

# DESIGN EXPRESS

The graphic services newsletter for promotional products pros



September 2016

## LOGOS SHOULD BE POWERFUL, ORIGINAL AND MEMORABLE



"What kind of logo do you get for \$5?" This exact question was asked two summers ago by a curious designer contributor to *The Startup*, a column about small business marketing published on Medium.com

According to the column, websites that offer their "corporate logo designs" on the cheap also tend to come with pitfalls that are not worth the savings of few dollars. But they wanted to really test the \$5 logo phenomenon by launching a fake software analytics company to see what would happen.

The end result will probably not surprise you. The Startup found that the \$5 logo service's designers were simply "appropriating other designers' work, and passing it off as their own." In short, they were ripping off logos, sometimes from big companies.

Another skeptic toying with the idea of the \$5 logo went further, making a bigger joke of the concept and the idea that your business's logo can be as inexpensive as a pint of draft beer. By pioneering his own website called [Horrible Logos](#), this anonymous "designer" and entrepreneur (if you want to call him that) offers the distinctive service of creating \$5 designs, with the tagline "bad logos for beer money since 2010."

The outcome here is more humorous, but at least users get their money's worth. Which is a black and white, original hand-scrawled logo that looks like it was drawn on a bar napkin.

The reality is that stolen, cheap logos are no joke.

Entrepreneurs have enough challenges. [Involvement a trademark infringement lawsuit](#) over [the design of a logo](#) isn't exactly a part of a good business plan. Whether they are small retailers that sell to consumers or

## QUICK NEWSLETTER SURVEY

Would you recommend this newsletter?

Nope  1  2  3  4  5 For sure

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ISS

Fort Worth, TX

October 6-8

Exhibiting, Booth 745

## NOTABLE QUOTES



"I love September, especially when [we're in it](#)."

— Willie Stargell



"Failure is another [stepping stone to greatness](#)."

— Oprah Winfrey

B2Bs with specialized services, SMBs' names and identities are their calling cards. That's why businesses in any sector can benefit from carving out their own looks and messages with well-designed logos.

Even companies that sell everyday products need to be original when it comes to logos. Take coffee, for instance. For some of us this centuries old concoction is a barebones morning necessity. But according to online publication, *Logoblink*, the **36 famous coffee logos** they featured are as varied as can be, ranging from popular brands like Starbucks to lesser-known local favorites. All of the logos exhibit their own original blend of strong colors, eye-catching fonts and shapes in designs constructed to stand out.

Experts on logo design point out that great logos are more than just combinations of spiffy fonts with high-wavelength colors and icons. Melissa Emerson, a business contributor to the *Huffington Post* writes that, just like starting your business, **branding is about demonstrating your company mission**.

"Your brand includes your company, products, and services. What does your business stand for? What are the values you hold?" Emerson asks. She also points that, in crafting your brand, you should "make sure you know what emotions you want to invoke."

For many busy entrepreneurs, just the idea of thumbing through hundreds of fonts and picking the right one or whipping up a colorful original design is a daunting task. Yet, just like that first cup of coffee in the morning, SMBs want their logo to make an impact with potential customers and stick with them.

Additionally, when it comes to putting their logos on the materials that get the names and images of their businesses out there — on promotional products, **marketing collateral** and even websites — the quality of the designs is essential.

Idea Custom Solutions knows hiring **the right resource** saves time and headaches. When you partner with us, you not only get a custom, original logo for your business, you can resell professional logo design to all your customers and win their long-term, profitable business for everything on which they'll place those logos — promotional products, business cards, brochures and more!

## SEASONAL OR STEADY, SOME SECTORS TO TARGET YEAR-ROUND

SMBs grow by continually attracting new customers and, according to the Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI), 42 percent of **small businesses are increasing their overall marketing budgets this year** compared to last year.

With that in mind, here are some categories to tap to find new customers for your company.

### Seasonal Businesses

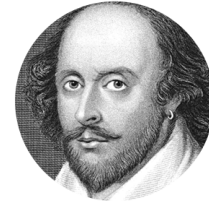
Planning ahead makes sense for every entrepreneur. But businesses that are busier in some months than others often think differently about the seasons. Examples include local landscapers and other SMBs that care for homes, gardens, pools and other outdoor areas.

