

*Think of your shop as a mini advertising studio and provide a complete image for clients*

## Logo design: 9 tips on getting paid for your work

by Dan Antonelli

If I could choose one part of the sign business that I could work on all day long, it would definitely be

designing logos. It's the part of the business I enjoy the most. For me, there's nothing more satisfying



*This client originally wanted something with a paintbrush, but I talked him out of it because it's just too overused. Instead, I used a Mike Stevens's script to make the lettering the recognizable element of the design. The multi-color stripe underneath helps sell the color aspect of his business. [Fonts: Painting by is Impact; Armando was inspired by Mike Stevens.]*



*This client owns several black Peterbilt semi trucks and wanted something that looked fairly custom with a prismatic look, while incorporating a similar element of his previous lettering. Serifs were added to the top corners, and the cross stroke on the "E" was also re-done. The Transport script was altered slightly from the original font. [Font: Alexis is Frutiger Ultra Black, Transport is Rapier.]*

than developing identities for other businesses, then incorporating that design on their vehicle, signage, stationery, and various other advertising mediums.

When I first decided to open my business, I knew that I wanted to focus on being a creative design firm with advertising services in addition to "traditional" sign shop services. Therefore, from the beginning I tried to keep my clients focused on the fact that what we would do was not just letter their vehicles, but develop a cohesive and unique identity for their business. And the beginning of that identity was their logo design.

Initially, it was sometimes tough to bring this concept home to clients. Many had trouble understanding the concept of a "logo". Some could at least understand the concept of a design or sketch fee, but the separate logo fee was something many just didn't comprehend.

Over time, and after listening to clients and other artists, I've found the following tips to be useful in helping me get paid for the time necessary to create a logo.

**1** Give them something tangible. You may have a tough time explaining image and identity to your client, but tell them you'll give them camera-ready art and a floppy disk with their logo. All of a sudden they can see the light.

**2** Have many examples. In my brochure I have samples of about 25 logos I've designed for other small businesses like theirs. When they see other companies that they know, it makes it that much clearer in the client's mind what a logo really is.

**3** Don't give ideas away. Avoid the "can you show me what it looks like" clients unless they're willing to give you a deposit. I've used this line many times for the clients who say they've never paid for a sketch: "Can you ask an architect to show you drawings of what a second-story addition might look like on your house—for free—because you're not sure if you want one?"

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*This client used the wheel icon previously, but was unhappy about the cohesiveness of the wheel and the lettering. I incorporated the wheel and the lettering into one image. Center strokes on the "E" have been customized. [Fonts: ColorWheel is Bodoni Poster Compressed; Painting & Decorating is Gill Sans Bold, both from Adobe Systems, Inc., 345 Park Ave, San Jose CA 95110; 408-536-6000.]*



*The client wanted something simple, but unique. The lettering and the use of the yellow "swirl" in the rear help create a unique, identifiable element in the design. Repetitive use of the logo will create an image that's more and more recognizable for this client's company. Serifs were added to the corners to help the prismatic feel. [Fonts: Andrei is Eras Ultra Italic from Adobe Systems, Inc.; Paving & Landscaping is Impact.]*



*This client wanted something "to really stand out" and look impressive. The name itself has a "country" feel to it, so I designed the logo with that look. [The design was used on several magnets and trucks.] The picture graphic is relatively simple. The white highlights were accomplished by selecting the lettering and then inseting a new path. Letters customized from original front are the "M", "E" and "A". [Fonts: Meadowview is Rundfunk with the M, E and A customized; Contractors is Albertus from Adobe Systems, Inc.]*

I gently try to explain that I've got the same level of education as an architect and that my education wasn't any cheaper. You need to be compensated for your experience and your education, or you're selling yourself short. (This goes for sign sketches as well as logo designs. Don't give them away!)

**4** Explain the time involved in creating artwork and sketches. For me, designing logos can be hit or miss when it comes to how long it takes me to be comfortable with a design. Some I can visualize before I even sit down at the computer, then I can bang it out in half an hour. Others, I'll struggle with for over four hours before I'm happy with it. Add to that the time it takes to meet and show sketches (I generally don't show them more than one or two proposed sketches), and you've got a lot of hours invested.

