

First Edition

AN ENTREPRENEUR'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT LOGO

BY TIM STEAD

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INTRODUCTION

MY FAVORITE PART OF LOGO DESIGN

I have been a logo designer and critic for nearly ten years, and during that time I have helped clients of all sizes launch and grow their business. I have partnered with my clients to discover who their ideal customer is and what their dream business looks like, and then developed websites, print materials, taglines, promotional items, campaigns and strategies that helped them have success.

But there is one experience during this process that stands out to me as the biggest moment in the life of a young brand - the first time a client sees the logo concepts I have created for them based on our many conversations, a lot of research and hours of design. I often do a video or phone call with my clients so that I can hear and see their initial excitement. The moment I love best is when they start describing how they imagine their new logo will look on a business card, website, product, storefront sign or profile picture.

Whether you hire me (Paper Rockets) or someone else, I hope you have that experience - that instant pride when you see the logo concept that speaks to you.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ACQUIRING THE PERFECT LOGO

As the business owner, it is your responsibility to hire a designer who is experienced and equipped to help you develop the perfect logo. It is also your responsibility to work with them to make sure that they deliver exactly what you want.

This guide is designed to walk you through interviewing potential designers, providing your chosen designer with the right information and feedback during the design process, and ensuring the final product meets both your standards and industry standards.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

There are numerous ways to define what a business's "brand" is, but let me start by defining what it is not. A brand is not simply a logo, a tagline, a catalogue, a commercial, a website or something you have complete control over. Instead, a simple way to define your brand is this:

"The way customers feel about your business or organization is your brand, and that can be influenced by the things they see, the messaging they read, the experience they have, and (most importantly) how your interactions and products/services make them feel."

You cannot control how your customers feel.

You can control things like quality, processes, service levels, details, visual branding and consistency, clarity of messaging, and customer experience to influence how your customers feel.

Today, we are focused on one element of visual branding - your logo.

WHAT IS A LOGO?

A logo is the one foundational visual element that ties your visual brand together. It is a symbol or mark that should appear on every aspect of your business output (see our list of 51 places your logo might appear later in this book) that customers can use to identify your products/services/experiences. Your logo should set the tone for the rest of your visual brand, influencing color, font and imaging decisions throughout your business's designs.

Because it is a cornerstone to your visual brand, and costly to update or change after your business has grown, it is critical that you develop an effective, memorable, professional logo early in the development of your organization that will be used for as long as possible.

Hopefully the information you find on the following pages helps you feel more confident expressing what you want and need to a designer.

Let's get started!

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10 QUESTIONS TO ASK A LOGO DESIGNER BEFORE YOU HIRE THEM

As the customer, you likely want to satisfy three main things in your mind before deciding if a designer is the best fit for you:

1. Will the process be easy and enjoyable? (Questions 1-2)
2. Does the designer have the experience and skills to produce the level of work I want? (Questions 3-5)
3. Will the value of the final product I receive be worth more than the money I am investing to acquire this logo? (Questions 6-10)

If a designer can satisfy those three things with their answers, you may have found the perfect designer to help you develop the perfect logo for your business.

1. What is your process for developing logos?

An ideal answer should include:

- Specific details about what inspires them or the individual steps in their process.
- Any answer that indicates that they have a creative process.
- Something unique about their answer that suggests they didn't just copy+paste their answer from another designer's website.

Wrong Answer:

- A vague or minimal answer that suggests they don't have a process.

2. What would be a rough time line for developing a logo assuming all of our communications happened within a reasonable time?

Does your current workload allow you to take me on as a client?

An ideal answer may include details such as:

- "When ideally would you like it finished by?"
Do you have any specific events that dictate when you would need it?"
- They offer to schedule a creative consultation within a reasonable amount of time after an agreement is made.
- A first draft delivery within a reasonable amount of time (5-10 business days after a consultation).
- If you have specified an ideal delivery date, can they finish by then?

Wrong Answer:

- "Tomorrow." (a short turn around time indicates they are not putting in the right level of research, brainstorming and creativity).
- "I don't know."
- "Let's just see how it goes."

3. Will you be designing the logo yourself, our delegating/outsourcing to someone else?

An ideal answer should include:

- You will be working directly with me the entire time!
- If you are hiring an agency, you may be speaking to the creative director or a sales agent who may tell you that they have one of their designers working on it. In that case, you will need to ask to see their specific portfolio first, and find out who will be your contact throughout the entire process.

Wrong Answer:

- "I will be involved, but I am getting some help with it."
- "No, we have a pool of talented designers who will be working on this for you."
- Any comment that leads you to believe that they are perhaps outsourcing to a contest site or a low-end marketplace for logos.

4. Where are some of the places your professional designs have appeared in public?

An ideal answer should include some specific, and ideally high profile places such as:

- Online (websites, social media, email signatures, profiles).
- Signage (street signs, billboards, public transit ads, office signage).
- Advertisements (newspapers, magazines, mail outs).
- Corporate stationery (business cards, letterheads, etc.).
- Products or merchandise (uniforms, tags, packaging, etc.).

