Chapter 6
Designing Visual Language Elements of the Brand Identity
The brand identity is the visual and verbal articulation of a brand, as applied to a single product or service or an extended family of products or services, which includes all integrated graphic design applications; it is also called a visual identity or a corporate identity. A brand identity may also include a claim or tagline and advertising, depending upon the client and design firm or advertising agency.

Defining the brand’s spirit and look, along with differentiating it from the competition, are the main goals of the brand identity. For success, efficacy, and sustainability, the brand identity should:

• Be memorable
• Be flexible
• Possess a spirit that is appropriate for the brand and audience
• Express a meaningful message
• Differentiate the brand from the competition
• Be distinctive

Naming a Brand

Naming a brand involves many crucial considerations. What does the name mean? What type of spirit or personality should it convey? How will people react to it? What does the name mean in a specific language to a target market?

A brand name is the verbal identity—a proprietary name—for a product, service, or group. Coupled with a tagline and/or descriptor, a brand name becomes the verbal signature of a company’s product or service or of a group. It is an intangible asset, optimally adding value to a brand. Without question, the brand name is the main point of reference to any brand and is the main verbal marketing tool. Usually, the name is the one brand element that remains unchanged or, at least, in place for a long period. Logos, often, are periodically updated; however, names usually don’t change unless there is a company merger, acquisition, takeover, or the name becomes outdated.

Types of Names

There are several categories of name types that are more or less appropriate for any brand.

Founder’s name: named for the company’s founder(s), such as Harrods®, London, named for the family name of Charles Henry Harrod; Ben & Jerry’s® ice cream named for Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield; Levi’s® named for founder Levi Strauss; and Martha Stewart® for the brands created by Martha Stewart.

Explanatory: named to best explain or describe the product or service, such as Toys “R” Us®, Petco®, America Online®, American Heart Association®, Coca-Cola®, Give Kids the World®, and Save the Children®.

Expressive or Invented: names that are constructed to have a certain panache or sound, such as Google®, Häagen Dazs®, Yahoo!®, Yumi™, Xerox®, Def Jam® recordings, Earth Share®, Timex®, and Intel®.

Allegorical or Symbolic: names that express their nature through an allusion to an allegory or a symbol to represent a brand, such as Nike® (named for the Greek goddess of victory), Sirius® (named for sky’s brightest star), and Apple® Computers.
Case Study from Pentagram

Figure 6-1. Identity Design firm: Pentagram, London, U.K. Partners: John McCoull. Client: Joyco.

Joyco

Pentagram was commissioned to create the new name and brand identity for an international Spanish confectionery group, GC Group (General de Confitería), who produce and sell a wide range of products, from gums to lollipops and toffees.

The new name, Joyco™, marks an exciting phase in the worldwide development of the group’s business and reflects the spirit of the recent changes they have made to the company. Formerly a collection of separate companies with different names and identities in different countries, all the companies will adopt the name Joyco, to become one worldwide family.

Joyco currently have manufacturing facilities in China, India, Mexico, Poland, and the U.S., as well as additional sales offices in Italy, France, the Netherlands, Russia, and Portugal. It was therefore important to choose a name that was suitable for global use and could be pronounced in any language. The name expresses optimism for the future and symbolizes the company’s philosophy of providing the customer satisfaction in a fun and enjoyable way.
Dear John,

This example shows the layout for letters typed on this letterhead. Always use the typeface Bembo Regular at 12pt set on 15 leading, even when typing the date and address in the position shown. The margin from the left edge of the page should be 35mm and the margin from the top of the page should be 107.5mm when typing the body of the letter.

Type the salutation three line spaces below the date. Use single line spacing throughout the letter with double line spacing between paragraphs. Do not indent paragraphs. Type lines to an average length of 120mm and keep the right-hand margin as even as possible (but do not break words). Use single spaces after full stops.

Type the closing salutation two line spaces after the end of the body of the letter (without punctuation). Then type the name of the signatory five line spaces below. Status or title may be included immediately below the name if required. Where required type ‘cc’ in lower case three line spaces below the signatory’s name, with the names of the persons who are to receive copies of the letter.

Yours sincerely

Ann Baker

cc Doug Brown


A graphic standards manual provides the client with guidelines for usage of the identity elements to ensure value and consistency.

The mark is made of two circles placed closely together with the words “JOY” and “CO” making two happy, brightly colored faces, which signifies the joining together and collaboration of the separate companies.

For the launch of the new identity, Pentagram and Javier Mariscal created an imaginative and innovative film, a small book (a spirit guide), a brochure, and a CD-ROM to mark the event.

— Pentagram
This graphic standards manual is presented to the client in a ring binder.
Acronym: a brand name formed from the initials or other parts of several names or words; for example, the following company names: BT® for British Telecom, BMW™ for Bayerische Motoren Werke, KFC® for Kentucky Fried Chicken®, IBM® for International Business Machines, and BP® for Beyond Petroleum®.

Effective Names

There are many ways to make a brand name effective.

• Distinction: a name that characterizes, distinguishes, and differentiates the brand among its competitors.
• Memorable: a name should be worth remembering and sufficiently engaging. Most say a brand name should be easy to pronounce and spell; however, one could make a case for interest over ease.
• Purposeful: a brand name can be meaningful, adding significance, purpose, or cachet to a product, service, or group. A brand name should communicate the personality of the brand and address its target audience.
• Extendable: a name should be capable of growing and changing with the company and possible brand extensions.
• Long-lasting: the name will be viable in the long term.
• Legally owned: the name or domain should be available to be legally registered, owned, and trademarked. It should not legally infringe on any other trademarked name.

