

CREATIVE BY DESIGN

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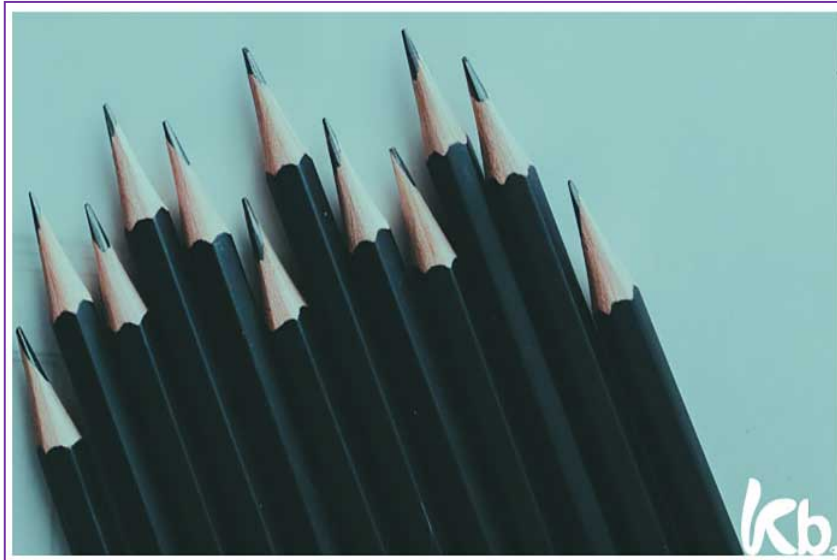
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INSPIRATION OF THE MOMENT

- Since 2012

How should my branding look like?

15 Mar, 2016 by Kenhalo Bernet



After the **branding message**, this is the main second step when it comes to branding, **create or renew your design identity**.

While every business ultimately has the same goal to succeed, the ways to get there can vary according to the identity and voice you established for your brand.

Just to be clear a logo *is not a* design identity.

A logo is the simplest form of identification of your brand.

Your brand name and tagline, together should express your brand essence in a nutshell and will later on provide the basis for texts that you use in campaigns, on your website, in your ads, and in the communication with your customers.

Design identity is the visual aspects forming your entire brand's presentation to the world.

So whatever budget or time allocated, it needs to feel right and it should make you proud.

Settlement is neither a good feeling nor a solution when it comes to branding. Chances are that your company can't afford the luxury to have to redo it. Not mentioning that if launched with the wrong message, you take the risk to leave an indelible mark in your customer's mindset.

Every identity is different, and there's no one method that guarantees success.

Nevertheless, it is required to get it right before anything gets to the final step the brand visibility! Easier said than done, yes I agree. But there are basics that can help you shift towards a good direction.

I often mention balance. Why?

I take it from life, things work when they are balanced.

So when it comes to design identity, a first suggestion is to set a firm calendar with milestones, deadlines and within sufficient time for constructive critics and solutions for each step.

Well-crafted visuals can help you build trust, differentiate your company and grow your business. Conversely, poorly conceived visuals/contents can damage your audience's perceptions of your brand.

What Are Good Strong Foundations For A Successful Identity Visual?

If you are branding your goal is to build awareness and extend customer loyalty and frankly there is only one way to do so and it is by putting in place a disciplined process and strong foundations.

Like any process, producing a design identity falls into a production schedule. You need to create a system, in general but also for specifics that tracks all your responsibilities. Doing so you will, above all, reduce stress levels. It is already enough nerves breaking in itself to renew or create a branding so let's make it easier.

Cross fields, I often talk about the importance of revamping and studying others. I think that studying others is a very important part of design identity. Whether it is for strategy, looks or contents, there is nothing wrong by having a full understanding of your surroundings, meaning here your competitors and especially the big ones.

Me, it is my job but honestly if you have a business or planning to create one it is yours too.

And I will even say learn not only in things that pertain to your field of expertise. I really encourage crossing fields, it can widen perspectives and consequently educate to see and even foresee better.

It's like going to the gym and instead of focusing on only one part of your body you actually decide to train your whole self.

And with this there is something very gratifying that comes with, the fear of change or unknown becomes more manageable and even possibly turns into motivation and more creativity.

I have had the chance to work in many fields as well as different countries and continents and doing so, I have soon realized that there is not one solution to one problem.

I often speak about 3D perspective well; imagine any problem as a complex shaped object and the solution the trajectory to its center point.

