

THEME: “Logos”

TIME: 8 minutes

DATE: August 2014

LOCATION: Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

THE KEY VIEWPOINT: What makes a not-great logo – and what makes a good logo? This in-depth discussion offers specific advice, so you can take a critical look at the logo you use (or need to create) for your small business.

TRANSCRIPT: We’re in Rocky Mountain National Park for a few days. We’re by the Fall River. About a year ago, this was the site of torrential rains and amazing flooding. Up-river is a lot of destruction. Today we have a nice, mild river flowing by us.

Whenever we start out for a hike, I pick my favorite hat that I want to wear for the day. It might be my Colorado Archaeology hat, Death Valley, or Bluff, Utah (land of adventure). Here is McMurdo Station from Antarctica. This hat was given to me by my brother, who worked three seasons in Antarctica, sleeping in a tent. I’ll have to ask John to share stories from his days there. He was drilling ice core; he works for the USGS.

Also, here’s my Colorado Rockies spring training hat. Out of all these hat designs, this is the design that is most like a logo. I’ve been thinking a lot about logos lately. As you may know, I guide my clients through logo design. I’m *not* a logo designer. In my 25-year high-tech corporate marketing career and 10 years in my own business, I’ve been fortunate to work with amazing logo designers. I find that when I’m working with my clients on logo design, I’m often something of a translator. I translate between clarifying your brand – who you are, what you do, what your clients get – and then we team with the logo designer. A lot of people don’t have the vocabulary to work successfully with a logo designer, to understand design, and be able to select a fabulous and wonderful design for their business – or to look critically at their own, current logo design.

Let’s talk about logo design. Let’s talk about what makes a not-great logo design and what makes a good logo design.

Next, I would challenge you to look critically at your own logo to think about whether it could be improved, because a logo is very important to help you communicate your brand.

The first point I want to make is *a logo is not a brand. A logo is a logo.* There is a lot of misconception out there. I have a friend and marketing colleague who says, “The logo is the visual signature of your brand.” I really like this description, because it communicates that the logo helps to support the brand.

Let’s take a second to clarify branding for small business and solopreneurs. Here’s my definition: Your clear brand helps you quickly communicate (1) who you are, (2) what you do, (3) what they get – the benefits and results your clients receive.

What does a logo do for your brand?

I believe the logo is one of the Brand Elements™ that helps to communicate who you are, what you do, and what they get.

Your clear brand quickly communicates:



Speaking of the Colorado Rockies, one of their two logos is a “C” and an “R.” I’m sure they paid a lot of money for that logo, but I don’t think it’s a great logo, because “C-R” doesn’t contribute much information to the brand story. To me, it lays flat.

That would be like if I created a logo for myself, Patrice Rhoades-Baum: “PRB.” Stack the three letters together. Done. I think you’re leaving money on the table. You’ve created a logo that might look nice, but is not very hardworking. It doesn’t help to contribute to the brand story. It doesn’t contribute to telling who you are, what you do, and what they get. To me, that’s not a real successful logo. It’s ok, but it could be better.

What else is a not-successful or poor logo?

You would be amazed how many times I’ve heard this phrase: “My nephew is good with computers, and I’ll ask him to design a logo for me.” Bizarrely, it’s always the nephew! I don’t know why! Your nephew who is good with computers is not a logo designer. I’m a huge advocate of hiring a professional logo designer. Don’t go to Fiver.com and think you’re going to get something really good for five bucks, because you’re not.

I’m such an advocate for professional logo designers! These people are my friends, and I respect them so much! A professional logo designer is going to listen to all the things we clarify during the Nail Your Brand™ process, when we’re branding your small business:

- Who are you?
- Who are your clients? What’s your target market?
- What’s the key value you deliver?
- What are the benefits and results your customers get?
- Let’s look at your personality.
- Let’s look at your photo if you’re a solopreneur, because your logo needs to complement your photo (another critical Brand Element™)

A talented logo designer is going to hear all that and pay attention to all that. I’m constantly amazed that a logo designer can create something pretty spectacular in a space this small. Something that communicates. Something that’s not just stacked letters. And it’s not something that “my nephew is going to put together, because he’s good with computers.”

Another thing I would consider a not-successful logo: the “home-grown” logo – when you do it yourself. You draw your own picture of a mountain range. Or you stack the letters. Or you draw a circle, and it’s supposed to represent a globe.

We’re not logo designers. It takes a lot of practice and talent to become an exceptionally good logo designer. Putting it together yourself – the home-grown logo – just doesn’t cut it.

If you’re a small business owner or solopreneur (professional speaker, corporate consultant, business coach), your marketing materials must be professional. You’re presenting yourself to corporations, organizations, other businesses. You have to put your best foot forward. You have to look professional. “Home grown” is not professional. I’m the first one to tell you – I’m not a logo designer! I can’t do it myself. I look to the professionals for logo design.

What makes a good logo?

I truly believe, again, a logo must be professionally designed. The designer is going to listen to you and hear about the concepts we parse out in the branding process:

- Who you are and what you do ...

- Who your target market is and what you do for them ...
- What is the value you bring?
- What are the benefits and results your clients get?

One example would be a life coach whose logo speaks to transformation, growth, development, and energy. This logo might need to include bright colors.

Or let's say you're a corporate consultant specializing in streamlining the technology processes within an organization. In this case, your logo is going to speak to "streamlined." It's not going to have high energy or bright colors. It's going to be much more low-key and certainly more geared to your target market and what they're looking for.

Here's what I'm saying: *There's an amazing amount of sub-text and symbolism in a successful logo.*

That's why something like "C-R" doesn't speak to me as a successful logo. It states the obvious. What's the subtext? What's it saying? What does it speak to about accomplishments? Where we're going to take you? Where are we all going to go together?

As a small business owner or solopreneur, I challenge you to take a good hard look at the logo you're using for your business. What does it communicate about your brand and your business? Could it be improved?



Patrice Rhoades-Baum Marketing Consultant & Branding Expert

Patrice "cracked the code" for branding for small business and solopreneurs (professional speakers, corporate consultants, business coaches).

Patrice believes you *must* clarify your brand; it's the foundation – the launchpad! – to promote and grow your business. Using her laser-focused "Nail Your Brand" approach, Patrice will team with you to:

- Clarify your brand
- Lead her team of service providers to create your marketing toolkit: new website, speaker one-sheet, and stationery package

Backed by 25 years of high-tech corporate marketing...

Patrice has managed big-budget advertising campaigns, direct-mail programs, and tradeshow events. She has been the project manager and copywriter for numerous websites, including two Hewlett-Packard websites with budgets exceeding \$250,000. An expert copywriter, Patrice has been published in *Fortune* magazine. Learn more and get a free “Nail Your Elevator Pitch” worksheet at www.BrandingAndWebsites.com.

Visit “Branding Views” and join the adventure!

From high in the Rocky Mountains to deep in Utah’s canyon country, Patrice delivers sage branding and marketing advice in this ongoing series of 1-minute videos. Bookmark www.BrandingViews.com to see stunning views of the West, Southwest, and Midwest. Enjoy breathtaking views, fresh air, and a fresh perspective!



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