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GRAPHIC DESIGNER

The Logo Design Process of Top Logo Designers



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Want to know the secrets of how top graphic designers create their logos?

This article will reveal exactly how top logo designers of today's modern age create their logos. It will show the design process that these designers go through to get to their final logo design.

Their Design Process:

- 1. The Brief
- 2. Research
- 3. Visual Research
- 4. Sketching & Conceptualising
- 5. Reflection
- 6. Positioning
- 7. Presentations
- 8. Celebration

1. The Brief

The Brief

Nearly all designers agree that the initial accumulation of information from the client is the most important step, either by a face to face interview or a questionnaire. This is where you must establish the design brief. Designer, John Homs says "You really need to understand your client very thoroughly before you get started. Logo Design is never just shooting in the dark. It's just the opposite."

If you haven't got a client yet you may be interested in how to get your first job. Or if you need help on writing a design brief check out how do you write a graphic design brief?

2. Research





After moulding the design brief, getting to know your client's businesses is the next crucial step in making a logo successful. Research includes general reading on the industry itself, sometimes on its history, and on its competitors. If budgets allow, external research can be carried out.

3. Visual Research



This is research not into the clients business, but into the actual logo style. This is where we seek out a look, a style, an approach or attitude, usually to attain a period or style that we are unfamiliar with, or to refresh ourselves with what is new or successful. Eg. Find logos of similar business' and critique them. This is where you look for inspiration.

Designer Wendy Stamberger said "I look more for techniques and to ask myself why a certain logo looks corporate, or what makes a really good health care logo: or for example why do I like this logo and dislike that one?" Designers should do this to gain a better understanding of the industry and competition.

Note: Some designers actually refuse the use of visual research, preferring to use their own mental source book, however others say that doing so, is limiting your design solution.

4. Sketching & Conceptualising

Sketching & Conceptualising

Developing the logo design concept(s) is where creativity comes into play, this is where the designer must create the logo by using the design brief and the research conducted. Some designers use a napkin to sketch, some use a sketchbook and some use the computer as paper, this is all a matter of personal choice, however using a computer first up is not recommended.

When conceptualising, some designers are mainly concerned with the graphic style and image of a piece while others try to convey deep meaning or some sort of visual puzzle (such as the arrow in the FedEx logo – look between the e and x). These types of logos have a bigger impact on the viewer and when a designer creates one, they know it straight away. It will be unique and will add a dimension to the experience and to the whole identity. For more information

on conceptualizing check out my article on how to design a logo or the ultimate guide to logo design or if you need help on typography, check out the top 5 typography resources.

5. Reflection



Taking breaks is as important as the physical research and the design brief. It is so easy to get stuck in a creative cul-de-sac (learn how to be creative) and get tired of a project and th / logo designers take breaks. By resting, your ideas mature and deve he back of your head. When you go back to your project, you have renewed enthusiasm, insight and opportunity. This is also a good stage to get feedback from others.

6. Positioning

Dositioning N 1

This is where designers choose how to work... they either position themselves like contractors and take orders according to their clients wishes (ie. Don't advise their clients of design matters) OR they position themselves like a business and build themselves a long term relationship (ie. Guide clients to a more appropriate solution much alike how a lawyer does). Designers have to choose how they wish to work. Personally, I try to find a happy medium.

7. Presentation



This is where the designer must present their work to the client. They can choose whether to show the client a huge variety of logo design concepts (if it is hard to gauge a clients taste) OR they could choose to showcase just a few select logo designs. This is another debatable issue. I personally, present only the best 1 or 2 concepts.

8. Celebration

Celebration.	
Celeviation.	

In a survey conducted to 75 top designers, when the job is finally finished and approved, 31% of designers celebrate by drinking beer, 12% head for

chocolate, 22% head off to bed to catch up on sleep and the other 35% can't celebrate because they must start on the next logo design.

Summary

Summary	
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Below is a summary of the whole design process for quick review. You may even find it useful to print the whole article – if so, make sure you print the smart way or even better, use the Print function found at the bottom of this article.