While the typical lawn care SMB in Arizona and Florida might cut grass



"Only when we are no longer afraid do **we begin to live**."

— Dorothy Thompson



"No legacy is so rich as **honesty**."

— William Shakespeare



"We are all now connected by the Internet, like neurons in a giant brain."

— Stephen Hawking



"I think a simple rule of business is, if you **do the things that are easier first, then you can actually make a lot of progress**."

— Mark Zuckerberg



"What the eyes see and the ears hear, **the mind believes**."

— Harry Houdini

and plant beautiful outdoor landscapes all year long, others such as those in the Midwest often **provide other services like snow removal** as a part of their offerings to residents and businesses. Talk to lawn and garden firms and you will find out that most are **preparing ahead of time for the next season's business**.

By showing what you offer in promotional products, you can definitely add to SMBs' marketing success. Moreover, you will find that, just like year-round businesses, **seasonal businesses of all kinds** want to promote their companies and maintain their competitive edge.

### Holiday Hustle

Speaking of "seasonal", don't forget that the winter holidays constitute the biggest period of the year for just about every business sector. Over recent years, **spending during the yuletide season has increased steadily** with few dips. This makes **planning ahead for December sales opportunities** essential for SMBs.

Whether your prospects and customers are retail stores that sell Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's related items, or they are services businesses that serve the celebrating public, make sure to see if you can help SMBs stand out in an intense marketing time. Simply ask your customers how much holiday business they anticipate and make suggestions how to drive more online or store traffic with promotional products.

### Education

Often when we hear about the branding by educational institutions, we hear about sports marketing around football or March Madness. When Villanova University won the NCAA's hoops title on a last-second buzzer beater, fans took to the streets. Businesses celebrated by crafting timely promo products campaigns. Big firms like TD Bank and Dunkin' Donuts **offered up branded lanyards, gift cards and wearables** (for both dogs and humans).

Aligning your business and branding with universities or college sports is one thing. But educational institutions themselves are great prospects. A number of colleges around the United States have recently re-branded. From the famed **Harvard Law School** to those looking to refine their branding like the **University at Buffalo**, **colleges are reworking logos** along with the promotional products that bear their names and reinforce their brands.

Keep in mind though that today's education category is not just bucolic countryside campuses. The advent of the **online and distance learning** allows students to learn anytime and anywhere. The bottom line is that **college students love promotional products!**

### Tech Targets

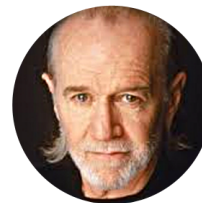
You've probably heard that technology firms are "swagging it up" at trade shows, **interactive conferences** and even **in the office every day with their employees**. Tech and tech services firms have become so innovative in marketing with promotional products that even stock shareholders want to take home free stuff.

But as Boston's TechJam attendees found out this summer, many of the conference's SMB exhibitors opted for **low-tech promotional products to**



"We must trust our own thinking. Trust where we're going. And **get the job done.**"

— Wilma Mankiller



"Think off-center."

— George Carlin



"Perseverance is failing 19 times and succeeding the 20th."

— Julie Andrews



"Once you **replace negative thoughts with positive ones**, you'll start having positive results."

— Willie Nelson



"If you do things well, do them better. **Be daring, be first, be different, be just.**"

— Anita Roddick

**grab attention.** Popular freebies were wearables like t-shirts and caps, not to mention good old fashioned **water pistols offered up by Fitbit.** It seems that high-tech or low-tech, some classic promotional products never go out of style.

Regardless of what industry sectors you already serve, keep in mind that there is opportunity everywhere. By offering new ideas and great service, you will build a strong reputation as an expert.

You take care of the product recommendations and Idea Custom Solutions will ensure your production-ready vector artwork, embroidery digitizing and graphic design files are **delivered fast and with the highest quality.** Together, we'll keep customers rolling in for you all year long!

## MAKE BRAND “LIVING BRANDS”

Believe it or not, **the idea of “the living brand” isn't new** or a 2016 trending topic. A decade ago, the *Harvard Business Review* asked its readers, “What company comes to mind when you think of customer service?” Whether the answer is big retailers such as Nordstrom or Tiffany, or local B2B firms, *HBR* concluded that it's all about creating balance between what companies sell and **how their employees embody brand promises** when dealing directly with customers.