Clients need to realize what goes into a design and the obvious reasons for being compensated for it. And "getting their business" isn't a reason to design for free. If you can spend all that time working for nothing, perhaps you might want to update your résumé. You won't make a career or build a business that way.

**5** Change the fonts and add some art. I think it's easier to sell a logo design when it doesn't look like it just flew off a computer. Avoid using standard typefaces—especially the common ones. No one wants to see their business name in Arial Bold. Update your font catalog or hand letter some art (see *Painting by Armando*) and scan it in. I like to alter the typefaces I choose so that they have a more custom feel. For example, you can change the cross stroke on the letter "a" or the center stroke on an "e"

(see *ColorWheel* and *Carnet Consultants*).

Whenever possible, use some artwork, but remember to keep it simple. Incorporate simplified graphics, similar to *Poseidon Pool*, *Eastern State Tire*, and *Strong Roots* to make the design a little more unique for your client.

You can also add simple but effective effects to the lettering, such as prismatic lettering (see *Alexis Transport*, *Andrei Paving*, and *Santa Maria*) or fades and blends.

**6** Explain the “recreating an existing logo” fee. It’s a little easier to sell a logo when you explain that if they want you to use their existing design exactly as is, you’ll have to charge them to scan it in and make it “plotter ready”. In some instances, it can take just as long to do this as it does to create a new logo.

**7** Explain why your design will be better for their business. I’ve had so many clients who, when we first met, insisted that they had a “logo”. I’ve enlightened nearly all of them as to why a more professional design would be better for their business.

The ones I can’t convince rarely become clients. I don’t want to work for someone who is not interested nor appreciates the value of creative work. They are usually the ones who think that Helvetica Bold holds the key to their financial success. I defer that work to the many instant shops around. It’s not what my business focuses on, anyway.

Sometimes it’s not too hard to convince clients that what they already have doesn’t work. Again, this is where education and experience play a role in convincing a client to trust you. If they’ve had their printer add a 30-year-old clip art design to their business card



*This client also wanted to “look big and reputable”. The lettering has not been altered significantly, but is unique enough on its own to not require any modifications. The sun and water elements help hold the design together, and create an image which looks more corporate. This is one of my favorites. [Fonts: Poseidon Pool is Rundfunk from ITC, 228 E. 45th St., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10017; 212-949-8072, and Spa is Serif Gothic from Adobe Systems, Inc.]*



*The client owns a home inspection company and needed lettering on a Ford F-350 King Cab truck. I designed the logo to fit across both doors, using all the space available. The magnifying glass and home graphic help convey the message further, and also creates an identifiable element of the design. The blue and red were done in reflective vinyl. [Fonts: Carnet Consultants is Copperplate 33bc; Home Inspections is Gill Sans Bold, both from Adobe Systems, Inc.]*



*This client wanted to look like a franchise. He wanted an image that instilled a higher comfort level in his client’s mind. Having a new engine installed in your car is a fairly traumatic experience, and image plays an important role in the consumer’s decision-making process. The client has told me that he repeatedly is asked where his other locations are—which means that most people believe his business to be a large franchise. [Fonts: The Engine Exchange is Eras Ultra; Engine Installation Center is Eras Black, both from Adobe Systems, Inc.]*



Here's one of my favorite logos—simple, clean and neat. The client does mainly municipal work and wanted something unique, but not too flashy. A simple graphic of the skyline sits perfectly in the center, adding balance to the design. [Fonts: Metro is Flange Bold with the "M" and "E" altered; Contracting is Albertus, both from Adobe Systems, Inc.]



The client wanted "something funky with no pictures and really cool lettering." So, I used a Mike Stevens's-inspired "S" as a starting point and designed around it. The "A"s are all modified from the original font. This logo was lettered on a red dump truck. The design held together really well. [Font: Santa Maria is Flange Bold.]



This client wanted the logo to give the image of a "large franchise". A simple graphic of a checkered flag conveys the automotive aspect, and the lettering has a racy feel. The "E"s and "A" were altered, and the "T" was brought through the panel for added interest. The lettering was used on a fleet of white trucks. [Fonts: Eastern State Tire is Frutiger Ultra Black; Automotive Center is Advertisers Gothic, both from Adobe Systems, Inc.]

or, heaven forbid, they have the "nephew who's really good at drawing" design—and they think that's their logo—it's usually easy to greatly improve their design.