- 1. Design Brief: Conduct Questionnaire or Interview with client to get the design brief.
- 2. **Research:** Conduct research focused on the industry itself, on its history, and on its competitors.
- 3. **Reference:** Conduct research into logo designs that have been successful and current styles and trends that are related to the design brief.
- 4. Sketching & Conceptualising: Develop the logo design concept(s) around the brief and research. Use creativity. Know how to design a logo.
- 5. **Reflection:** Take breaks throughout the design process. This lets your ideas mature and for you to get renewed enthusiasm. Receive feedback.
- 6. **Positioning:** Position yourself as a contractor or build a long lasting relationship. ie. Client orders you what to do OR You guide client to the best solution.
- 7. **Presentation:** Choose to present only a select few logos to the client or a whole collection.
- 8. **Celebration:** Drink beer, eat chocolate, sleep, start on next logo design. Or a combination. ;)

Moral

Moral of the Story

When given a brief, every designer interprets in their own way and if an assignment is given to 100 different designers, it would return 100 different logos, few of which would resemble each other. Though we all endlessly conjecture what makes a 'good' or 'bad' logo, one must remember in the end, the ultimate arbiter of logo design greatness may only be the satisfied, paying client.

The secret moral to this story, therefore, is to work hard, but not be too hard on your first concepts as the process itself, is the key to ultimate success.

If you are interested in getting a professionally designed logo, I am currently available for hire.

This article is a summary of the secret logo design process that 75 top designers told to Leslie Cabarga in his book The Secret Life of Logos: Behind The Scenes With Top Designers.

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194 JUST[™] Creative Comments

Jesus Omar February 1, 2008 at 3:55 pm

Very educational post, thanks for the article.

Jesus Omar's last blog post..January 2008 Desktop

inspirationbit February 1, 2008 at 4:57 pm

Reply

Reply

This is an excellent round-of the logo design process, Jacob. And I really liked how you decorated this post - great job! Stumbled, Dugg, del.icio.us ;-)

inspirationbit's last blog post..The 2008 Bloggies – A Joke Or A Smack On The Face?

Jacob Cass February 1, 2008 at 4:59 pm

Reply

Ah Jesus Omar, I see you saw the link on David's blog. Glad you

found it useful :) All the best.

Thanks Vivien. :)

liam February 1, 2008 at 11:31 pm

Reply

Nice read. And looks great what you've done adding graphics throughout.

Jacob Carter February 2, 2008 at 5:49 am

Reply

Reply

I love the article. Thanks for sharing.

I would have never thought of actually doing visual research. Now that I think of it, it seems almost essential. I could see how some designers who just rely on their past knowledge would get stuck in a certain type or way or design. Learning and using new ideas seems to be essential.

Welcome to Paradise February 2, 2008 at 3:32 pm

Gee.... man you are a good designer and I mean it. Hats off to you man.



Reply

Great procedure!	
------------------	--

According to you which is best logo format? I mean text or image based logo?

Jon February 3, 2008 at 3:38 am

Reply

Positioning: you hit the nail on the head with that one!

David Airey February 14, 2008 at 1:01 am

Reply

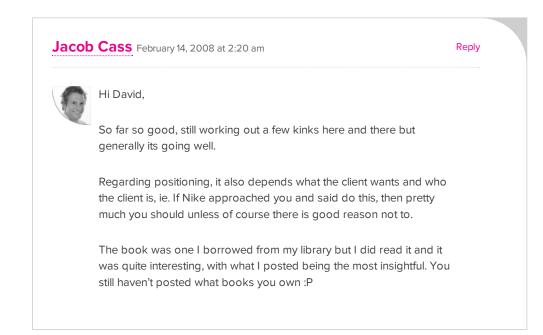
Hi Jacob,

Hope all's well.

For the positioning section, any designer who is not informing the client of design issues isn't doing their job properly. Education is a big part of my process, which ultimately improves the designer / client relationship.

The book from Leslie looks interesting. Is it one in your library?

