

QUICKSTART GUIDE TO MARKETING: YOUR LOGO & VISUAL IDENTITY

When most people think of “branding” they think of logos – the predominant part of a brand’s Visual Identity. But there’s much more involved than the identifying mark used on your website and business cards.

A brand’s visual identity is a collection of visual assets and defined aesthetics – including a logo, tagline, colors, fonts, commonly used imagery, graphic styles, and more – used to identify and promote the brand. Used together, in conjunction with a brand guide, these pieces help you present your brand in a consistent and memorable way.

“...you have just 7 seconds to make a first impression.”

Thanks to a 2011 Forbes study, it’s a commonly held belief that you have just 7 seconds to make a first impression. It’s also estimated that “55% of first impressions are made by what we see.” (US Chamber of Commerce, 2016)

When it comes to making great first impressions as a brand, your visual identity plays an important role.

“Whether people are meeting a new person or a brand, first impressions are mostly visual. Smart design choices not only give brands a better chance at grabbing attention, but they also leave a lasting impression.”

(US Chamber of Commerce, 2016)

With so much of your reputation riding on your brand’s appearance, it’s worth it to spend some time developing your visual identity.

This includes designing your logo, creating a tagline, choosing brand colors, selecting the fonts you’ll use consistently, and outlining the styles of photography and graphics you’ll use.

PARTS OF A BRAND’S VISUAL IDENTITY

Logo Design

Color Palette

Fonts & Text Styles

Photography Styles

Graphics & Other Assets

Effective Branding = Good First Impressions

When we talk about branding, the most desirable trait is for it to be effective. But what exactly does it need to be effective at doing?

An effective visual identity is well-designed, takes the social mindset into consideration, and successfully conveys a core idea, concept, or impression relating to the brand.

While you want to like your logo, remember that your personal preferences do not necessarily equal an effective design.

Ask for input from a range of sources – *like your spouse, your team, current customers / supporters, vendors, partners, and your staff* – to get a well-rounded view of how your logo design will be received and interpreted.

It's important to design a logo that will be effective for your business, which goes beyond simply designing something you like.

EFFECTIVE BRANDING...

**Stands out and gets noticed
(in a positive way).**

**Sends a message or
successfully embodies
a feeling.**

**Is easily remembered and
instantly recognizable.**

**Connects and relates to
the people your services /
products are geared towards.**

**Will stay relevant through
changing trends, styles, and
social interpretations.**



These logos all belong to very well-known brands. They've become so easily recognizable that they can identify themselves simply with their logomarks and brand color palettes. All are examples of strong visual identities that have been built to be effective at capturing their target audiences.

(Logos: Nike, Target, Apple, Pepsi Co.)

ASK FOR INPUT:

Does it send the right message?

Does it invoke the right feelings?

Is it memorable on its own?

Does it look like / remind you of anyone else's branding?

Does it have longevity? Or does it utilize 'trendy' design?

Logo Variations

While you want to use one main logo for consistency, there will be times when you need your logo to fit a specific space.

Anticipate these potential needs by asking for versions of your logo in both horizontal and vertical orientations.

If it works with the design, an emblem-style square or circle version is also useful, especially for social media and promotional items.

In addition to different orientations, you may have multiple color options of your logo, as well. Include guidance in your brand guide for which version of your logo is your primary one, to be used for most applications. Also include parameters for when it's appropriate to use the other versions, and any specifications for doing so.

It's best to have all your logo versions saved where you can access them without needing to contact your designer for files. You'll also want a variety of file types for different applications.

Tips For Creating Your Logo

1. Take your time; don't rush!

Designing your logo could be the most complex design project you undertake. Give yourself adequate time.

2. Make sure it's uniquely yours.

Your logo has the potential to be a highly valuable asset for your business as the most recognizable piece of your brand.

3. Keep in mind who your logo is "for."

It's important that you like it, but primarily your logo needs to capture attention and speak to your target audiences.

FULL COLOR PRIMARY LOGO



FULL COLOR REVERSE LOGO



ONE-COLOR BLACK / WHITE



VERTICAL LOGO



CIRCLE EMBLEM



Pictured above is AnchorPointe Graphic's logo suite, which includes several variations of colors and layout to allow for use on a wide variety of uses. Whatever needs come up in the future, we have a logo that will work for it!

Selecting Brand Colors

Why should you select and utilize specific colors to represent your brand?

Color provides a stronger association for people than words. According to one survey of 2,500 consumers, **“using a signature color can cause an 80% increase in a consumer’s recognition of your brand.”** (Reboot Online, 2019)

Tips for Choosing Brand Colors:

1. Limit your primary brand palette to 3 colors.

A limited color palette creates built-in consistency. You can select secondary colors that compliment, contrast, and add impact to your visual identity.

2. Think about the mood and tone your colors convey.

Color is a strong identifier and invokes strong emotions in people. Many of our perceptions about color come from our cultures and environments, so it’s important to think from your target audience’s point of view.

