

Simplicity makes for memorable logos

Effective logo design is the cornerstone of your customer's image

From the time I was in the eighth grade, I can remember noticing logos, symbols, trademarks and icons designed to identify companies and the products they manufacture or service. The early 1960s provided many interesting examples for my young eyes. As these pieces shot by, my interest was sparked. I was seeing not only letter-forms, but graphic images, too.

On the way to my aunt's house every weekend, we passed the International Harvester plant. On their water tower was their IH logo. The more I looked at it, I saw something more than I and H. It was a man on a farm tractor!

Saturdays were always set aside for a bike trip to the hobby shop. Next to that building were three railroad tracks that brought some of the most interesting corporate symbols ever produced—the Canadian National CN logo, Burlington Northern BN and the Illinois Central IC trademarks. I could go on and on.

The point is that the people who designed logos, symbols and trademarks were quite an inspiration.

Obviously, a lot of time and money went into the development and research of these timeless designs. Corporations would not stop at anything to achieve the best look possible through legibility, simplicity and recognition value. Though the lettering was used imaginatively to convey the nature of a product or service, it was always the designs that I saw and tried to understand first.

But, I don't sit in a design studio talking to NBC or General Motors. My clients are small businesses and trades people, most with limited budgets. Some are just starting up. Many never gave a thought as to how their business image should look.

The samples in these photos were developed almost on the fly. There was brief communication about the client's needs and





expectations. Many times one's needs are simple, direct and let's get it done. You know: "I need to use my truck tomorrow..." Or, "They won't give me an occupancy permit without an ID sign on the fascia..."

I designed logos for each of the signs shown here. Here are my thoughts as to how each of them was developed.

Environmental uses a stylized E with a simple graphic of the world within the letter for worldwide recycling flavor.

The **Great Lakes** G utilizes horizontal bars depicting stacks of building boards, which the company supplies.

The graphic on the left of **Industrial Door** is a lowercase i and an industrial garage door at the same time.

The **Homer** tree and lowercase h were the "Don't tell the boss, but we need a new look..." approach. The bulky H served as a perfect backdrop for a skinny trunk and medium-leafed treetop—all green, of course.

The **Upgrade** logo depicts a few things—a bold U and an arrow pointing up, which just happen to be the shape of a home.

My interest in those unique images that I absorbed many years ago helped me with my design process today. Simplicity, legibility and recognition coupled with a simple, well-thought-out layout are always a timeless value to our clients. ☺



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