DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION

Graphic designer Chuck Green shares with us some of the details of his process of creating logos for a company. Of particular interest are the logo designs themselves and the feedback from the company to the graphic design.

SOURCE WEBSITE: Chuck Green's IdeaBook
ORIGINAL URL: http://www.ideabook.com/progress.htm (no longer works)
DATE: 2007

INTRO

A while back I was asked to design a logo for a fast emerging software enterprise. I presented three logos and the rationale behind them, they responded and we are in the process of putting the logo they chose into use company-wide. They were gracious enough to allow me to give you a look behind the scenes at the presentation and their response to it. I want to share it with you because I think it is a good representation of how designers and clients work together to solve problems.

    The company is Paragon Software. The CEO, Jeffrey Marshall, was in search of a corporate identity to match the high quality of his company's work. Because they provide lots of very technical, computer-related products and services I decided to amplify the concept behind the name rather than attempt to portray a single aspect of their broad talents.

    So I started with the definition...
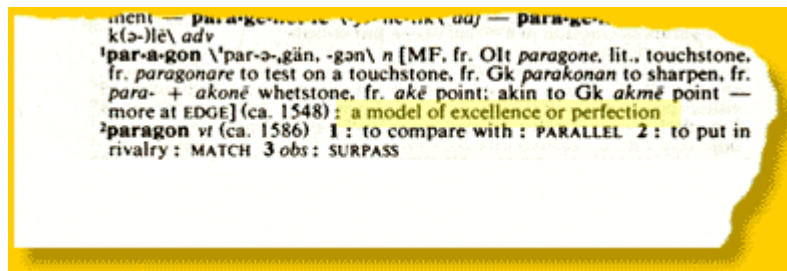
The resulting designs and the reasons behind them are presented below. The actual presentation took place online too.

THE PRESENTATION

Here is what Mr. Marshall and his folks read when they came on line to see the logo designs for the first time:

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS BE THERE TO SHAKE HANDS

Many prospects will make their first, possibly their only, judgments about your organization without ever meeting you. They will judge you by your brochure, your business cards, your signage, and your packaging. Materials that must "dress" as appropriately and "speak" as convincingly as you do.

Good day Paragon Software. I'm excited to have the opportunity to present you with three logo concepts--three visual identities for establishing a new relationship with your existing customers and future prospects.

Before you take a look, one quick point: be certain to note your first impressions. This, obviously, is the only chance you get to have them. If you don't like a design at first glance, don't try to talk yourself into it. Likewise, if you have a positive reaction the first time around, make note of it.

I'm available to answer any questions you have or to discuss the meaning of the symbols further. You can reach me at 123-456-7899. Once you have decided on a design, we can quickly move to a layout of your stationery. I'm anxious to hear your reactions.

CHUCK GREEN
Logic Arts Corporation

THE LOGOS

Rational: A smooth, unbroken path symbolizes continuity.

Rational: The iceberg metaphor symbolizes the unseen
depth of great programming and software.

Rational: The symmetry of the target symbolizes the literal
definition of "paragon" -- model of excellence or perfection.

CLIENT RESPONSE

The clients reaction? Terrific! Among others, I received this very thoughtful assessment from one of the folks at Paragon:

"Great work, I find all of these visually arresting. Here are unedited first impressions."

"Logo 1: Perhaps not deliberate, but anyway reminiscent of "@" character symbolizing very appropriate inter/intranet theme. Unfortunately this has become something of a visual cliche in the industry ... logos of Prodigy, @Home etc. etc. Also I wonder whether the darkness, lack of contrast, and cold unsaturated colors don't contribute to a kind of gloomy brooding feel that would be more appropriate to a cyber-punkish or goth-flavored gaming company than a stolid tools/outsourcing firm."

"Logo 2: Brighter saturated color base and strong contrast make for a more upbeat feel than #1. However the polygon feels unstable to me, as it's top-heavy and sitting on its tip (my design training stressed that triangles and quadrilaterals ought not to sit on their apexes unless you are deliberately aiming for a nervy feel of dis-equilibrium--perhaps this is way old graphic orthodoxy though). Iceberg motif is clever allusion to "unseen depth" theme but equally valid association is "hidden danger" ... isn't James Cameron's "Titanic" blockbuster being released this Christmas?!? I may be biased about this because I have spent enough time sailing in sub-arctic waters to have a healthy fear of icebergs--they are constantly flipping over, fragmenting, and giving you heart attacks as they appear suddenly out of the fog."

"Though perhaps these mental associations are absent for our customers in places like Virginia? Also --would the iceberg motif be sufficiently obvious in B&W? I'm always concerned about whether logos still make sense when the colors are obliterated on faxes and photocopies. Finally, the need for the large "ocean" field to make the iceberg icon sufficiently clear seems like, well, a waste of space in tight quarters like letterhead, business cards, and web icons."

"Logo 3: The best one by far. One-point perspective skewing of 'Paragon' feels visually stable via wide base while drawing the viewer into an imaginary distance thus alluding to the future and forward thinking. Circular color accent on the "A" provides lots of positive iconography ("peak", "rising sun") and would still render well in B&W. Overall symmetry enhances message of solidity, reliability, and stability that our predominantly corporate clients value. Much more compact than #2, hence easier to deploy in media where information density needs to be high. Bottom line, I can't find anything to fault with this one."

Wow. This is the kind of feedback designers dream about. This person did some hard thinking about the image and took the time to offer put it into words. Positive or negative, you owe it to yourself to think through a design--whether you are buying or selling it. I have no doubt the folks at Paragon have.

THE FINAL CHOICE

The company chose to use Logo #3.