Of larger companies that have nailed down the best service, *HBR* wrote, “They consider employees their living brand and devote a great deal of time and energy to training and developing them so that they reflect the brand's core values.”

Another essential point is that a visual image or name is not a brand. Casey Cavanaugh writes in *The Huffington Post*, “**A brand is not just a logo; it's a reputation.**” He goes on to say, “It's a way to attract and communicate with your audience. Because people are often exposed to your brand before actually interacting or doing business with you, it also acts as a way of setting expectations.”

But how do you make sure your brand or your clients' interacts with customers in the right way?

To be specific, Gary Nix, an SMB branding expert who writes for *Small Business Trends* and *The Personal Branding Blog*, explains that it's about “the feels” you create. He notes that **integrity, reputation and trust are important for small businesses**, especially since they tend to know their customers on a personal basis in contrast to big companies.

But to create those attributes, relationships are essential. “We as humans naturally seek out relationships. We are social beings, so we look to acquire and retain relationships with people that are like us, that we like, that like us back and that we can trust,” Nix writes. “Recognizing and realizing this fact will help you in your personal relationships as well as your business endeavors. It is the relationship that you build that allows you to become bigger, better, faster, or stronger.”

Capitalizing on trust and relationships depends on companies' abilities to plan and position their brands too. Nix adds that having attractive logos and familiar names is a great start. But the biggest job for entrepreneurs is to **make sure they are clear about their missions, visions and values**, as well as the quality they provide to customers, regardless of their lines of business.



“Initiative is **doing the right things without being told.**”

— Elbert Hubbard

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### Rupesh Kavale

Unit Process Specialist, Digitizing

A tenured professional, Rupesh has worked with Idea Custom Solutions for 11 years. His responsibilities include checking the quality of designs before they are delivered to customers, sharing feedback received with the internal team and improving the overall quality of our work to meet expectations.

Since joining the company, Rupesh is most proud of his promotion to unit process specialist for digitizing. The best thing about working here to him is the employee events organized by the Human Resources Department for all the festivals in India.

Although he grew up in Murad Janjira (the local name for a fort situated on an island just off the coastal village of Murud, in the Raigad district of Maharashtra, India), Rupesh now lives in Chinchwad (a suburb of Pune), with his family. He is married and has a daughter. Together, they like to take long drives on days off.

Rupesh also watches movies

“Quality is defined as the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind,” Nix concludes. “In the context of branding, this comparison is represented by your know-how or how capable your product or service is in contrast to those analogous to you.”

Lastly, according to *Entrepreneur* magazine, a brand strategy is “how, what, where, when and to whom” companies reach when communicating and delivering on their brand messages. Above all else, branding for SMBs is comprised of consistent efforts.

Certainly SMBs come in all shapes and sizes. There’s no boilerplate approach to crafting their brands from scratch to perfection. But for those entrepreneurs who are passionate about what they do, the best advice might be very simple.

They should start with clear visual identities — great logos designed with the help of a top-quality partner. Then they should be authentic, making their brands and reputations shine by giving customers the best products, quality and services possible.

### Big or Small, Brands Evolve

Last year, as businesses large and small evolved marketing strategies, launched new products and tried on new colors and typefaces, it seemed like an explosion of graphics occurred across the marketing galaxy.

Google shocked the world and the business press by reworking its logo with a new font that some people warmed up to and others hated. Kraft and Heinz — two of the world’s major food companies with several billion-dollar brands between them — merged to form one of the biggest food conglomerates in history and had to figure out how to fuse two logos of different colors together.

But why do companies feel they have to “change it up” every few years? Is it just about sharp logos and current color schemes?

For a lot of SMBs new products, change of location or just normal growth can be the driver behind a slight tweak of the logo or even a major rebrand overhaul. Some experts say, however, that rebranding shouldn’t be done just to “keep up with the Joneses”, nor should it be done whimsically.

Online magazine and branding resource *Rebrand* notes that planning and vision are crucial. While new logos, fonts and color schemes are important to the visual appeal SMBs present, don’t think it ends there. Rebrand writes, “Designing is the least expensive but most glamorous aspect” of the process. Implementing the brand through different “touchpoints like signage, stationery, and clothing” is essential. That’s where marketing collateral and promotional products extend the brands’ power.

