



A Guide on How to choose a logo

(by Sabine Schneiders)

INDEX:

general:

- Why is Corporate Identity so important?
(the most crucial first impressions)
- Targeting yourself to the right audience
(know your clients)
- Elements of Identity
(developing a "Company Language" as your coherent guide line)
- Your Planning and Research

The Logo:

- different Logo types and what they represent
- Colour choices
- Font choices



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

general:

Why is Corporate Identity so important?

You have a great product or service and now you want it to sell. And there is no reason why it shouldn't, if you take care of a few additional things like presentation and product-placement before launching it onto the market. Because when you get those things right and have created a strong "brand" by the end of it all, your sales will go up.

Let us try to explain you the "magic" of presentation, Corporate Image and correct market placement of a product. I say try, because it's a vast subject and in a short guide like this, we can only touch certain subjects on the surface and will have to make at times generalisations to be able to get a point across in few sentences. But it's meant as a starting point in the matter and as such I do believe it can give you a good overall idea.

As we all know, first impressions are the most crucial.

For a potential client there is a vast amount of choice and competition out there, and no client has the time nor inclination to inform himself into depth about each company or product, before he selects. The impulse that make him select a few to look deeper into are either personal recommendations or an incredible low price, but are always the first impressions he has of a certain company or product, when he comes across it.

When you look through any magazine full of advertising, what makes you stop at a certain ad and actually read what it says?

This first impression, which usually forms itself in a matter of seconds, is entirely down to the Corporate Image with which a company presents itself.

It's the visual translation of the company's ideas and philosophies, which unconsciously enters the client's mind while he is flicking through a magazine....and it gets reinforced and "branded" by consistency and repetition of this visual identity.

So the trick is how to make this visual image appealing in those few seconds of attention you have got, but also crucially, for those type of clients you want to attract.



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

Targeting yourself to the right audience

Know your clients.

You have developed your product or service and now you have to really think about; for who exactly is it useful, who would benefit from it most or would consume it (if its useful for him or not)

Ideally you have thought about these things already while developing your product, but now you should do it again with the focus on presentation of your product.

Once you know exactly who your client-group is, try to find out as much about them as you can, how do they spend their leisure time, what are their political views, what are their most frequently chosen occupations etc.

The more you know them, the better you can "speak" to them through your chosen visual presentation.

An example; If you are selling fashion to teenage kids, your visual image would need to reflect the desires of young teenagers to be trendy and part of a group, rebellious or more adult than they actually are.

If you are trying to sell exclusive and expensive jewellery to 20- 60 year old middleclass, your visual image would ideally reflect their desire to be seen as having "class" and wealth, being well educated or to be timelessly beautiful.

The closer your visual image reflects the client group you want to target, the more they will naturally identify with your company and its product and therefore the higher the chances that they choose your product over the millions of others on the market.

Since this first impression of "I like it/I don't like it" forms itself in a matter of seconds, it is actually almost impossible to implement the whole philosophy of a company into the visual image or logo. On the contrary, it could even "overload" the image and make it less clear and readable. It is more effective to try and capture an essence which can be taken in by the viewer immediately.

In our previous example this could mean: 'timeless' jewellery might have a clean black or white background while the teenage-fashion has a strong pink background as an example for a basic element of the visual image.

and for the logo itself - if you are trying to sell surfboards, the logo doesn't have to show a wave and a surfer on a board, but can simply be a curved blue shape which represents a wave as well as representing "outdoor", "sporty" and "healthy" through the blue, "dynamic" through the shape and "honesty" through the simplicity of it all.

You have been able to catch much more of the company's general philosophy and its persuasive power with the curved blue shape than with the "more fixed to one message" literal image of the surfer.



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

All the Elements of a Corporate Identity

Developing a "Company Language" as your coherent guide line

Imagine that you step into this expensive cocktail bar you see this well-dressed gentleman in a silk tie and a dark well-cut designer suit...everything from the surrounding to his dress-code gives you a certain impression of this person, until you notice the shoes he is wearing; white dirty trainers and you are thinking "he's a fake". The same can happen with companies.

The company image, which ever direction you have chosen, should be coherent throughout to be the most effective; from your logo to business cards to web-site, it all should seamlessly fit together and look effortless, because "this is not just your image, this is who you are as a company"; at least this is the impression you want to give, even if it all has been thought through and carefully designed. It shows that you care.

This means, the more elements of your Corporate Image you can take care of, the better and the stronger will be your impact.

