

Major Assignment 2 Individual Research - Global Design Firms

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## **The various ways of conceptualizing, developing and launching a new identity.**

This document sets out to report on a system of brand identity development within the constraints and circumstances a designer or design studio may face and utilize.

## The Initial Design Process

The initial design process begins with a thorough research of a company's background and history, from its inception and growth to contemporary times. Its ideals and beliefs and its ethics. The research would form sixty to seventy percent of the conceptualization for the company's new identity design.

Taking the information, which is derived from research through the company, directors and founders the designer should get a clear insight as to what entity the company is and what sector of commerce it belongs to. If the new identity is a make over of an existing one then there may be residual attachments for the graphic elements by a large majority of the company and initially the brief would be to "design something new - yet the same", this is the most challenging of all identities to create, as you are often trying to modernize a design which has a lot of heritage and is associated with a lot of exposure already.

If it were a case of creating an entirely new identity then there would be much more of an advantage at the aid of the designer as they are given a blank sheet of paper upon which to conceptualize and the boundaries of creativity are not so restricted. Never the less designing any form of identity, from rehash to scratch is always a challenge to any designer due to the many factors at play which are beyond the designers control. It is mostly impossible to satisfy the entire appointed committee who have commissioned the design project due to their own personal ideals and vision of what and how the company should be represented in the form of a graphic or typography.

A system of design is usually broken down into two sections, a preliminary stage of legalities concerning the identity development project and the actual - physical development of the brand and identity.

## Preliminary Legalities of commission

### Initial Commission

This is the first point of contact where where the identity design requirement is briefed to the design studio by the client and all development time and costs are approximated by the design studio as a formal quotation and contract of work agreement can be drawn up by the design studio for the perusal and acceptance by the client.

### Sub Commission - Contact of Work Agreement & Engagement

The basics of a formal working relationship, deliverable materials time of development and total costs must be submitted to the client by the design studio in a formal contract of engagement for the undertaking of the design requirement by the studio on behalf of the client. This document should clearly state, the allocated time of development including concept work, the stages as described below along with overflow of development time and charged rates, all other legalities of this work agreement should be put forth in a standard terms and conditions document which would form the full Contract of Work Agreement, this document should be provided a two copies and signed in good faith by directors of both parties, one copy is retained by the client while one copy is retained by the design studio.

One can not stress the importance of such a contract, often a design studio neglects to use such a document and therefore the lines of discipline and development cease to exist, which often leads to unnecessary confusion and time wasting and sometimes a fall out between the clients. If a set contract is in place then both parties know exactly what to expect and when and if one party fails to uphold what is stated in the contract then the other party may be compensated and visa versa. This contract is neutral and does not empower either party. If a client after having read the contract does not wish to sign and comply, then the design studio should question the validity of undertaking the brief, after all this contract is also about respect, you wish to gain and give the same respect back, so if one does not respect a contract then one does not respect your company or there is another motive.

Sometimes contracts should be put forth in a manner that fits the stature of a company, I have learned from experience that often you can intimidate a sole operator or small to medium business by putting forth a full ten plus page contract for a simple design assignment, so there fore it would also be wise to have smaller and shorter contracts that outline the job at hand yet do not 'scare the smaller fish'.

**Stage One.** The initial concept development and presentation.

**Stage two.** The amendments based on client feed back on stage one

**Stage three.** The submission of the final design and copyright transfer to the client

# The Initial Design Process

## Stage one

- Investigate and research on notes taken from the client committee, research on the history of the company or brand
- Take the research and compile a body of ideas as a reference to brainstorming and sketching
- Develop ideas and conceptualization in the form of sketches and diagrams
- Select three of the best suited concepts and proceed to develop them as finished art on a computer for presentation purpose
- Present the concept to the client committee and receive criticism and amendments or path of action

One should be very lucky to hit the nail on the head on the first go, seldom is the case. While the studio is busy design and creating the concepts for presentation the client committee is also busy seeking information and absorbing thoughts and ideas while anxiously awaiting the first presentation. Usually the reaction from the client committee sends a shock to the design studios after they have invested so heavily into the conceptual designs. Good reaction or bad reaction, the design studio should keep a level and neutral attitude and be willing to accept criticism, after all we are talking about a company's identity which has to represent them for the future.

At this stage the design studio should be soaking all the criticism, analyzing and making preparations for changes whilst the meeting forges ahead. Not all aspects of the first presentation meeting would be negative, after all the studio has thoroughly researched the company before applying that to the design so there would certainly be enough body of work which is met with approval. A studio should set a target of seventy percent acceptance on the presented designs as a great achievement with fifty percent being the bottom line and also the point of failure, but even at fifty percent one would be on the median of the brief requirements, which is not as drastic as a total failure.

We also have to remember that any such design committee would be very similar to a jury in court, where by 'emotions' play a great role in selling the idea. This would mean that aside from the conceptual development and the research behind the idea, the design studio must have developed a link between the two which they could use in prose to buffer their ideas and play on the emotions of the design committee if they strongly believe that a particular design is the ideal suit for a client and the brand being developed.

# The Initial Design Process

## Stage two

- assimilate the outcome and feedback on the designs presented in stage one
- is there a unanimous selection of one design by the client committee ?
- is there a unanimous selection of two designs by the client committee ?
- apply the reconstituted feedback to the selected design / designs
- start fresh designs from the reconstituted feedback from the client committee  
is none of the presented designs met with approval

This stage is really determined by the outcome of stage one, generally there is ALWAYS something that needs to be amended, so these are the first things to do to the designs. The positive outcome would have been that the client committee has selected one or two of the presented designs and have narrowed the design down to two perhaps one, leaving the studio to concentrate and finishing the design to the required standards. If none of the presented designs met with approval then there would be a serious question mark hanging over the creative department, either something from the research was not followed or the design was maverick in nature and did not conform to the tastes of the client committee and the company.

Also at this stage we should point out that an element of salesmanship also plays an important factor in the first meeting. Aside from designing and presenting, we have to aware of the influences that may be playing on the client committee prior to them attending the first stage meeting, so the design studio representatives should be fully armed to answer any questions which may be raised in questioning the motives and elements applied to a particular design.

This is where the initial research plays a great roll as this is the arsenal that the design studio representatives have to answer the raised questions by the client committee. If each element of the identity design is accounted for by this information then it all relates to the company some how which in turn influence the client committee to base their decision on a particular design. It adds weight to the identity as the client committee can clearly see that the studio had researched heavily into their company's heritage and have absorbed their informations and requirements throughly to produce this branding identity, this carries weight so therefore it is a product of quality, developed with a solid intellectual mind.

This would form the core idea and principal applied to the design. The other part would be the elements used to present the brand communication, these really are the carriers or frames of space and geometry and is all about the matter of aesthetics and the application of the design. This could be used for the next round of presentations, actually showing the designs applied to items relating to the company, for instance, company uniforms, vehicles, stationary and other media.

## The Initial Design Process

### Stage three

- final design preview by the committee and other key stake holders
- final amendments and requirements
- application requirements

The final stages of design, where the second presentation is previewed by the client committee and key stake holders within the overall company. Although the client committee has been reporting of the progress of the brand identity development to these key figures this is when these key personnel take a more active and hands on approach to the development process, for they are the executive decision makers for that company and they have thus far relied on the appointed branding committee to undertake the preliminary work. There may be some minor details and amendments to the brand design at this stage as highlighted by the executive committee but these should only be minor details.

### Completion & post design process

After the amendments the design should be to the satisfaction of the executive board and company and be ready to use in production. In the finishing stages of the brand identity a application guide is a compulsory development for the brand identity. This document should contain a catalog of all the various uses of the design, the colors of the design as well as application constrains for physical media and the like. These should be compiled with a CD ROM of variable forms of the brand identity with corresponding serial numbers as per the application. Upon final submission of these media packs, a document formalizing the conclusion of this project along with a transfer of copyright to the client should be provided. Once again two copies, one for the client to retain and one for the design studio to file.

## **Design Process for internal entity companies.**

### **Example. Apparel & Fashion Industry**

In the case of the fashion industry or entity based brand, I would apply the same series of steps as outlined, yet this would of course be carried out on a internal level. There still would be a an appointed "client committee", but the design studio may be an internal department of the company. This would ensure a faster turn around on the design of the brand identity as all decision makers and committees reside at the one place making communication and feedback much faster. The "Design Studio" would also have an advantage if it were internal as they would have the freedom to experiment more on designs, being able to access more information rapidly and to liaise directly with executives for feedback during the design process. The clothing company Zara follows a similar fashion, where the design, prototype and production is encapsulated into one building throughout its international zones, ensuring fast turn around of all its apparel design and branding.

This system was developed to cater for clients on a corporate level therefore it is quite expansive in nature and adheres to a more corporate brand identity design project. It can be applicable in a external studio environment as well as on a internal level, forgoing the legal structure in that instance.

## **Conclusion**

In real live scenarios, the majority of clients usually come from smaller business sectors who do not understand the actual complexity of designing an identity. Usually a designer or studio is approached by clients who demand a plagiarized identity of the current trend of design in their industry to "fit in" with the their stream of business and rarely wish to initiate some form of innovation, there is really no challenge in designing such identities but it helps to keep studio revenue steady.

I have created this system which allows it to be expanded and contracted in the use of designing brand identity as well as any work which has to do with the design industry. It is a simple and effective system which has worked for my requirements, it is not a new system as it was partially tutored to me by senior businessman from very different business back ground to the design industry, but the teaching is quite relevant in most industries aide from design. I merely took the information and moulded it into useful material for the design profession.

In a world of commercialism and now the forces of change playing across most industries including the design and advertising, I have found that in order to proceed forward one must take a few steps back to aid in innovation with a quality factor.