

Logo Basics

Crafting a logo that will set you apart from your competition

BY LISA SMITH

John McWade, founder and creative director of *Before & After* magazine says “design looks easier than it is, and it’s more important than it looks.” This is especially true for your store’s logo.

While most people think they know the elements of a good logo, the process of creating that logo is more mysterious. Here are some tips to help you arrive at a logo that can be used in any application, whether you are creating your logo for the first time or giving your old logo a face-lift.

Finding a designer: A good designer is worth his or her weight in gold. The right designer will not only guide you through the process, but also will research what your competitors’ logos look like and how they use them in their marketing, so you get a logo is truly unique. (For more information about how to find the right designer, go to the website version of this article, at www.cooperative-grocer.coop.)

Never do a logo design contest: Not everyone can afford to pay a design firm. That’s OK, but avoid design contests—especially ones where you have to choose a winner. You will have to live with your logo for a long time, so working with a good designer ensures you get exactly what you want and that the end product is fully usable.

Avoid those “\$500 for Five Versions” logo websites: Most websites that offer “x” number of logos to choose from for a fee will use stock designs and adapt them for their clients. If you are looking for something creative that really reflects what your store is about, then invest in your logo. Some designers don’t charge more than these sites and may even do the project for a working-member discount.

Keep your committee small, but take input from all: Ideally your committee of decision-makers for your logo will be made up of no more than two or three people who really understand the issues around good logo development. They should know the store well and be able to envision where it is going and how it will grow.

Maybe it’s because each of us sees so much advertising every day, but most folks consider themselves experts when it comes to marketing. Effective marketing and branding decisions should be made by the people who will use the logo on a daily basis and who understand the power it can



Samples of your logo in color, grayscale and black and white helps you make an educated decision about your logo and how it will be used. Ask to see your top three logo finalists in sample ads and letterhead before you make your decision. Seeing your potential logo in action will help you make a more informed decision.



wield for a business. That is not to say you should not involve others. Getting input from as many people as possible, both employees and shoppers of varying levels of experience with the store, will help the committee make an informed decision. Talking about the feelings the logo evokes, what it makes them think of, and their overall impression will help the committee gain insight into how the public will view their new brand icon.

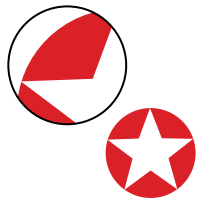
Do your research: While your designer should research what your competition is doing, it is always advisable to take a look for yourself so that you don’t push your designer into making a mistake.



Logos should be scalable to sizes small enough to use on things like stickers and coffee mugs without losing impact or quality. Notice how the Hill Top logo details are completely lost when small. Have your designer show samples as small as 1” tall or wide to ensure your logo will be effective across a spectrum of uses.

Typefaces: Your logo typeface should be easy to read and have some personality. When choosing one, a good rule of thumb is if it came with your computer, you should look for something else. Choose a typeface or two typefaces from different categories (oldstyle, modern, serif, slab serif, sans serif, script, handwritten, distressed...) that fit your store’s style but have characteristics that make them special. Also, consider that different styles lend different character traits to your brand. For more information check out *The Non-Designer’s Type Book*.

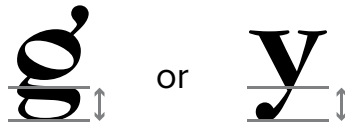
Color: In theory, you can have as many colors as you want for just about any application, thanks to the increasing popularity of digital printing in professional print shops. But don’t. K.I.S.S. really is important when it comes to your logo. Limit your color palette to no more than three, including shadow. This will ensure you are ready to print on anything and that the printing costs will be



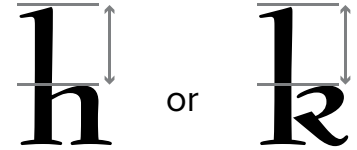
Vector



Bitmap
or Rasterized



Descenders



Ascenders

Bitmaps can be grainy. Ask for vectors that are saved for use in Word as well as in .eps so your logo can be used for a range of purposes.

Really long ascenders or descenders can make it challenging to read your logo when it has to be placed in a small space, as in on an ink pen or some signage.



Fonts and lettering are a great resource for making a distinctive logo, but using too many fonts without a good eye for type can lead to a logo that looks like the brand for a Crazy Font Store instead of a co-op.

affordable. Having your designer develop one- and two-color versions of your logo as well will help you control costs for print jobs regardless of the printing process. When the final versions are delivered you should receive different files (vector, .jpg, and .png, file types at least) with color charts showing your CMYK, Pantone, RGB equivalents.

Identify potential issues early

Your designer should anticipate a lot of the issues for you, but knowing what some of them are will help. Here are sources of common mistakes, with illustrations shown:

- Ask for your final logo concepts to be presented as color, gray scale, and black and white. This will give you a chance to see each logo's strengths and weaknesses in different contexts.

- Logos should not have fine details that will get lost or look like ants when they are scaled down. Ask to see logo samples as small as 1 inch.
- Typefaces that have long ascenders or descenders can be problematic. They can bang into each other and make it hard to use the logo in tight spaces.
- Make sure your logo is designed as a vector and not a bitmap. Vectors are mathematically based drawing, so they can be scaled up to any size without loss of quality—very important for signage uses!
- Don't use too many fonts, fonts that don't go together, or crazy fonts.
- Avoid bad or suggestive color, shape and/or type combinations. ■



Color, type, and logo shape can be powerful media in logos. Avoid color combinations that suggest a concept that's contrary to the wording (like a red tomato for the Green Zebra Co-op), obvious font choices, and poor spacing between characters. The color and shape of a logo can be suggestive, too, as in the IHOP imitator above or Starbucks' green circle, Macy's red star, or Apple's white apple.

Recommended Resources

The Non-Designer's Design Book (third edition) by Robin Williams. Peachpit Press, 2008.

The Non-Designer's Type Book (second edition) by Robin Williams. Peachpit Press, 2005

Letterhead & Logo Design 10 by Sussner Design Co. Rockport, 2007. Part of an ongoing series on this topic.

1000 Retail Graphics: From Signage to Logos and Everything for In-Store by JGA. Rockport, 2009.

Logo Design Love: A Guide to Creating Iconic Brand Identities by David Airey. New Riders, 2010.

www.fontsquirrel.com—quality free fonts that can be used commercially

www.myfonts.com—a huge range of fonts for sale, with information on their designers and type history

www.freelancegraphicdesigner.info

www.aiga.org—American Institute of Graphic Arts, the oldest and largest professional membership organization for designers. This site has a directory of members, which can serve as a starting point to finding a designer.