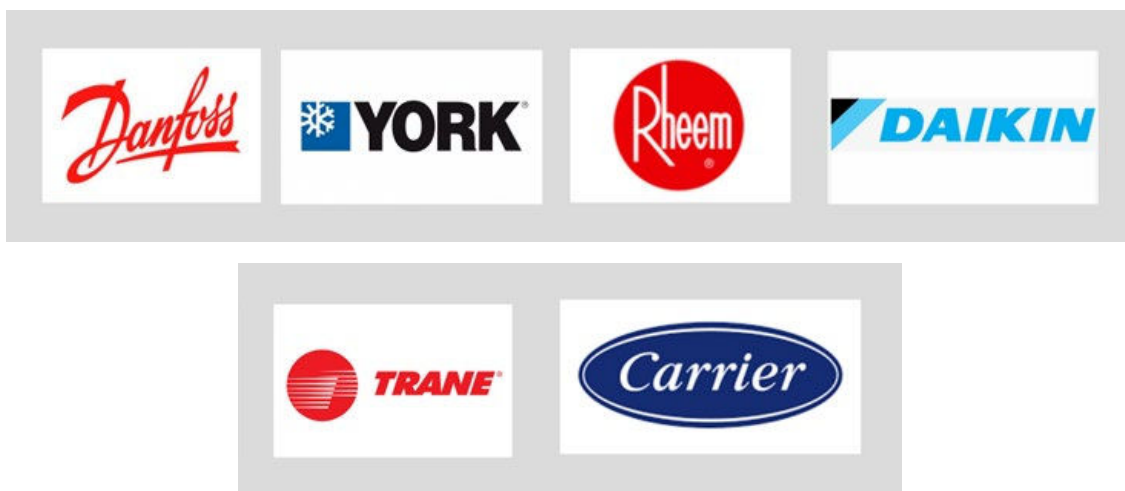
3. Be aware of “Industry Standard” colors in your field.

There are a few color choices that have become cliché and expected for specific fields – which can work against your branding goals. It’s okay to include these colors, but think about how you can create a unique appearance for your brand with contrasting or unexpected color pairings.

LEARN MORE ABOUT COLOR PSYCHOLOGY IN MARKETING:

Read our blog post **“How Color Effects Us”** to dive deeper into how the colors you choose for marketing influence people’s thoughts, feelings, & decisions.

Scan the
QR Code
to read!



This array of logos represents the top HVAC manufacturing brands in the US. Notice any color patterns? Red and blue are very prevalent color choices in this industry. This color pairing makes sense for this industry, as red typically resonates as “hot” and blue as “cold” for most people.

What ways can you see that these brands have used to differentiate themselves? Which brands might be more easily confused for another? The addition of black or another color to add contrast, or using a different hue than other brands are a few ways you can create a unique visual identity that stands out.

Color Uses: Print, Digital, Web, and Color Matching

Your brand needs to be able to go wherever your target audience goes; in print, online, on promo items or clothing, in your store / lobby spaces, etc. We know that color is a strong identifier. Which means that everywhere your brand colors appear, they should be as consistent as possible. Think of “Tiffany Blue” or “Barbie Pink” and you picture the same hue, every time.

Create color consistency across all your materials by selecting color data for each of the main color modes. These include Pantone, CMYK, RGB, and HEX color modes. If possible, start by selecting colors from the Pantone Matching System using a physical swatch book.

Pantone colors are created with exact color recipes that are able to be replicated by anyone with the right capabilities. Even Digital print technology uses Pantone color data for accurate color matching.

This makes it the most reliable way to communicate color and ensure that your digital printer, website designer, or even interior painter uses colors that will match as closely as possible. In turn, this will provide you with the most control over how your brand colors appear across all communication channels.

After selecting Pantone colors, you can use a color converter to select the closest matching hues for the other color modes. We recommend using a Pantone + CMYK color book to select your CMYK color data. This will let you see a direct comparison between the Pantone ink and the corresponding CMYK toner-created color.

You will end up with the same color palette in four different data modes: Pantone colors for accurate color matching, CMYK for digital printing, and RGB and HEX for digital output.

“...everywhere your brand colors appear, they should be as consistent as possible.”



A Pantone Color Bridge swatch book shows a direct comparison of Pantone colors next to the closest CMYK equivalents. This will help you choose colors for your brand that will look as-intended across all platforms and production methods.

Example of a Brand Color Palette:

Navy Blue
PMS 540
HEX 003056
CMYK 100 57 12 66
RGB 0/48/87

Light Green
PMS 390
HEX B6BD00
CMYK 35 12 100 0
RGB 181/189/0

Teal
PMS 326
HEX 0CA89E
CMYK 86 2 41 0
RGB 0/175/170

Logo Ownership; Copyrights and Trademarks

Logos are a unique piece of artwork created to represent an organization. Here's what you need to know about logo ownership and how to protect this important piece of your brand.