The most important ones are the following:

Company name:

You decide on a company name that best reflects your company ideas, philosophy and the direction you want to take your company.

It can be either something that is quite descriptive (there is a restaurant here in Barcelona called The Fishnet and -surprise, surprise- its situated at the port and has mainly fish dishes) or leaves more room for imagination, best for creative companies or those who don't produce specific products.

Logo:

You choose a logo which best reflects those ideas and philosophies visually and there will be some help on how exactly to do that later on in this guide in "THE LOGO" section.

Your slogan:

A slogan is not always necessary, but it helps to describe your company better, especially if your field is more abstract like a service. The slogan can serve as the reinforcement of the message transmitted by the logo.

Company Language:

By that we mean the whole tone of voice for all communication.

It means as much literally how you are going to address your clients verbally in your ads for example; more friendly and chatty or more serious and professional.

But it also includes that all the other elements like business-cards, letterheads, brochures, ads and website will be developed according to the previous set "Company Language" meaning to the right color, font type and sizes etc. All these elements will constitute an identity package; which then is used like a bible for all new campaigns.

The company logo is the most important element in a company's identity, and will therefore often work as a guide for development of all other material.

By sticking to a once set "Company Language" you are starting to convert your company into a identifiable and powerful brand.



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

Your planning and research

What is it then you have to do to make it all work

The more prepared you are, the better. To realise much later on in the game that you should have targeted a different client-group for example could become a very costly error. But it's not as difficult as it seems, just sit down and really reflect on the following things:

1. What your business exactly does:

What is it you are producing or what is the service you are giving? In what way can this be flexible, how can I add a product or service if the possibility or necessity presents itself without losing integrity?

If you are a record shop for example, would you want to keep the option open to get involved into selling fashion as well and present your place as a whole lifestyle-choice or would you prefer to present yourself as "experts in music" and not spread yourself too thin? Define your starting point and where you would like to end up.

2. Who are your competitors?

And why should a client choose you over your competitors. They say "know your enemies" and they are right. Find out exactly what they offer, their strengths and weaknesses, what are their specialities, how you can place yourself within them and offer something slightly different or in better quality, better customer service or value for money.

In the beginning, the customers know your competitors, but not you.

The only weapon you have when you start out will be the image you give, to make the customer try out your service or product.

3. Who are your clients?

These are the people you are doing it all for, that's why I covered them at length previously. It's as well these people who will determine, if your business will be a success or not. The more you know about the kind of people you are going to sell to, the better you can communicate to them, that they should buy from you and not from next door. They are the people your Corporate Image should reflect so that they can identify with your product; "it's practically made for them."

"My clients will be over 50 years, traditional in values, quality and price concerned" For this group it would be a bad match having a techno font type with strong colors. A more traditional font combined with comfortable, mild, yet clear colors would be more appealing for this type of customers.

If you know your customers, you can adapt to changes in the market better as well. For example, technology has advanced into a certain direction, are your type of clients likely to follow this trend, which would mean you need to adapt your product-range?

4. Your Company Image

Not the visual one, this is our job, but if you want to present yourself as more young and dynamic, chatty and friendly, or more serious-professional for example.

Are you an exclusive and personal service, or would you rather give the impression of a bigger, well-oiled machinery?

Should your product be perceived as artisan?

Should it be limited edition or something in greater quantities for less money?

Are you a reseller of already well-known brands of confidence or an entrepreneur, promoting new ideas?



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

The Logo:

Different Logotypes

And what they represent

There are many ways on how to represent visually your company, but there are generally four main categories of Logos. Those are the following.

Using an illustrative graphic in combination with your company name

This is a graphic that directly and concretely illustrates your business.

For example our fishrestaurant in Barcelona "The Fastnet" has a graphic of a fish beeing caught in a net. This kind of Logo gets often chosen by craftsmen, or somebody who produces a concrete product.

Careful though, if you are producing superglue, it is not such a good idea to use a superglue tube in your logo. First, because its quite difficult to distinguish it from a toothpaste tube and secondly because as a graphic itself its not so attractive. In the superglue case, it might be wiser to choose a more abstract symbol that represents unbreakable connection for example.

Using an abstract symbol in combination with your company name

This is an abstract interpretation of your company ideals and philosophies.

It is most used by consultant agencies or other type of more "abstract" services, creative businesses to give their customer a certain type of creative appeal or companies with a wider range of products. Of course a craftsman or a single product company can still use an abstract symbol in its logo and might even stand out more because of it.