Wrong Answer:

- "I think someone used one of my logos for their business cards."
- "No where yet" (don't let them practice on you, they should be professional).

5. Can you walk me through a project in your portfolio that you think may be similar to my project? I want to see your process in action, and the results.

An ideal answer should include:

- Being shown at least one project the designer believes can best exemplify their work and demonstrate their skills.
- An effort to communicate details about that project (client's wishes, challenges, outcomes).

Wrong Answer:

- "I have never done something like this before" (don't let them practise on your business).
- An ugly, ineffective or unprofessional design accompanied by poor communication about why they chose to show you this specific project.

6. What do you charge for a logo design? What are the payment terms in our agreement? Do you work with a contract?

An ideal answer should include:

- A price that satisfies you AND allows the designer the freedom to spend time defining your needs, researching your industry and target clients, conceptualizing, exploring, creating, refining and exporting a logo with a high level of quality. Often, customers are trying to get the lowest price possible, and while that makes sense from a financial point of view, it could cause your designer to rush through the job, not putting giving them the most optimized situation to create a perfect logo. If you want a designer to give you their best, consider your branding a worthy investment.
- Many designers require a deposit ranging from 30-50% upfront.

Wrong Answer:

- "I don't have a contract, let's just see how things go."
- They require FULL payment up front.
- Any logo design quote valued at \$300 USD or less.

7. Does your price include a branding guideline that includes fonts and color values used in the logo?

An ideal answer may include:

- “YES!”
- “It can, for an additional fee.”
- If your logo design is going to be black handwritten text, this may not be important to you. Otherwise, you will want a logo to ensure your colours and fonts stay consistent in the rest of your visual brand.

Wrong Answer:

- “Nope. I don’t do that.”

8. How many rounds of revisions are included in your logo design fee?

An ideal answer should include:

- 3, 4, or 5 rounds of revisions included in the price.
- Even though “unlimited” sounds great, it is hard to know when to stop making changes, but this is not the wrong answer to get.

Wrong Answer:

- 0, 1 or 2 (paying for additional revisions can add a lot to the price to pay).

9. What formats and versions of the logo will I receive?

An ideal answer should include:

- One file type that is vector (.eps (preferable), .ai, .svg or .pdf).
- One file type that is raster (.png (preferable) with transparencies, .jpeg, .bmp).
- Your logo should be delivered as official full-colour version, a black only version, and a white only version. If a logo uses a gradient, you may want to request a single colour version and/or a flat version of your logo.

Wrong Answer:

- A photoshop file or just jpegs (you NEED a vector version of your logo).

10. Based on our conversation, does this project excite you?

An ideal answer may include:

- "YES!"
- "I appreciate the opportunity."
- "I am excited to get started."

Wrong Answer:

- "Nope."
- "Yeah, I will get it done as quickly as I can."

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10 WAYS YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOGO DESIGN PROCESS

It is not the sole responsibility of a designer to develop a perfect logo - it is the customer's responsibility as well. Your future logo is designed to represent YOU and YOUR business, so you should have some ideas to contribute to the design. The goal is not to pigeon-hole your designer into one final concept, because you may be missing out on hearing your designer's ideas, but having some jumping off ideas and guidelines helps both of you to work towards a perfect logo.

Below are a list of 10 ways you can contribute to a successful design:

BEFORE YOUR DESIGNER CREATES FIRST CONCEPTS

1. Know ahead of time the exact name/words that will appear in the logo. Less is more, so avoid lengthy names or taglines in your logo. Whatever your operating name is, that should be what appears in the logo.
2. Do some research on your competition and be able to describe to your designer who they are, what colors and imagery they are using, and how you want to stand out from them. Perhaps your competitors use blues in most of their logos. This may mean you want to use red to stand out from them.

3. If your business has something unique about it (innovative product, new business model, incredible location) make sure your designer knows about this, as it may or may not end up influencing the final design. What message do you want your logo to express?

4. Spend some time brainstorming words, shapes, objects, animals, emotions and characteristics that you want people to feel or experience when they see your logo.

5. Use Google to search for logo examples you can share with your designer. Not only should you look for designs you like (and be able to describe what you like about them), but also popular logos that you don't like. Logos can be categorized by a number of styles and feelings. It is your responsibility to know some of the styles and trends in logo design that you like, and (more importantly) don't like.

6. Similar to how you used Google to point out your favourite popular logos, spend time looking through your designer's portfolio looking for strengths and feedback you can share with your designer.

BEFORE YOUR DESIGNER CREATES FIRST CONCEPTS

7. Focus your mind on simple, minimal and memorable. When you see concepts from your designer, look for ways to simplify and remove unnecessary elements (without changing the nature of a design) that will have a huge impact on the final outcome.