David Airey's last blog post..When is a 'bad' logo design actually 'good'?



David Airey February 14, 2008 at 2:24 am

I think that if Nike were to hire a design agency, they'd do so because they want the agency's opinion. Otherwise, all their work would be in-house. I wonder who's responsible for Nike's design work?

On the subject of my library, I haven't had time to take photos of the books, and probably better to take it one at a time. I haven't forgotten though. :)

David Airey's last blog post..When is a 'bad' logo design actually 'good'?

Jacob Cass February 14, 2008 at 2:35 am



Another arguable blog post about whether to educate your client or not, I know educating your client (www.makemylogobiggercream.com ring a bell?) would be a bit more favourable however in Nike's example I think that they would trust a agency by the work that they have previously done so Nike would not need be educated as such, they would just expect it to be quality but of course it varies from project to project. I couldn't find a thing on who does Nike's designs but it was only a

quick search. You could just list the books and provide links on Amazon.

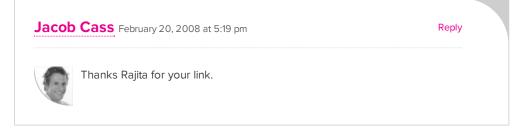
rajita February 20, 2008 at 2:20 pm

Reply

Reply

Reply

Once you get the idea of the design process ,then you can use your imagination to take you where no designer has ever gone before. Hope its helps you guys. http://logodesignnewzealand.co.nz/blog/index.php/it-latest/logo-design-tutorial/



Cade April 20, 2008 at 6:14 am

Reply

Hey, your first link in 1. The Brief is dead.

Otherwise, thanks for a good article.

ARI April 25, 2008 at 1:41 pm

Nice and useful article! ;)

Paintworkz Web Design May 13, 2008 at 1:04 am

A wonderful post and thanks for sharing it with everyone. A very good presentation overall.

shashika (1 comments) May 13, 2008 at 10:25 pm

Reply

Reply

Reply

Great Great Just Great!

D.A.T. May 25, 2008 at 6:03 am

Reply

great article. Very informative. Keep up the good work here I love your blog

Shane June 27, 2008 at 2:42 am
Reply
Hi Jacob,
Great articles, you clearly know your stuff. This information on logo design is incredible, thank you very much for posting it.
I have a few questions and I hope it's alright to ask:
1) Roughly how long does the logo design process take?
2) What is the best way to charge a client for the service, hourly or as set fee?
3) How much should a designer charge? I've been a designer for 10 years but have never designed a logo, but up for the challenge.

Thanks again!

danny garcÃa September 12, 2008 at 1:43 am	Reply
excelente post.	
great post.	

Richard September 13, 2008 at 12:30 am

Reply

Great Article! I work for the best web design firm located in NY called NoamDesign and it's always great to stumble upon articles that help motivate, educate and inspire! Thanks!

Nermeen September 19, 2008 at 10:12 pm

Reply

Do you know any free program I could use?

Jacob Cass September 20, 2008 at 10:52 am

Reply

Here is a list of all the programs you could use. http://www.maa.org/editorial/mathgames/mathgames_08_01_05.html

 Steve
 October 15, 2008 at 12:41 am
 Reply

 Every once in a while you find a real gem, and this is one of them, thanks very much!!
 Steve

Brochure Printing | PrintPlace October 24, 2008 at 6:21 am

Reply

Nice overview and I especially like the added graphics, but I'm sure you probably already figured that! ;) I think a lot of designers, myself included, skip

the reflection part. It's a nice idea, but sometimes there just aren't enough hours in the day, week, or whatever the deadline is for a design. It's definitely a good idea, and I've had times where I've thought of something better days later, but by then it's past deadline and too late.

Jacob Cass October 24, 2008 at 12:20 pm

Reply

Q

Kristina, That is also true, that is why I usually try to start logo designs as soon as I can so I can get the reflection part in, it really does improve the final result.

Pierre November 14, 2008 at 11:30 am

Reply

hey this articles is awesome!like it!

