

Out With The Logo, In With The Meme

Logos aren't you sick of them? Out of roughly 3000 marketing messages that reach every individual each day through multiple media channels, thousands of them are linked to a logo. It seems that logos have been lost in the deluge of messages. In a sense they are way too subtle to survive the marketing racket. Only the biggest Nike, Coke and Pepsi are still strong, to an extent because they are powerful but mainly because billions of dollars have been spent in promoting them to mean something. Professional marketers are taking a good hard look at the traditional logo and concluding that it may have lost its importance as a marketing tool. Even if companies come up with great logos, the cost of making them into instantly recognizable brand logos is prohibitively expensive.

So on what visual hook should businesses hang their marketing efforts if not the logo? Well, logos are being replaced by memes, pronounced with a long e to rhyme with dream and team. Its English creator defined a meme as a basic unit of cultural transmission that passes from one mind to another and instantly conveys an entire idea. In other words it is a universally understood symbol with innate meaning. For example, everyone knows that a zigzag lightning bolt warns of dangerous electric current. You don't need advertising campaigns to tell you this.

The silhouette of a few balloons directs you to the party. The open faced palm of a policeman's hand tells you not to proceed beyond that point. And so on.

So a meme does more than identify. It actually carries an instruction with it. The Chiquita Banana as well as Planters Mr. Peanut are on the way to being memes but they are not there entirely. But at least they tell us exactly the businesses of these companies.

A meme is much more universal but at the same time must be appropriate for the business concerned. For example, banks are in the business of money. But would a dollar sign, or a sketch or print or picture or even a graphic image conveying this be appropriate? Yes, money is their product but the same is true for gambling operations. But would a dollar sign be correct for a gambling operation? Not really. A dice or a fruit machine would be more apt. Such a symbol is more linked to the benefits and zing connected with gambling.

The memes mentioned above are ones that are already universally recognized. But why shouldn't brand new memes be just as recognizable? A good meme might show the tools of your trade. For instance a health club could show a set of weights in its meme. A hairdresser can use a comb and brush in a meme. The best memes suggest a complete scenario to the consumer. Take for instance a meme that could be used for an optician: a physician's eye chart with the lettering in decreasing size as the eye travels downwards. Instantly the entire process of having one's eyes tested is conveyed.

There are a couple of fairly obvious steps to designing your meme. Ask yourself what the benefits that your products and services offer to customers. Are they unique to your business? What problems do you solve for customers? What needs and desires do you satisfy? Keep thinking about the customer, not about you. Then reduce your analysis to a single image, picture, symbol, icon or whatever visual device presents itself. You should be seen as different and better, but also the meme should make completely clear what your business is about.

About the Author

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