### Don’t Forget Social

Considering the importance of digital and social presences, *Marketing Land* advises that SMBs rebrand with social media too, keeping clear what their unique selling propositions (USPs) are as businesses really are. Furthermore, “the same logo and images should be used on every touch point customers interact with on any social media platform.”

To ensure successful outcomes, *Marketing Land* says it is a good investment to hire social media and branding experts to help because they can act as third parties to provide an outside perspective. “Social branding

with friends and enjoys riding his two-wheeler. Another outlet is doing yoga. The contact sport Kabaddi is his favorite game but Rupesh also loves to watch and play football (U.S. soccer). In addition, he watches news channels to stay informed on current affairs and a favorite book is *Tell Me Why*, by Arkady Leokum.

In terms of inspiration, Rupesh cites his older brother. “He always keeps me motivated to face challenges and achieve success.”

### TWEET THAT!

US thirst for beer is strong and craft brewers growing. @ASICentral's ideas about making #PromoProducts work for craft brewers. <http://goo.gl/Yp82tU>

Tweet That!

“Back To School” is back! Six great #PromoProducts for SMBs who want to ring the school bell louder. <http://goo.gl/krTTZm>

Tweet That!

Tech is part of everyday life. So, here are 8 top tech #PromoProducts for SMBs. <http://goo.gl/fQpMqX>

Tweet That!

Best way to get the most from #PromoProducts? Get your CEO or SMB owner involved in the message, design. <http://goo.gl/p5AYBQ>

Tweet That!

Retired #golf god Greg Norman's #brand of #wearables is still swinging — to the tune of \$300 million. <http://goo.gl/44oYHJ>

Tweet That!

Texas points to its floral beauty, “superstar” plants with #marketing #brochures that shine bright. <http://goo.gl/YZhuln>

Tweet That!

#Marketing gurus think retro #logos and #marketing turns heads. @GQ looks at

Tweet That!

experts are experienced at viewing brands from a customer's point of view and they will often pick up on or suggest details that you would never have thought of yourself."

Whether you decide to rebrand your company or assist your customers through the process, be sure to get the right help, plan carefully and avoid winging it! You can see some [samples of Idea Custom Solutions logo design](#) here.



### Embroidery Digitizing



### Vector Artwork



brochures slicker than the cars in them.

<http://goo.gl/01uhhC>

Just in time for [#football](#), FanDuel rebrands with new [#logo](#), "bill of rights" for customers.

<http://goo.gl/ufnOfc>

Tweet That!

Beat it, food snobs! Hormel [#rebrands](#) fan favorite Spam to reach comfort food foodies.

<http://goo.gl/XtGqfR>

Tweet That!

Soviet Union, ace of tourism? Maybe not, but these Cold War era travel [#brochures](#) are epic.

<http://goo.gl/NjQegg>

Tweet That!

Get your business brain in [#brand](#) mode. Here's how to think vision, big success.

<http://goo.gl/eyCH4S>

Tweet That!

Once called "Master Charge", MasterCard, its [#brand](#) and new [#logo](#) are everywhere you want them to be.

<http://goo.gl/aHzY8u>

Tweet That!

Cadillac's crest [#logo](#) is an American icon, signaling attainable luxury, class, comfort for all.

<http://goo.gl/h7m27F>

Tweet That!

Louisville, KY's convention and [#TradeShow](#) bureau launches [#rebrand](#) to attract tourists, new biz, residents.

<http://goo.gl/ds3POY>

Tweet That!

## CLIENTS ARE RAVING

"Diane gives great service and so does the rest of the team!"

**Idea Custom Solutions customer**

"The embroidery digitizing you did for me was exceptional. I haven't had orders for other logos since but I will definitely use you again."

**Idea Custom Solutions customer**

If you have any designs created by our team that you would like to share in this newsletter, send them to us at [marketing@ideacustom.com](mailto:marketing@ideacustom.com)



© 2016 AffinityX All Rights Reserved. The mark Affinity Express is a registered trademark of Affinity Express, Inc. in the U.S. and other countries, and Idea Custom Solutions is the sole property of Affinity Express.