When you start using your logo for your business, you are the trademark owner. Even without officially registering it, you have exclusive rights to use your logo in conjunction with marketing your specific goods or services in your geographic area. You need to be the first to use it in your area, and be consistent about using it for self-promotion. However, these “common law” type protections are limited to your local surroundings, and your specific business type / industry.

You can pay for an official trademark registration with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). This provides stronger, nationwide legal protection of your logo (or name, tagline, etc.). Whether you register your logo with the USPTO depends on a few factors. These include how large your business is, how far your reach is, how valuable your brand identifiers are to your business, and how high your risk of infringement is.

Some businesses wait to register until it makes sense to do so. For example, if you are a small business that recently started selling your products online, you may choose to officially register your logo to prevent another business across the country from using similar branding that could confuse or mislead your online customers.

Both a copyright and a trademark protect intellectual property (*things created or designed by a company or individual*) – but they protect different types of intellectual property.

A logo can be considered – and registered – as both.

A Copyright protects things that are created. You automatically have a copyright to anything you create and fix in a tangible medium such as paper, cloth, or digitally. A **registered** copyright, marked by a © symbol, protects your exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, or display your created work and prevents others from copying or exploiting your creation.

A Trademark protects things that identify a company to customers and differentiate against competitors. According to the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), trademark protects “*words, names, symbols, sounds or colors that distinguish goods and services from those manufactured or sold by others and to indicate the source of the goods.*” A Trademark can be registered (®) or unregistered (™) – both provide some level protection.

Although not required, using a ™ serves as notice to the public that the words or logo is an unregistered trademark. For registered trademarks the ® symbol is used.

To be eligible for trademark protection, a design must meet USPTO standards for uniqueness. You cannot trademark a design that is too generic – such as a circle. In addition, your design cannot be too like another design that is already trademarked or for which there is a pending application.

Copyrights Are Applied to:

Artwork
(paintings, illustrations,
and other fine art media)
Photography
Graphics & Digital Art
Writing
Fashion Design

Trademarks Are Applied to:

Logos
Taglines
Specific Colors
Graphic Assets
Icons
Phrases
Sounds



STARBUCKS®

To the left are two recognizable pieces of Starbucks® coffee's branding. Notice that the famous, green two-tailed siren emblem is marked with the "TM" symbol of an unregistered trademark. The actual text of "Starbucks" is denoted with a ® Registered Trademark symbol. Both are widely used to market this brand's wares across the globe.

Transferring Ownership

As the original creator of your logo, the designer is the first legal copyright owner. When you commission an original work from an independent creator, they retain ownership until they transfer it to you in writing.

It's generally accepted that logo designs are the exception to this rule, as the intent is to be used as a trademark to represent a business. However, it's always best practice to obtain the copyright to your logo design officially.

Many designers include copyright transfers in their work contracts. Once the work is completed and payment is made in full, the ownership transfers automatically. Otherwise, simply ask your designer to transfer the copyright ownership of your logo, and other brand assets, to your name in writing.

Your designer may wish to retain 'portfolio rights' to the work you've created together. This is commonplace, and up to you if you are comfortable with them showcasing the design as part of their repertoire. It can be mutually beneficial, as it puts your branding in more places online. If your designer has a positive reputation, it can be a good public connection for your business.

If you wish to obtain the portfolio rights for ultimate control of your logo, be prepared to pay an additional fee. Designers use their recent work to get the attention of new clients. If you don't want them using your design for this purpose, they may ask for additional compensation.

Final Deliverables to ask for from your logo designer:

Versions of Your Logo:

- Primary Logo Format
- Alt. Logo Formats (horizontal, vertical, emblem, etc.)
- Logomark Only (graphic without text)
- Logotype Only (text without graphic)

Color Variations of Artwork: (in Pantone, CMYK, and RGB)

- Full-Color Versions
- Reverse-Color Versions
- Alt. Color Versions
- 1-Color Black
- 1-Color White
- 1-Color in Brand Colors

File Types:

- Copy of original files (the program used to create artwork)
- EPS (retains vector art)
- PDF
- JPG
- PNG (with transparent backgrounds)



Above is a selection of APG's brand guide, showing some of the variations of our logo we keep on hand. Having different formats and color versions ready to go means that we can quickly decide which one will work best for each need and send the correct file to production.

Progress, Not Perfection

While it's important to take the time to create effective branding, don't get hung up on needing the "perfect" logo before getting started.

Consistent doesn't mean stagnant. You can evolve and modify your branding as your organization grows. What matters is that you have a solid foundation to start from.

Once you have the basics created, you can start utilizing them in the real world. Then you'll have more guidance on what you may want to change. Marketing is always an ongoing experiment. The "guess and check" system is a critical part of self-promotion.

Don't worry if your logo doesn't feel "perfect" right now. You'll have time to reevaluate and morph it into something that embodies your brand as you gain experience and feedback.

Next Up: Part 3 – Verbal Identity

In Part 3 of this series, explore the less well-known side of branding; **your verbal identity**. Define how your brand speaks to audiences; your word choices and use of slang, tone of voice, messaging, and learn how it all ties into your brand's mission, vision, and purpose.