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## What's a Logo and Why Do We Need a Good One?

Logos are hard — really hard. Surprisingly hard. There's a lot more to organizing the way your law firm name looks on your business card than most people think. Consider how easily we can remember the typefaces used by Coca-Cola, Disney, IBM, FedEx or NASA — or Target's unique circle's or Nike's swoosh.

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A logo is one of many tools that helps firms convey their message to the marketplace. While it can seem insignificant, a logo is often the first contact many prospects will have with your firm — for example, on a business card when meeting one of your lawyers at a conference. It can help set the tone for how they view your firm and its quality and professionalism. Does it look professionally designed? Does it convey the sense of a high-quality organization?

I want your logo to highlight the information that helps viewers read and remember the firm, to help them find you later. We've redesigned more than 100 law firm logos over the years, most commonly as part of a larger firm rebrand. We always start with a process to discover the brand message the firm wants to convey to the marketplace. Has your firm first decided what its message is? Are you tough or friendly? Creative or traditional? Efficient, intellectual, tech-savvy or edgy? Because once you know specifically what you're saying, that is the vital guidance to offer to a qualified designer.

**Logo design is a narrow subspecialty area of design.** Not every graphic designer can create great logos, just like not every lawyer can handle every kind of legal practice. Many great logo designers do little else, spending their entire lives exclusively designing logos. That's it. They live in the world of glyphs and font families.

**A logo is a little piece of art, and your lawyers and professionals can have very different feelings about the type of artwork they like.** Some like impressionists or



modern art; others might prefer “dogs playing poker on velvet.” They’re entitled to their own opinions, of course, and we must help them see why the logo says something about the firm that should make them proud to pull it out of their wallet. Because if they don’t like the color or design, you’re going to hear about it for a very long time. Some lawyers will simply refuse to hand out their cards — trust me, this happens. Logo design is much more difficult than many people realize. And in some ways, it’s more important, too. Why? Because an amateurish logo is *your entire firm* wearing a cheap suit.

Maybe no one ever hired or fired a law firm because of its logo, but it’s sitting prominently on your business card and website. It’s one of the first things people experience about your firm at a critical time, when they’re looking for any indicia of quality (or lack thereof). It’s an important part of a first impression.

**It’s understandable that people think logos are easy to design** — they’re just words after all. Pick one or two different standard Word fonts, bold or italicize part of the name, center it, then add a color. Boom — you’re done!

It seems simple, but it’s not. Well-designed logos are eye-catching, balanced and nuanced and a good designer juggles many different variables like, shape, balance and utility. Consider the capitalization style, centered or offset, thick or thin, serif or sans serif, two lines or three.

**Don’t settle.** In a high-risk legal profession where the buyer can’t “try on” the service or take it for a test drive before buying, even little things matter. You wouldn’t wear a cheap suit to meet with a hot new prospect. Don’t let a mediocre logo or business card act like it.

Done right, logo revisions require strategic thinking to clearly determine what the firm wants to say to its target audience(s), and how to connect with them. It can be a long process, but it’s well worth the investment. ■

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Ross Fishman, JD**, specializes in branding, websites and marketing training for law firms. A former litigator, marketing director and marketing partner, he has helped hundreds of firms dominate their markets. Fishman was the first inductee into the Legal Marketing Association’s Hall of Fame. He’s written two books on branding and associate marketing, both available on Amazon.

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