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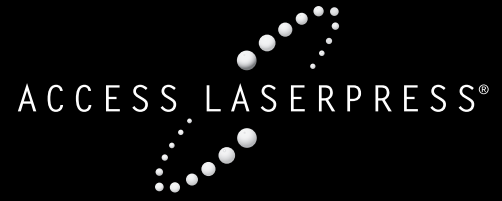
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Making Graphic Impact in a Multi-media World

By Glenn Michaels



Richardson or Richardson

Marketing

What does it take to establish a memorable corporate or brand image in our wildly boisterous, multi-media marketing environment? Cars, trucks and buses turn into mobile billboards. Web sites, banner ads, and streaming e-mail have introduced a whole new set of visual options. Architectural and interior design threaten to become part of the mix, too. The torrent of competing images has never been greater.

According to TrendWatch, a respected graphics industry research and report provider, "Creative professionals today must 'design-in' clients' need to use the same designs and elements across all their media. You know, design once, tweak and adjust, and use across various media like Web pages, print ads, broadcast, direct mail, CD-ROMs, trade exhibits, billboards, direct mail, corporate intranets and even email." TrendWatch calls this "cross media."

So how are Phoenix-area creative professionals and their clients addressing these challenges?

"The development of a successful logo," says Art Lofgreen, principal and creative director with Phoenix' Catapult Strategic Design (formerly SGL Design), "begins with a clear understanding of the client company and its target market. Thereafter, we try to develop

designs that can be used in any medium. We start with a black and white design. Once a logo works in black and white (after all, most things get faxed), we add color and animation as needed."

Environmental and graphic designer Ann Morton, a principal of Thinking Caps, Phoenix, describes her approach to identity development as "encapsulated simplicity." "To me the best solutions are identities that are so simple, yet so indicative of the character and function of a business that when you look at them you say 'Why didn't I think of that?'" However, a good idea is not enough. "Clean and professional technique in creating the actual visual component is essential. We back that up with considered use of color, typography, and materials. What looks like a very simple solution is actually the result of a lot of work and expertise."

Two well-respected designers. Two approaches that share a common theme: begin with the basics. Nonetheless, the professionals' opinions on developing a market identity diverge in subtle but significant ways.

Lofgreen is emphatic about the importance of consistency in image marketing. "Because we are inundated with so much information, there is only a brief opportunity to be heard. Therefore, it is vitally important to present the same

message in all media. Any changes in a company's image or logo could suggest that something about the company has changed. The logo should keep the same colors. Type fonts should stay consistent." Lofgreen is equally emphatic that while the message must stay the same – defined by marketing objectives – the images may vary. "Web color is more limited than print. But the Web has more potential for animation." Sometimes, he points out, even fonts must change for Web applications.

Forrest Richardson, of Phoenix firm Richardson or Richardson, offers Starbucks as the model of savvy image marketing. "Graphic consistency isn't always a good thing. By design, Starbucks stores are becoming more eclectic. They need to be able to adapt so they don't look homogenized. Who wants to take morning coffee in a stale, always-the same, never newsworthy environment?" On the one hand, he says, "Starbucks is consistent in that it has transcending elements: the logo; the signs; its cups, bags, and annual report. "Yet," he points out, "it can still become whatever it needs to be for Christmas, Valentine's Day, or a poetry reading."

Richardson uses a drugstore chain pharmacy as an example. "You would want a pharmacy to have a strong identity. Yet customers also want to feel like



Motive Design



CFD Design



Catapult Strategic Design

the pharmacist truly knows them, as if they were at a small town pharmacy. What is the right balance? One option is to create graphic consistency in terms of corporate identity – the exterior of the big drug-store, its advertising, etc. But within the store, create a more intimate, graphic consistency that makes the pharmacy feel cozy and personal.”

Jesse von Gluck, principal of Motive Design, Phoenix, sees the quality of the client-designer relationship as the crucible from which powerful programs are forged. “Trust and respect separate the successful design program from the mundane. Technique or style aside, designers and clients need to communicate well with each other before they can begin to communicate to an audience.” Von Gluck draws an analogy to cancer research. “The biologist who does leukemia research is hired to produce answers, results. The same thing is asked of us as designers. We deal with companies’ lifeblood (identity and advertising). We and our clients need to think about our activity in those terms.”

Designers’ commitment to systematic identity systems clearly translates into action at the marketing level. Access Laserpress, Inc., the first commercial printer to offer digital printing in Arizona, uses its trademark yellow (PMS 123) and black palette in all of its

marketing efforts. Its advertising and collateral materials, Web site, interior design, and trade booth all feature this high impact color scheme and the company logo. The logo is composed of a series of colored spheres in graduated sizes elliptically orbiting the company name. Originally, the spheres in the logo were black. This allowed Access Laserpress to use the same logo for all types of output media. The company’s recent move from black to colored spheres is intended to point up its four-color printing capability.

According to Forrest Richardson, who with his wife and partner, Valerie, established the identity, “With Access Laserpress, the graphic consistency is powered most by color and tone of voice. Tone is often forgotten, but it is probably the most powerful of the design elements.”

The president of Access Laserpress, David Seid, takes his business image very seriously. “Our yellow has provided a great degree of recognition since we adopted it in 1991. People tell me that they don’t forget it. The fact that we’ve incorporated it into the design of our offices generates positive comments in at least 50 percent of our client visits.”

The implementation of Imperial Lithograph’s identity system, developed by John Havel of CFD Design, has

certainly enhanced the firm’s visibility. Imperial sought an updated image system following the merger of Imperial Litho and AZ Litho & Dryography in 1995. “The challenge,” recalls Havel, “was to create a bug (logo mark) that would communicate Imperial’s intention to be an industry leader in the Southwest and a recognized presence across the country.” The image needed to honor Imperial’s existing client base, while communicating a forward-looking business style. The mark that Imperial settled upon is composed of a deep blue male figure with lightning bolt arms, stepping forward and through an orbiting sphere.

Alan Anderson, president and CEO of Imperial Lithograph has been very happy with the impact of the identity program. “I can’t tell you how many comments we get on our vans. They’re essentially travelling billboards and you can see them from a mile away. We’ve also used our mark on wine glasses, watch faces, golf ball markers and gifts.”

“We are the largest print company in the Southwest with a 40-year history,” says Anderson, “and our ID speaks to that. The feeling described by people who see it is very consistent with what we wanted to achieve.”

Several designers mentioned

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“The development of a successful logo begins with a clear understanding of the client company and its target market.”



Catapult Strategic Design



Thinking Caps



Thinking Caps

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Central GraphicsLab identity as an example of excellent design. Mike Tomko, also of CFD Design, developed the Central GraphicsLab program. “The logo itself is a recognizable bug with simple, clean type,” explains Tomko. “Two colors were used, black and Pantone 389 for the greenish yellow. To help Central put the logo out in the public eye, we created an announcement postcard revealing the new logo as well as their new location. There was also an ad that ran in a few publications. The delivery trucks were doused with the Pantone 389. The logo, logo-type and other pertinent information were then added.”

Pierce Arrow Lithographers’ identity is another example of close collaboration between client and designer. According to Lofgreen, “Their print materials showcase their capabilities. Normally, we wouldn’t include foil stamping, embossing, die cutting, and multi-color PMS printing in a single piece because it would be cost-prohibitive for the average client.”

Lofgreen created a complete identity package, from logo and stationery, to truck and building facade design, for Pierce Arrow. The logo itself is a stylized archer based on the letter “P.” “We selected a spectrum of muted primary colors – brick red, ocher, medium blue,

mustard gold, dark blue-green, and black – for the Pierce Arrow palette,” says Lofgreen, “to suggest their color capabilities.”

On behalf of Tempe In Motion (TIM), the City of Tempe office that manages all of the city’s alternative transportation programs, Thinking Caps created a complete identity program. “The scope of work included a system naming hierarchy, logo graphics, bus color palettes, graphic applications, and specification drawings for all bus and system vehicles,” says Morton. “We evolved related, but distinct identities for each of three transportation components: pay for use buses (BOLT), free local area shuttles (FLASH), and hybrid gas/electric shuttles (BOLT/FLASH Electric).”

The designs, based on a specially created, whirlwind mascot called Tim, also took a cue from the Valley Metro’s green and purple color palette. This allowed Tempe to tie-in graphically with the regional Valley Metro identity.

Amanda Nelson, Community Outreach and Marketing Coordinator for the City of Tempe, explains that the function of the identity program was to help Tempe citizens see their tax dollars at work. “The citizens had passed a half-cent sales tax to improve transit in the city, and we needed to identify where our

citizens’ money was going,” she says. “This program has worked very well for us. We do market research regularly and find that more and more Tempe citizens are proud of our city and our bus service. The graphics have helped personalize the system for them.”

If the case studies presented above are any indication, our creative professionals are successfully addressing the challenge of new and alternative media. In the process they’re also enabling significant gains in awareness among their clients’ respective target audiences.

Here’s what the president of and CEO of Putnam Investments, Lawrence J. Lasser, recently had to say about the importance of design (as cited in *@issue* Volume 2, No. 2). “To be a truly great company, it is necessary to be world-class in everything you do. Not merely at the front line where customers see you, but in everything. What we say to clients about who we are is reflected in the look of our letterhead and advertising, in the look of our offices and in the way people are treated as professionals ... What is often underestimated is the image projected to our own employees – which employees, in turn, project back to customers in their pride and enthusiasm.”