8. When the designer sends you drafts and asks for feedback, using design language will help you express your feelings in a more useful way. Saying "I don't know how to describe what I don't like about it, I just know I don't like it," does not help a designer move towards a final product.

Instead, use words such as soft, rigid, smooth, rough, simplify, crisp, slick, inflated, bright, loud, busy, sterile, tacky, scale, ratio, proportion, curve, masculine, feminine, bold, eliminate, reduce, unbalanced, unnatural, or other descriptive words to express what you like or don't like about certain elements of a logo (or the entire logo itself).

9. When you send your feedback, ensure you include all of the changes you would like to see in one message. If you are working with a team of decision makers, ensure that you are on the same page with your requests for changes or you will end up burning through the number of revisions your designer will provide.

10. Don't accept a logo until you are 100% satisfied and proud of it, even if you need to pay extra revision fees. Your business will flourish if you take pride in your brand, and your logo is a critical part of that.

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10 CRITERIA YOUR FINAL LOGO SHOULD SATISFY BEFORE YOU APPROVE IT

Almost there! Your designer has presented you with a number of beautiful logo concepts, and after some revisions, you are ready to crown a design your OFFICIAL LOGO! Before you do, here are things that should be considered to ensure this is the perfect logo:

- Is the logo simplified as much as possible without losing the meaning or nature of the design? Can anything be removed that is unnecessary to tell the logo's story?
- Can the logo be turned into a black or single-colour only version and still have meaning?
- Can your logo easily be screen printed or embroidered?
- Is your logo attractive on first impression?
- Is there something memorable about your logo?
- Is your logo appropriate for your industry and product/service?
- If you reduce your logo to 3/4 inch, can you still read and understand it?
- If you enlarge your logo to appear on a billboard, is it still effective?
- Are all of the shapes/curves smooth and natural looking?
Any final tweaks necessary?
- Do you love it? Do you take pride in it?

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51 PLACES YOUR LOGO MIGHT APPEAR

Have you thought of all the places your logo is going to appear on? Hopefully this list inspires you to consider how important it is to invest in an experienced designer to develop your logo effectively and professionally the first time. Better than having to go through the process a second time and update your logo in all of these places!

ELECTRONIC

- Website
- Social media profile photos
- Social media content
- LinkedIn account
- Email signature
- Promotional videos
- Other company's websites
- Online classified listings
- Job postings
- Powerpoint presentations
- Watermark for photos/videos
- App loading screen and menu

MERCHANDISE

- Uniform shirts/hats/jackets
- Labels
- Packaging
- Client gifts (mugs, bags, etc.)
- Promotional items (pens, knick knacks)
- Official merchandise (the product you sell)

PRINT

Business cards
Letterhead/envelope
Brochures
Posters
Postcards/fliers
Magazine/newspaper ads
Shipping boxes/containers
Retail bags
Packaging
Receipts/invoices/estimates
Ebooks or eGuides
Holiday cards
Appointment cards
Doorhanger
Retail point-of-purchase display
Tickets

SIGNAGE

Street (pylon) signs
Lawn sign
Exterior signs
Feature wall by reception
A-Frame (sandwich boards)
Window vinyl cover
Billboards
Banners
Xframes/retractable banners
Vehicle wrap for company car
Trade show booth
Industrial carpet for your entrance
Electronic signage for waiting room
Ads on local public transit
Sponsorship for a local arena/
stadium/park/team
Conference sponsor signage

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PRAISE FOR TIM STEAD

"Tim Stead is extremely passionate, versatile and comprehensive in everything that he does. He is able to hone-in on the finest little detail without losing sight of the big picture. He sees both the forest and the trees.

Moreover, his solutions and products often become the gold standard in the industry. His work is exemplary and when you work with him you will ask yourself "How could I have ever done without him?"

Randy Daiter, MBA, RPA, PLE
Vice-President at M&R Holdings

"Tim's knowledge and creativity helped turn my vision into a reality. He developed our beautiful logo and print materials, and we were immediately able to see growth in our business."

Peter Power
Owner and Operator at Power Pest Control

"I have had an exceptional experience working with Paper Rockets. Tim's design expertise, ability to cater to my specific needs, and time spent researching (and teaching me about!) my target market really has distinguished him as an expert in his field."

Dr. Katie Au
Owner and Chiropractor at Lawrence Park Health and Wellness Clinic

"We approached Tim for designing our University of Toronto Peters-Boyd Academy Graduation Gift logo. From the start he was extremely profession and detail-oriented. He asked for specifics of what we wanted to see in our design. After receiving the information he quickly incorporated all that information into one of the most amazing logos that our group had ever seen."

Dr. Shaidah Deghan, MSc., MD
General Surgery Resident at Queen's University

Ready to Hire Tim to design your logo?
Visit PaperRockets.ca/INeedThePerfectLogo