

# Embrace Growth – Update Your Logo

Take your nonprofit from grassroots to professional with a modern logo to help you attract modern dollars.

## Logo Styles of the Past

Changing your logo is one of the natural steps to take as your nonprofit grows, so don't be afraid to do it - people will still know who you are. Even the big boys, like BBC Television, SBC and AT&T, Starbucks, 3M, have dramatically altered their logo since their inception. Check out the evolution of the Walmart logo (below, right). Even Walmart started out with a "home-grown" logo.

### *The 1970's & 1980's*

Most company logos have finally broken out of the circular symbol / seal look left over from the early days of commerce when your logo probably was used as a seal. But logos were fated to be thrown into boxes instead. Symbols tend to be detailed line drawings. The fonts are not very user-friendly with lots of italics or all-capitalized.

### *The 1990's*

In the 1990's logo designers start responding to the "Think Outside the Box" mantra and start dropping all logo confinements. You may find lines separating parts of the logo but surrounding boxes and circles are out. Symbols are also starting to look more simplified, scaled-down and text is shortened; Kentucky Fried Chicken becomes KFC.

### *The New Millenium*

In the new millenium, logos have gotten even more simplified, often dropping all symbols (or using the symbol without the name like Nike) or using highly stylized symbols (like Wal-Mart's symbol that appears star-like without the specific outline of a star) and focusing on the simple text (no all-caps). Colors have become bolder often using one brighter "pop" color that really stands out. Text has become user-friendly and easier to read and the "tagline" has become king - short and to the point and often becoming one with the logo. Many tech companies (and others) have also added 3-D effects making the logo look like glass or create reflections.

The MTV generation has grown up; we still want it now and we still want it fast but now we have the money to make it happen. And if you want some of those dollars, you need to attract our attention. Grassroots organizations make us feel warm and fuzzy and can bring out our desire to fight for the underdog; we may donate \$25 or \$100 to a fledgling organization to see how it goes (and grows). But the bigger dollars tend to go to bigger organizations; not just because they are big but because they are more likely to have a well-developed infrastructure, policies and procedures in place that guide them and more staff and volunteers to carry out their mission on a bigger scale. All these factors indicate long-term stability to a potential donor and can help generate larger donations.



WAL-MART

1960's/1970's



1970's/1980s

WAL-MART

1980's

WAL★MART®

1990's

Walmart   
Save money. Live better.

2000's

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## Building Credibility

We have also become more wary of the really large organizations after several high profile nonprofit meltdowns, proving that even the larger organizations may not have proper financial controls in place. While this may be a reality, there is still a greater possibility that an organization that is growing and looks professional is MORE LIKELY to be financially sound than a nonprofit that looks - and is - grassroots. Looks are the first thing people notice and can be the first indicator of:

1. Are they stable?
2. Are they trustworthy?
3. Are they financially sound?
4. Are they professional?

I know what you're thinking. Number 5 should be: Are they spending too much money on non-program items? Most nonprofits have this fear when they grow from grassroots to professional - that it will appear as if they are spending money frivolously. I do think it's possible to go too far over the top, but having a professional logo and tagline is not one of those circumstances. Most people understand that nonprofits need to market themselves and unless you plan a trip to Europe for the entire staff, or purchase a floor-to-ceiling interactive display for your trade show booth, you probably have nothing to worry about.

## 6 Signs That Your Logo Needs Updating

- 1 Your symbol is a detailed drawing, photo, or cartoon character.
- 2 Your logo is confined within a square, circle or shape of any kind.
- 3 Your symbol or graphic is 2-3 times bigger than your text.
- 4 You have the same heart, star, people symbol or kid's stick drawing that hundreds of other nonprofits have.
- 5 Your logo is just your name in some font that someone picked out years ago.
- 6 Your logo is all one color or colors that are dark.



PO Box 92, East Irvine, CA 92660-0092  
www.brandedforgood.com

## Thinking About Your Audience

Your original logo obviously has special meaning to you and was most likely created by the founder of the organization. This makes it harder to make the decision to update your logo.

The best way to handle this is to create a shrine to your old logo on your website. It's important to commemorate your history and showcasing your original logo is the best way to do that. Most people LOVE reading little tidbits about the history of the organization; it shows how far you've progressed and pays respect to the original founders at the same time.

Many times, preserving and explaining your old logo is the only way the public discovers the real meaning of your logo. Most nonprofits are inward-focused when they develop the first logo; they are choosing something meaningful only to themselves and the logo becomes a masthead of inspiration for their mission.

As you grow, you will no longer be the logo's main audience and the logo will have to have significance to others. It is important, because as you grow and seek outside support, the perceptions of others become important. You will need to move forward with your brand, without compromising your history and your roots.