The more you are curious and learn about anything, the more solutions present by themselves faster and in variety as you look at that same problem from different angles.

It works the other way too!

You can go from inside to outwards, for instance if you place your business in the center your vision can become the shape/space of its possibility.

Of course there it can become more complex because to achieve the actual shape you need to take into account as many elements (the more the merrier) that made that shape. That is basically what branding is.

Furthermore, not understanding branding and marketing when you run a business is like me telling you that what you are looking at is green while pointing at a green spot when you are actually unable to see colors.

Understanding does not required mastering however it is like speaking a familiar English while conversing with a fluent English speaker, if the native starts to explain something you increase your chances to actually get to the full comprehension.

Also, keep in mind that it will help you determine if you are dealing with a consultant/agency that is actually good because to get to such results from AMA (American Marketing Association) and IDG (International Data Group) that stipulate that **over 50% of marketing contents produced are not relevant to its customers.**

We have to accept the sad fact that **not everyone is good at marketing.**

But let's face it; this is a norm in any field. However, those numbers are high so be careful!

To be fair, let's also understand that it is not always a lack of professionalism that leads to wrong decision but sometimes the impossibility to see potentiality or simply accept to change.

For instance, many millennial have no knowledge of Blockbusters that filled for bankruptcy in 2010 after years of decline and its notorious refusal to partner with Netflix.

Soon more will also have never heard of MySpace.

My point is those companies reached great revenues and expansion, therefore they obviously were at some point very well structured with what I call the **magic trio** production - marketing - management and yet they collapsed. So **studying successes and also failures is an important matter on your to-do list.**

Break it down

appropriately; you have an ultimate deadline that consists on when does your new branding will be launched visibly? Which is part of your strategy. From that final date, move upstream and set logic and solid timeframes for the design identity process.

If you do not know entrust someone knowledgeable but do not guess it. It is like if someone was to tell you how long you can breath under water while holding your head under it without consulting with you or worse having never set foot in water. *You get the idea!* That's what I call a recipe for disaster and most likely the certainty for future strong arguments!

Keep track of the schedule,

at the end of the day either you or whom you assign of that task but someone responsible and knowledgeable within your company needs to keep track.

Let's not relay only on the designer/agency to do so. Ultimately, it is for your company.

Do the hard things first!

I am not inventing it, behavioral scientists claimed it way before me.

Psychologically, we tend to **prefer experiences that improve overtime.**

Which means it's better for the **most annoying parts** to happen **early in the process.**

Make your visuals smart, for instance if suitable your identity design should be flexible so you can adapt it to a multitude of uses with ease when/if needed.

It should convey character, individuality. It should stand out from the crowd and it should be simple. The simpler the system, the clearer the communication.

Smart branding taps into larger concepts and feelings that already exist as part of the collective memory and associates them with the specific thing being branded.

Smart branding makes you think that you've seen it before. Its familiarity makes any user able to both relate to the branding identity and to understand what the brand represents. And it normally works within a cohesion and uniformity in the form of simplicity.

And there is no better place than to understand this concept than by looking around.

We live in a time of quasi-constant visual assault and diversion. So any identity that stands out or communicates something affective to a user, would seem to be smart.

Present your own examples, when you think of the brand message you want to portray what companies even outside of your field according to you convey that same message. It is much easier to present your team or consultant/agency with visual direction and references then it is to try to explain only with words something that you want.

Whether you are paying others or doing it yourself at the end of the day, we can all agree that time is money so you are better off by limiting unnecessary wasted time. It can only lead to frustration in all sides.

Lastly be accountable. If you gave your designer an unrealistic schedule, it is the designer's fault for accepting it in the first place but s/he might never anticipated for example that your feedbacks would take so long or s/he may actually have had no choice to start with.

Ultimately, who's to blame is not always so clearly define. As the head and final decision maker you need to be accountable of your deadline and remain honest about them.

Is It Your Place To Create Your Visual Identity?

Only you can honestly answer.

Do you feel able to decipher from the examples you like what specifically in their visuals has given those brands that voice?

Can you recreate that same emotion now for your brand?

Taking into consideration that a lot of what is out there looks the same and doesn't communicate or persuade very well.

Point being that buying a canvas, paint, and brushes doesn't make everyone a Van-Gogh, nor does using a Wacom and PicMonkey transform you into an amazing graphic designer!

We all have skills and knowing what they are or aren't demonstrates strength.

If it is not your **forte** surround yourself with someone you consider having that skill and **trust** that person to make the right choice for your company.

Some will call it a form of power relinquishment. That is if looked at it with very conservative eyes, I personally think that it is not. Collaboration is essential to success. And letting go when the point falls under a skill you do not master is important just not blindly neither. Like I said earlier it is all about balance.

If you start working with any designer/agency that seem defensive on transparency, start to become concern. The whole point of design identity is constant collaboration between you and the creative.

This is where choosing carefully who you will go through this journey is very important.

Logo

I strongly believe that a company is not its logo at least for the majority of companies on the market.

In time, as you develop your brand identity, your customers will come to associate your brand with your logo.

They will come to transfer all of their perceptions and your branding onto that logo.

So a logo is great to have but understand that it has no intrinsic meaning by itself at first.

However, it surely doesn't mean that you should not think about it. It just means that you should try to keep it simple and let the colors agree with your branding message.

My basic advice for a company considering a logo redesign is to stick to a simple and/or minimalistic look. Limit the color palette to 2-3 and make the most of white space.

By now you have heard about the importance of using your logo consistently. But there should be as well a consistency with the elements beyond your logo.

While a logo can be the linchpin that holds a brand identity together and makes it right away recognizable, as I was saying brands aren't built on logos alone.

When creating a brand identity, don't focus on separate elements but make sure you always consider the bigger picture and how all the smaller elements interact with one another.

How Do You Structure Your Identity Design?

Establishing a brand image is all trial and error. Once you set the deadlines. I like when the budget allows it to take 2-3 distinct directions and exploit them until finally only one remain.

Look at the colors, typefaces and visual styles used by your rivals and then create something truly unique that position your company away from them all.

Think of the **varied uses, colors and sizes** of your design.

Then stand back and consider it with your **client's point of view in mind**. But be careful, you still want to make sure that the message remains clear and the product obvious.

Your goal is that when a customer will visit your website, your color choices, the size of your text, and the mood of your design would tell him/her exactly how to feel about your brand.

So if the visual that you're conveying does not match your values, it will disappoint, confuse, and alienate your target market.

And I reiterate, please take into account the sum of everything your audience can see when they look at your company. It is the complete ensemble of those visual elements that tell the story.

Another factor to understand is that we live now in an online world, your brand face the challenge of expressing its personality before even most likely actually interacting face to face with a customer.

Whereas before your sales team or customer service would put a human face on your brand, online has created a barrier.

This speaks to the visual importance, text is great but when building and promoting your brand identity, there's more to the story than just writing words. By using visual references, you can add an emotion or voice to your words.

Once you have determined the imagery choices, the color scheme, it remains how do you convey the right emotion. The explosion of visual contents means that your potential customers are skimming more than ever; in a few seconds they view an image and determine whether they want to investigate further or just move on. Harsh truth.

So keep it simple, your visual design should not be complicated. When there are too many things going on, there is a good risk of confusion.

At the risk of seeming underwhelming or unexciting, remove everything from your visual identity that does not contribute to your brand persona. That is key!

Keep consistency, which lies in applying the same filter, the same size and the same font type across your visual platforms.

It creates cohesion, so that wherever a customer follows you, he always gets the same story.

This will distinguish you from all the small-fry businesses and shape your company towards becoming a brand.

Social Media

You need to become fluent in the conversation. For visual branding, it's key to find the appropriate content for your audience on each platform.

For example, **Pinterest** appeals to advice, DIY, and helpful tips and tricks. The images you post on Pinterest should be in some way actionable by your audience. You want them to pin it for increased exposure, but you also want them to click through to your site.

Facebook and **Google+** are all about community. You should use these platforms to start conversations with your target market, and gauge interests to further develop your brand.

On **Twitter**, short bursts of commentary, forward self-promotion, and catchy imagery is the language.

As for **Instagram** it is suitable for slices of life.

Have your designer **create automatic templates** for each social media platform, so that you can stop guessing and adjust over and over image dimensions.

This way you can easily launch any new campaign with your pre-configured dimensions. It should include: Facebook cover, Facebook post, Instagram Post, Blog template, business card, twitter post to start with.

You have **established your set of values** in your brand messaging by defining how you want your customers to feel as a result of your product or service and you **have completed your identity design**.

It is time to tell it over and over again.

You are now ready for your last phase, the **brand visibility**.

Good luck!