Designing a Logo

A logo is a unique identifying symbol or wordmark; also called a brandmark, mark, identifier, logotype, logomark, or trademark. A logo represents and embodies everything a brand or company signifies; and a logo provides immediate recognition.

Nomenclature periodically changes; although the term brandmark is used by some within the design community, logo is the most commonly accepted term among design professionals, clients, and the general audience. (And, it should be noted that although the word logo is most often used to describe the brandmark or mark of a brand, it is shorthand for the word logotype, which historically and literally means a wordmark—that is, the brand name spelled out in unique typography.)

Types of Logos

Logos can take the form of a wordmark, a lettermark, a symbol mark, or a combination mark.

• Wordmark (also called logotype) is the name spelled out in unique typography or lettering (Figures 6-2 through 6-5).

Figure 6-2. Wordmark logos.


Figure 6.3. Wordmark logos.


Figure 6.4. Wordmark logos.

c. 3M™. Courtesy of 3M.
Lettermark: a type of logo that is created using the initials of the brand name (Figure 6-6).
Symbol mark is a visual mark that symbolizes the brand and can be formed as a pictorial visual, an abstract visual, or a nonrepresentational visual.

- A pictorial symbol mark is a representational image that symbolizes the brand or social cause; it relates to an identifiable object (Figures 6-7 and 6-8).

Figure 6-7. Pictorial symbol mark logos.
- Design firm: Red Flannel, Freehold, NJ. Client: MerLife, Partners for Success Program.

Figure 6-8. Pictorial symbol mark logos.
• An **abstract symbol mark** is a type of logo which is a representational visual with an emphasis on the intrinsic form, an extraction relating to a real object, modified with an abstract emphasis (Figure 6-9).

• A symbol mark can also be a nonrepresentational visual, which is a nonpictorial design that symbolizes the brand and does not relate to an identifiable object or person (Figure 6-10).

**Figure 6-9.** Abstract symbol mark logos.

a. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.  
   Client: Dragon Fly Farms.

b. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.  
   Client: Big Dog Wearable Line.

c. Design firm: Red Flannel, Freehold, NJ.  
   Client: MetLife.

d. Design firm: Red Flannel, Freehold, NJ.  
   Client: MetLife.

**Figure 6-10.** Abstract nonrepresentational symbol mark logos.

a. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.  
   Client: Thermo.

b. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.  
   Client: Printmaster.

c. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.  
   Client: Refined Technologies.

   Client: Insurance Underwriter.
Combination mark: a combination of words and symbols (Figures 6-11 through 6-14).

Figure 6-11. Combination mark logos.
- CBS Eye Design®. The CBS and CBS Eye Design are registered trademarks of CBS Broadcasting, Inc.

Figure 6-12. Combination mark logos.
Figure 8-13. Combination mark logos.

Client: Northwestern Nasal + Sinus.

Client: Brooklyn Brewery.

e. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.
Client: Connecting Point.

Figure 8-14. Combination mark logos.

Client: Expresso Paper.

d. Design firm: Gardner Design, Wichita, KS.
Client: Brentoli Architecture.
e. Design firm: VSA Partners, Inc., Chicago, IL.
Client: Cingular Wireless.
Conveying Meaning

Given that a logo identifies an entity or group—corporation, product, service, person, social cause, or issue—it must clearly communicate, through its design, the personality, character, and nature of that entity. Amazingly, an enormous amount of meaning, content, and emotion can be compressed and articulated in a logo and perceived by a viewer.

With one glance, a viewer should be able to ascertain and assess a brand by looking at the logo. Although not a designer, today’s average viewer has become design savvy by virtue of exposure to a plethora of design applications. Graphic design is ubiquitous in industrialized nations. Everywhere a person turns are graphic design applications or advertisements.

How does a designer begin to convey the brand message through the logo? The place to start is in the design brief or positioning statement. Once you know the strategy and understand the spirit of the brand, you can begin ideation.

Each and every design decision that goes into creating a logo will affect how the viewer perceives the resulting design. If you choose to describe a logo with a scratchy line, that would convey a certain feeling to the audience. Color will affect the communication, as well. If the logo is flat, it will communicate a different message from an illusionistic logo. Symbol marks—pictorial, abstract, or nonrepresentational logos—can take many different forms and evoke different styles or periods. Certainly, the type of forms you choose must be appropriate for your brand, convey the brand spirit, and differentiate it; for example, Milton Glaser’s logo for Brooklyn BrewerySM (Figure 6-13c), which was applied to their packaging, promotional material, T-shirts, and trucks, and to the front of the brewery. Glaser comments: “The name ‘Brooklyn’ suggested, among other things, the ‘Dodgers’®, the baseball team still associated with Brooklyn many years after they treacherously decamped for Los Angeles. The partners [of Brooklyn Brewery] wanted their label to have a European appearance to differentiate it among popular American beers and to suggest their commitment to a more complex and interesting product. I designed a ‘B’ that looked as though it belonged on a Dodgers uniform. Actually, the lettering on the real uniforms was quite straightforward, but through some trick of memory, most people recall it as looking like this logo.”

“A logo’s makeup should define and represent a brand’s character.” — Denise Anderson, director of Marketing Services for Pershing

Chapter 6: Designing Visual Language Elements of the Brand Identity