8 Know what the market will bear and the client's logo usage. I can only attest to my rates for logo design. I'm sure it varies throughout the country. When I first started a few years ago, I was getting about \$75 per design for small businesses. That was not nearly enough.

Now my bare minimum for a logo is \$175, and most generally sell between \$225 and \$275. I know a few local shops that charge nothing or a nominal fee. Regardless, the old saying of not getting what you don't ask for holds true. If you think you're going to add the price of the design on the back end, forget it. You'll end up with a client who thinks you're overcharging them for something else.

You need to be up-front with the client about your separate logo and lettering fees. Give examples of what different logos cost and what those logos cost to letter. Find out what their sign budget is, explaining that the design will be created keeping the client's monetary constraints in mind. You don't want to design a nifty logo that you'll have to charge \$200 per door to apply when the client only wants to spend \$125 per door.

Generally, for a logo design and two truck doors, most clients will spend roughly \$475 to \$600. After they've had the work done, they all agree that it was money well spent.

It's important to note that there is a huge variance in pricing for logos for small businesses versus large businesses or institutions. I've sold several logos for a few thousand dollars for large companies. The design didn't take me



Here, the client wanted to “look like a big landscaping company”. He had black trucks, so I had to design something to work on that background. The simple leaf helps create a unique and identifiable part of the logo, while the lettering, with its “cut” sides, gives an outdoorsy look. [Font: Strong Roots is Novarese Italic from Adobe Systems, Inc.]



This environmental services logo was developed with only their stationery in mind. They have no vehicles that require lettering, so I incorporated a blend which is easily executed from a printing standpoint, but usually not on a vehicle lettering application. [Fonts: Prism is Novarese Italic; Environmental is Gill Sans Bold, both from Adobe Systems, Inc.]

any longer than a \$200 one, but the fee was obviously much larger. Why? Well, for one, the usage was much different. If the design is going on nearly everything, and you're dealing with a million-dollar corporation, they should pay more than the landscaper who is just using the design on his dump truck.

**9** Reposition your shop. If your design skills are strong, try to think of your shop not as a sign shop, but rather a mini

advertising studio. Look past the sign aspect and focus on what the client really needs from you in order for them to succeed. You're not just providing them with letters on their doors, but rather a whole image on which they can build their business.

If you stress the sheer marketing value of good logo design from a consumer standpoint, your clients can see the benefits more clearly. And as soon as you advise them of a marketing strategy, you're not just lettering their vehicles, you're

giving them advice on how their business can grow. □



Dan Antonelli's shop, *Graphic D-Signs Inc.*, is in Union, New Jersey. He can be reached at [dan@graphicd-signs.com](mailto:dan@graphicd-signs.com), and his Web site

is [www.graphicd-signs.com](http://www.graphicd-signs.com).



### About the cover design

When I asked Tom what he had in mind for this month's cover, I got this reply: “Work up a quick sketch, and I'll run it by the crew....”

Well, thirteen hours later my “quick sketch” was ready. It combines a variety of techniques I've outlined in the article, plus a few others which are really only practical in the print medium. Unless you're the likes of Brian Schofield, executing this job with paint would be extremely time-consuming.

The design was created in Macromedia Freehand 8.0 on a Mac. The lettering for *Logo* was inspired by a Mike Stevens's script. I made the script prismatic and added some soft “airbrushed” fades on the dark side of the letters. This was accomplished by cutting blended boxes that have the fade in them, then pasting them right into the existing path. Double outlines, and an outlined drop shadow, were then added.

The *Design* box is a simple technique. Using two boxes, create a fade 100% of a color to 100% black in one direction. Now place the second, smaller box on

top of the first box, with the fade going in the opposite direction. This creates the illusion of depth. The font is Rundfunk, from Fontek, with the *E* altered and a few other letters modified slightly.

The *S* employs the same technique as the lettering for *Logo*, except there are “airbrushed” highlights on both sides of the letter. Again, this was the same technique of cutting and pasting boxes with the airbrushing into the lettering.

As I was adding more and more impractical details to the design, I kept saying to myself, “Thank God this isn't going on someone's truck!”—D. A.