The Logo Scorecard
Meaningful Criteria for Evaluating Logos

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> *"The principal role of a logo is to identify, and simplicity is its means... Its effectiveness depends on <u>distinctiveness</u>, <u>visibility</u>, <u>adaptabilty</u>, <u>memorability</u>, <u>universality</u>, and <u>timelessness</u>."*
>
> *- Paul Rand (1914-1996)*

ABOUT THE SCORECARD

Logos are controversial. Whether you are rebranding an established company, or you are designing your startup's very first logo, the process never easy. With opinions flying like arrows, it can be hard to separate opinion from solid principals.

I created this scorecard based on 6 traits of a good logo outlined in a quote from Paul Rand, a legendary graphic designer who focused primarily on corporate logos. Rand was a great designer, but he was an even better thinker. His soundbites on design have unmatched clarity.

Use this scorecard to judge your existing logo. Or use it as a way to grade the work given to you by a creative agency. If you want to see how our company logo scored, complete with commentry on compromise, visit http://smithHOU.SE/scorecard

- Matt S. Smith, President / Founder smithHOUSE

KEY CONCEPTS:

- **Branding System** - This is your logo, your colors, and layers of graphical elements that are used to extend your company's visual image. (e.g. social media avatars, packaging for your product, in-store signage and advertising.) A branding system is sometimes *graphical identity*, *identity system*, *identity*, or simply your *brand*.

- **Logo** - This is the graphical symbol of your company. Designers are usually very sensitive when the word "logo" is thrown around because it is an oversimplification of a branding system. A logo is the key stone of a branding system, but it's vulnerable to misinterpretation if there isn't a comprehensive branding system in place. Many logos can be separated into two parts: logomark and typemark.

  1. **Logomark** - The graphic icon within your company's logo.

  2. **Typemark** - The stylized letters within your company's logo. Also described as a "wordmark."

I. Distinctiveness

YES - IDK - NO	01. