

PRINT MATTERS

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Is it time to update your magazine's logo?

Be honest — when is the last time you took a good look at your magazine's logo? Has it held up over the years or is it perhaps time to consider an upgrade?

Let's first consider why logos are important. "Your logo is the first thing that defines you," said graphic designer Sharon Cordell. "It speaks to whether or not you know what you're talking about. It can go a long way toward making you look like a professional magazine and not like you have a logo that somebody created in his basement."

That said, we realize that creating a new logo can be a daunting task. But we are here to tell you that you can do it, and it won't be nearly as painful as you think. Let's review the basic steps you will need to take.

1. Consider your target market.

"You definitely want a logo that reflects the magazine's content, style and personality," said Ellen Custer of 2d — a design collaborative. "You obviously have a passion for your publication, and your logo needs to reflect that."

2. Get inspired.

Go online and look at magazines or visit your favorite bookstore. There are dozens upon dozens of examples of terrific design out there. Custer says she draws inspiration from everywhere — nature, point-of-sale displays in stores, junk mail, etc.

3. Be bold.

“Your logo should be strong and powerful and memorable,” Custer says. “It should pop; it shouldn’t just be sitting there.” Being bold means that it should make a statement, not that it has to be big in size.

4. PLAY!

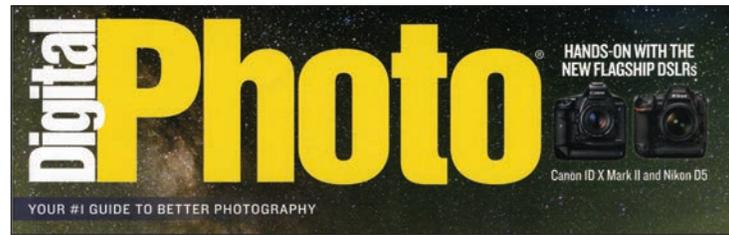
Experiment with a wide variety of typefaces and positions. As you can see from the examples included in this article, designers get very creative with type and placement. Turn one of your words sideways. Squeeze a word within another word. Try a square logo. Try a color bar behind the type. Shrink just one letter in one of your words. Take a few good hours to let your muse run free. They can turn out some pretty good ideas when we get out of the way.

5. Keep it simple.

Custer says creativity is paramount when it comes to exploring a wide variety of typefaces. However, it’s equally important to remember that the typeface you select for the logo should complement the typefaces you use in the magazine, but not necessarily match because you want the logo to stand out. In a similar vein, don’t go full bore with the latest design trend; it’s more important to create something that is timeless that will resonate with your target audience.

6. Create a focus group.

After you have a handful of designs you like, choose three or four trusted associates and solicit their opinions. “You don’t necessarily



want them to focus on the design per se,” Custer says. “It’s more important that they convey what they think the logo says about the publication. Does it match the magazine’s personality?”

Also, keep in mind that people do have strong opinions about design, even if they have no actual experience in it. So incorporate what is worthwhile from their comments but definitely trust the design instincts you have honed over the years.

7. Announce it with great fanfare.

Readers love hearing behind the scenes stories of how your publication is put together. Write a fun blurb of how the new logo came to be and place it on the TOC or on your editorial page.

8. Think about the future.

Create some rules about how the logo will be used.

Will you move it around? Will it change colors? Will you place someone’s head on top of it? (Editor’s note: We are OK with this practice. Your readers see your magazine often enough that they will still know it’s you even if a few letters in your logo are covered.) Making these decisions upfront means you won’t have to agonize over them later.

So yes, creating a new logo is no walk in the park. But we believe you’re up for the challenge. And, as Cordell emphasizes, good design definitely matters. “It makes people feel good about themselves when they see good design,” she says. “You know how you feel when you see something sloppy. But when you see something that looks good, it feeds your spirit.”

What a great way to build a bond with your readers every month.