes that one design tip is to keep logos simple in nature. Keeping the design simple allows for flexibility in size. Ideally, your design should work at a minimum of around one inch without loss of detail. Take for example, the logos of large businesses such as Mitsubishi, Samsung, FedEx and Facebook. All of their logos are very simple in design, while much thought was put into them, they are more memorable and recognizable because of their simple design.

Many logos and brand identities can also make people feel a certain way. It was made someone feel happy or confident in a product that company is selling. It may also make a person feel that a business is immature and not professional if their logo has lots of rounded edges and uses uncommon colors like orange.



Dierdorf said, “When you see the apple, it evokes an emotional reaction. That is so much more powerful than any words could adequately advertise in such a simple way.”



“For the newspaper the logo is just as important as it would be for any company. But in journalism, having a consistent logo and identity helps establish credibility and reliability,” stated Hannah Gibbs, a senior Graphic Technology and Interactive Digital Studies double major at the University of Northern Iowa. Gibbs is also the Managing Editor of the Northern Iowan. “Especially in news, establishing credibility and reliability is very difficult to do, but it’s extremely important. Journalism exists based off readership and you won’t have readership without credibility and reliability.”

Apple is an emotionally humanist brand that really connects with people – when people buy or use their products or services; they feel part of the brand, like a tribe even. It is this emotional connection that creates

their brand – not purely their products and a bite sized logo, as Just Creative notes.

In his book, “How to Use Graphic Design to Sell Things, Explain Things, Make Things Look Better, Make People Laugh, Make People Cry, and (Every Once in a While) Change the World,” Michael Bierut says, “When we look at a well-known logo, what we perceive isn’t just a word or an image or an abstract form, but a world of associations that have accrued over time.” He continues, “As a result, people forget that a brand new logo seldom means a thing. It is an empty vessel awaiting the meaning that will be poured into it by history and experience. The best thing a designer can do is make that vessel the right shape for what it’s going to hold.”

Bierut is a graphic designer at the renowned design firm, Pentagram. He has worked with clients including The New York Times, MIT Media Lab, Mastercard, Saks Fifth Avenue and Verizon. One of his most recent works was designing Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign logo with some inspiration

from Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign logo. “I want something that’s so simple that a first-grader could do it with construction paper, Elmer’s glue and kindergarten scissors,” Bierut recalls saying. He “didn’t want a fancy thing you needed to know software programs to create, [rather] something that was easy to draw as a heart or a peace sign or a smiley face.”

99% Invisible pointed out that logo design has not always been such a major source of public scrutiny and controversy. When the United Parcel Service (UPS) changed their logo in 2003 to reflect a broadening of their business beyond package delivery, the redesign elicited a few articles. Much



of the criticism and discussion that took place, however, happened within design community forums and chat rooms rather than big social media sites. The rise of social media and online publishing has since changed the equation for logo criticism. When Gap unveiled its new logo in 2010, it sparked a huge outcry from brand fans and citizen critics. In a way, this shouldn't have come as a surprise — people are invested in the logos of things they love — but Gap was not expecting such a high level of resistance. Eventually, the company caved and reverted to its old logo. More recently, in January of this year when the Los Angeles Chargers announced they were moving from San Diego to Los Angeles, the team's social media channels received a lot of interactions for all of the wrong reasons. The Chargers floated a navy and blue logo that included a stylized lightning bolt attached to the city's initials. The logo has striking similarities to those of the L.A. Dodgers and Tampa Bay Lightning. Because of the outcry on social media and other online platforms the team quickly rescinded the design and stated that it was simply just a marketing concept.

In the end, each person understands the impact of a logo a little bit differently than how someone right next to them might understand it. That is the beauty of design. That is the beauty of a logo, because it has the ability to convey emotion, represent something bigger than itself and to tell a story.



Photos contributed by: Mitch Leonard, 99% Invisible, Quartz, Wired, Eye On Design, Sports Illustrated and Inkblot Design.