Emiloly November 30, 2008 at 7:07 pm

Reply

Yup ... Reflection is a big part for me too. I had a little giggle at the 'creative culde-sac' as it's something I think that we have all experienced.

Lawrence Anderson December 15, 2008 at 8:47 am

Reply

Great post!

It's always nice to read a short reflection on how the design process works (or at least how it should) because sometimes you find yourself making too many adjustments to fit client constraints.

I especially liked #6. Personally, I think I would like to start positioning myself closer to your business/lawyer analogy.

Thanks for the read, Lawrence

Reply

We work with many different designers on the numerous sites we own, so this was a very helpful article. THANKS!

Hans van Wijk January 11, 2009 at 5:06 am

Reply

Great article, helped me a lot figuring out some problems.

BRANDCORE January 20, 2009 at 11:10 pm

Reply

Reply

great article !very usefull!

Fabian January 24, 2009 at 5:54 pm

Great article Jacob!It's so true without a strong brief your are flying blind.How do you handle clients that only offer a very basic brief? I'm starting to tear my hair out with ones that are...I need a logo for a Gym.



Yes I do send a questionnaire:)	

Don't you just hate taking on design work for a company when they already have a shit logo!! A good logo should compliment a design it is going on. It's a nightmare when you design something good for a company and then you have to place their poor logo onto your great design.

Meng February 11, 2009 at 3:56 am

Reply

Reply

That's the turth! Especially while I am designing a logo for someone. I like your site Jacob Cass, Hope we can have more communication in the future!

Adamaris February 14, 2009 at 12:16 am

Thanks Jacob Cass for your valuable post. I think Logo design is an important area of graphic design, and one of the most difficult to perfect. The logo is the image embodying an organization. Because logos are meant to represent companies' brands or corporate identities and foster their immediate customer recognition, it is counterproductive to frequently redesign logos. The term Logo Design refers to a number of artistic and professional disciplines, which focus on visual communication and presentation.

MirazTutorials February 21, 2009 at 5:15 am Reply

Excellent layout of the key aspects related to creating well thought out and planned design. Its not all about creativity there is logic in it to :)

atommedia February 23, 2009 at 7:00 am

Reply

good to see the design process laid out

 Funny SMS
 February 24, 2009 at 3:41 am
 Reply

 Best Tutorial I ever saw

Krystian March 3, 2009 at 4:56 am	Reply
" 35% can't celebrate because they must start on the next logo design." sn't it an easy way to professional burnout? Celebration should be one of mo	ost
mportant stages, it helps to find motivation in this job.	
Fhanks for the article.	

Rich March 10, 2009 at 2:05 pm

Reply

thanks for the nice article...I am too often part of the 35% that miss the celebration phase and head straight to the next logo design.

Kiran March 30, 2009 at 4:11 pm

Reply

Reply

Very informative i like it :)

Paul April 1, 2009 at 7:26 am

For me research research research! is the key. You can never do enough research. Having a good grounding goes a long way towards satisfying the greatest of needs from any client when designing a logo.

 Chetan Madaan May 2, 2009 at 5:25 am
 Reply

 This is really good!
 Provide the second second

Love this. I really love logo designing.

Raven May 10, 2009 at 3:16 pm	Reply
It's interesting to discover that this guide doesn't deviate from what I naturally do	
stan May 29, 2009 at 7:20 am	Reply
Really helpful because logo design is my weak point. The beginning, when it	

Fion Nai June 6, 2009 at 7:49 pm

Reply

Hi Jacob,

I am glad to read your article, is really helps me in the way of designing and i feel i learn allots of new skills, understanding the steps of creating logo step by step....

Thanks alots....

Amitma August 2, 2009 at 5:34 am

Reply

Thank you for this useful post! very good :)

Aditya Dipankar October 24, 2009 at 12:20 am

Reply

The process described here is certainly going to act as a bookmark for many aspiring logo designers. Great thoughts!

peterson November 10, 2009 at 9:23 pm

Reply

it's click article to make nice logo. :)

love this.

