What Makes a Good Logo a Good Logo?
A Non-Designer's Guide

Designers have been putting their clients into a terribly unfair position for far too long by asking them to determine the merits of a logo for their organization without educating them on proper evaluative measures. What's worse is these same designers will express great frustration when said clients make "unreasonable" requests such as: "We're a bike company. Why isn't our logo a bike?" and "My wife hates the color green. Can we use blue instead?"

For the designer, these answers are clear but often expressing them in a manner that is concise and digestible is a task they find overwhelmingly difficult. Take the four logos at the top of this document, for example. While we all know and typically respect the design integrity of these brands, it's quite challenging to articulate why. After all, Apple's logo is not a computer, FedEx's logo is not a delivery truck, Starbucks' logo is not a cup of coffee, and Nike's logo is not athletic equipment. So, why are these working?

To put an end to this seemingly elusive question, we at Beveridge Seay have decided to share our own points of evaluation. These measures are based on historical evidence of successful logos in the market, a whole lot of reading and research on the subject of identity, and our near 25 years in the business of designing these things. In other words: *trust us*.

In evaluating the merits of a logo, there are four critical questions to ask:

   **1. Does the logo express a specific feeling or personality that is important
       to convey to our audience?**

Rather than defining what an organization does, a strong logo will often help define what an organization is *about*. Clients sometimes believe the role of the designer is to convert a mission statement into a pictogram, but the smart designer recognizes a logo is an opportunity to convey something potentially more powerful. In our examples above, Apple speaks to simplicity with a nod to Newton and clearly communicates that it's not your typical computer company. FedEx inspires confidence and reliability through bold letterforms with a hint of an arrow between the 'e' and 'x'. Starbucks captures an earthy and warm "feel-good" feeling. Nike embodies speed, precision, and understated power.

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To be fair, making an inspiring statement through a logo is not always realistic, and often intrinsic meaning will not be realized until much later in its life. What you can do from the outset, however, is complete this sentence: *It's important for our organization to appear [insert adjective].* If your potential logo does not reflect any similarities to the adjective you chose, you are likely on the wrong track.

2. Is the logo distinctive?

We'll admit that this is a fairly abstract concept but – before you wince at the word abstract – determining whether or not a logo is distinctive may be an easier exercise than you might expect. All that it requires is a review of your proposed logo in comparison to your competitors and other organizations in your industry. Does your candidate get lost in a sea of similar shapes, colors, or visual treatments? Or does it stand apart in a positive way?

Another key attribute is whether or not a logo is memorable. After leaving the logo presentation, for example, can you clearly visualize the shapes and forms that you reviewed several hours later? If a number of options were presented, which come to mind first? If you are able to remember a logo, it's a strong indication that your audience will too.

3. Is the logo going to be functional?

While there is a growing trend for visually complex and excessively detailed logo design running recklessly throughout the design community, be mindful that – unless your organization's presence is strictly web-based – you may regret not asking some basic questions on functionality. These include: Will the logo embroider well? Will it be legible at a very small size? What happens if it's printed in the newspaper in black and white? And how does it look on a dark background? Don't let your designer shrug these questions off – they should be proven through examples and testing.

4. Is the logo well crafted?

This question may be particularly difficult for the non-designer but competent execution is a big indication of whether or not you are getting your money's worth. Do curves appear smooth and uninterrupted? Are straight edges straight? Does the spacing between letters appear visually balanced?

While quality assurance is the responsibility of your designer, unfortunately there are many who regularly overlook fine details. A word of caution: Your designer will hate you if you identify a flaw that they didn't see… Do it anyway.

Beveridge Seay, Inc. is a multi-disciplined brand and identity consultancy. Since 1987, the company has provided its extensive and diverse client base with visual design and messaging solutions that support long-term strategic goals and near-term tactical objectives.