The example I have given earlier about the surfboard seller, which could either be represented through a surfer on a wave (illustrative graphic), or through a more abstract symbol like a curved blue shape which represents a wave as well as representing other company values like "outdoor", "sporty" and "healthy" through the blue and "dynamic" through the shape, would be still a fairly literal abstract symbol.

A technology company might not want to use a computer in its graphic or even a symbol that can be interpreted as a computer, but an arrow type shape, lets say, pointing from left to right symbolising "advanced" and "looking into the future".

Using a unique, specially designed font type

This is a specially designed fontface for your companies name.

To give a simple example; if your Company is called "lemon productions" lets say, the "o" of lemon could be shaped like a lemon.

This type of Logo would be most likely to be custom designed. If the combination of your name with your company values allows you to engage in this kind of visual play of expression, the result can become a strong and effektive logo.

Using a graphic or symbol only

To be able to use the graphic or symbol element of a logo only without the company name itself, your brand must be already well-known to be still recognisable.

I would not recomend it to a start-up or small company.

However, the graphical element might be used by itself in certain ocasions, for example on the label inside the clothes of a fashion designer. It would be a confident but risky move and you would have to make shure that the client can still associate the company with the graphic.



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

The Logo:

Colour choices

And what they represent

Colour plays an important role in your Corporate Image and how your client will perceive you. Their meaning can vary depending in which frame you place them.

But here is a general description of the most common colors used in logos, as well as suggestions on what type of business the different colors will match:

black

Symbolic meaning: Strong, defined, trusted, definite, professional
Suggested uses: Construction, trade, finance, marketing, consulting etc

white

Symbolic meaning: Purity, clarity, truth, innocent, open, visionary, light
Suggested use: Health, research, cosmetics etc

blue

Symbolic meaning: Extensive, inventive, careful, overview, idealism, confidence, empathy, tenderness, caring love, devotion, loyalty, reliability, institutional, inspiration
Suggested use: Trade, health, research, IT, recruitment, government etc

red

Symbolic meaning: Aggressive, offensive, enthusiasm, hungry, important, urgent, warm, excitement, drama, passion, romantic, powerful, energy
Suggested use: Marketing, entertainment, sport, health, real estate, clothes, cosmetics, food

yellow

Symbolic meaning: Clarity, understanding, wisdom, self-confidence, security, curiosity, humour, energy, dynamic, innovation
Suggested use: IT, technology, food, entertainment, cars, children etc

orange

Symbolic meaning: constructive, solution oriented, security, safety, dynamic, innocent, creative, energy, independence, attraction, joy, kindness
Suggested use: Education, recruitment, entertainment, sport, food, childcare etc



READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

The Logo:

green

Symbolic meaning: Silence, peace, renewal, compassion, moderation, harmony, raise, diplomatic, thoughtful, profundity, ecological, nature

Suggested use: Recruitment, tourism, farming, research, medicine, government, organisations

purple

Beauty, inspiration, art, softness, mystical, religious, emotional

Suggested use: Body and soul, alternative treatment, astrology, mystic, cosmetics

brown

Symbolic meaning: Productivity, generous, down-to-earth, stabile, traditional, conservative,

Suggested use: Farming, construction, craftsmanship, finance



urbanlogo

READY-MADE LOGOS FOR START-UP
AND SMALL BUSINESSES

The Logo:

Font choices

As with colour, the font plays an important role in the development and expression of your Logo. If you have a bakery with a quite traditional etching-like illustration of an oven, you would completely confuse the preceiver, if the company name itself is written in a modern techno-font. These days, there are millions of fonts out there to choose from and I know that every designer has their favorites which makes his work recognisable as his. I will try to give you a few examples:

The classical look:

examples of uses:
Company with more traditional ideals, older target-clients, long experience etc

Century Old Style

CHARLEMAGNE

Zurich BT

The elegant look:

examples of uses:
Company with finely crafted product like jewellery or fashion, main values not strength and power, but beauty/ delicatness

Fina Regular

Graphite Lite

Incised

The modern look:

examples of uses:
Company with young target-clients, fashion-able product, creative services etc

Sui Generis

T SERIS

NEURONA

The technical look:

examples of uses:
Company with main values like strength and power, technology, advanced etc

SF Square Head

BANK GOTHIC BT

Oloron

These examples show, how versatile Fontfaces can be and how much they influence the meaning of your Logo. To list them all here is impossible, but the examples can give an idea on how to look at a fontface.