 William Cia
 March 25, 2010 at 8:30 pm
 Reply

 Those are exactly what I am doing every time I start my design. I am glad I`m on the right track.
 Image: Cia March 25, 2010 at 8:30 pm

William Cia March 25, 2010 at 8:40 pm

But there are always some clients who don't understand at all our process as designers. They always think creating logos is EASY and instant. I met a few clients who came up to me at the very last minute and asked me to design NICE logos for them in a matter of less than 24 hours.

I usually just told them I couldn't guarantee I would finish on time.

 William Cia March 29, 2010 at 2:16 pm
 Reply

 Ok, just right after I posted my previous comments.
 Now I am being asked to produce a logo in less than 4 hours, with no given time for brainstorming, no information about the company, and the worst part is minus presentation from me, the designer.

 Great.

 Rak Design
 March 31, 2010 at 12:31 am
 Reply

 A well written brief should reduce bad direction for end design. Badly written brief or even worst NO brief is just asking for trouble.
 Reply

Joni August 11, 2010 at 10:24 am

Reply

Reply

>8. Celebration

I never thought about this step. But I do think one should take the time to celebrate. I will have to start planning on doing this after the finish of each job.

I just joined Behance and posted my fist project on this same subject: My logo creation process step by step http://www.behance.net/gallery/My-logo-creation-process-step-by-step/635726

Logo Design NZ December 30, 2010 at 5:37 pm

Reply

Haha, I found another great post by Jacob Cass, this one is definately bookmarked and I will be having a good look over your website in some detail early in the new year. Thanks for the helpful articles.

Melaniedawne January 8, 2011 at 9:56 pm

Reply

Hello. I have a potential client that would like me to design a logo for their company. I gave him a very very fair quote and this is how he responded:

"But what if this design doesn't jive for me, either? Am I paying for your time to produce something or for a logo I'm going to use?"

How do you think I should respond? Help please.

Donna Liens May 25, 2011 at 3:27 pm

.

Its really interesting article. Thanks for sharing..

rgds, Donna

rajgopal June 23, 2011 at 8:58 am

Reply

Reply

Hi

This is Raj Gopal am a graphic designer, am mad about ur articles & designs the way of working & after work the way of rationale i love it.

may loc nuoc nano July 19, 2011 at 12:29 am

Reply

all of them are great. thanks for helpful article

highland builders August 2, 2011 at 6:01 am

Reply

I would advise anyone looking for a designer to read this as much as I would advise any designer to read.

fj shield August 4, 2011 at 4:09 pm

Reply

Reply

well written article on the logo design process with great links to check out too! thanks for sharing!

Cory Skaaren August 10, 2011 at 2:33 pm

I think the creative process is the most import part of the design profession! Here are my thought in detail from my blog...

http://tumblr.com/xzu3kdjir3

Thanks, looking forward to keeping the discussion going

Virtual Agents August 28, 2011 at 9:55 pm

 WEBNY
 August 11, 2011 at 4:22 pm
 Reply

 Just go through your logo design creation process.. Good article on the logo process. Thanks for sharing.
 Reply

Thanks for this post. I love the designs. Icredible Site. It's really well structured and I found very helpful tips. Keep it up!

Reply

Tanaya S. September 3, 2011 at 3:45 am

Reply

Thanks for sharing. I love all your articles.

Dean Marshall November 4, 2011 at 6:32 pm

Reply

Reply

The logo design process can be complex and it is easy to go wrong. This article is a good overview of the steps involved in the process and of the places where things can go wrong.

I wish there were articles like this when I started out. Really wish I'd stumbled upon it a few years ago – when you first wrote it.

Thank you – I'll be pointing clients at this to clarify their understanding of the process.

Catypoposex April 18, 2012 at 6:01 pm

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Saadullah Aleem January 7, 2013 at 4:51 pm

Reply

I find that keeping the clients informed about the process and letting them know how I work definitely helps them understand what they're paying for. It also helps out in the word of mouth referrals.

Design process and a questionnaire are the tools that'll help a designer differentiate himself/herself from the specwork/freelancer websites market.

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