

Creative intelligence for
startups and scaleups



Choosing the right logo for your startup

Branding briefing

SIM7
Creative Agency

The lowdown on logos

When it comes to selecting the right identity for your business, there's a lot more to consider than just the aesthetics.

"LinkedIn! I need help choosing my new logo."

Tempted to ask your network's opinion on your new brand identity? Without mincing words that's the worst possible idea.



Why?

Here's a metaphor to illustrate the point: let's say someone posts a picture of four shoes on social media.

There's a brown brogue, a smart trainer, a Chelsea boot and a black lace-up. The accompanying copy goes something like this: "I need a new pair of shoes for an interview, but I'm not sure which is right for me. Which would you choose?"

Pretty soon the post gets plenty of likes, comments and opinions. Networks on LinkedIn tend to love this kind of request. It gives the contributors a chance to (be seen to) help, without requiring much expertise or effort. Win/win!

The results are in. The black lace-up gets the most votes! The network loves the sensible shoe more than any other option, thereby making it the obvious choice. Excellent, decision made!

Ah, but there's a problem. The person who created the post actually wanted the shoes for an interview with Google, where even the HR director wears Nikes to board meetings. How could they have been so badly let down by the 'hive mind'?

Perhaps they didn't provide enough information to go on? Likely!

Or maybe the network wasn't their target audience? Now we're on to something!

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The better the research, the better the brand

A decent branding agency is unlikely to give you four logo options to choose from. In fact, (arguably) the best agencies won't offer any options; they'll simply design the best identity for the job. Because they're the experts after all.

And how do they do it? By applying creativity to a distillation of information. And while that sentence might make some readers want to vomit into their Chelsea boots, it's nevertheless true.

Here's how it works...

Ms. Foster wants a logo for her Personal Training business. She sets up a meeting with 'Decent Branding Agency Creative.' and they ask her probing questions such as:

- What are your ambitions for the business?
- What is the opportunity?
- Who are your key competitors?
- How do you stack up against them?
- What do we want people to feel or believe?
- Who are we talking to? What do we know about them? Do we know what they respond to?
- What tangible outcome would you like to achieve?
- Are there any existing brand attributes that need to be reflected?
- Are there any creative solutions that should be avoided? Why?

Eek! And that's just the start of it.

Next, DBA Creative will question, analyse and experiment. They'll choose the colours, fonts and creative approach that suits each and every one of the answers they're given and, if they have the budget, they might even do some market research and refine their thinking before coming up with the ideal logo.

But what if a design agency's prices are all too much for your startup? What happens then?



Livin' la vida logo (solo!)

Of course, there are cheaper ways of getting logos designed – many of which will probably do the job when you're only just starting out. But be prepared do more of the research yourself and provide explicit instructions about exactly what it is you're after.

Do:

Ignore trends

If you want something that's ageless don't follow some fad or trend. We've seen an increase in nostalgic rebrands in recent years, for example - Pizza Hut, Co-op and Burger King to name a few. Of course, for a brand with a rich heritage this can work well, but piggyback on this one at your peril.

Put your budget to better use and go with something that will stand the test of time. Sure, experiment with your colour palette, avoid the 'safe' colours for your industry if you're up for disrupting the status quo, but don't go for something that simply doesn't suit or will obviously be old hat in six months' time.

Keep it simple

Remember when Wilkinson rebranded to Wilko and Marks & Spencer became simply M&S? They did this in response to their customers. Because people don't like things that are overcomplicated or that take time to process.

It's why brand after brand have been busy simplifying their logos - think Pepsi, Mastercard, Gap, we could go on.

Choose your font carefully

Put the serif fonts down and move away. That's our best advice for a simple and modern look. Of course, they can work in the right context but there are not many occasions where they will work better in a logo than a sans serif font. You want an example? We give you Google who changed from serif to sans serif in 2015.

Alright, alright serifs can work. Just ask Gucci, Prada, Rolex or indeed Tiffany & Co. They're luxury brands wanting to exude elegance. But they have used them with care. Each letter is given space to breathe, and the overall designs are kept super simple.

Make sure it works in monotone

Of course, many brands have created their logo in a chic black and white anyway, but if you're introducing colour into yours, you'll want to make sure there is a monotone version that works nicely too. Think letterheads or even overlays for colour pictures in graphic designs and marketing content. It's one of those things you just gotta remember to check.



Bring your brand values into the mix

When it comes to branding, we often talk about how consistency is key, and in logo design this holds true. While you may be clear on exactly what your brand represents - your values if you like - your audience will make assumptions based on how you come across in everything you do.

And yes, your logo contributes to that. If you strive to be the shaving brand whose demographic seeks practicality over glamour then stick to basics in the design. If your mission is to save the planet, a bold, red logo might instead scream danger.

Try it out with a few of your target clients

Once you've come up with a few options or ideas you like, find some trustworthy people who closely represent your ideal customer and show them the designs to see what they think. Try not to be all precious about the whole thing (honestly harder than it sounds!). And definitely go back to the drawing board if your gut is telling you something is not working for them.

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And finally, a 'Don't'

If you're after a logo that's meaningful and helps you stand out then don't ask a bunch of strangers on the internet what they think.

Sounds obvious when you put it like that!

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For more branding tips and tricks to help get your startup packing a punch, head over to SIM7 creative agency sim7creative.co.uk

Or get in touch with our startups branding specialist Henry John at Henry@sim7creative.co.uk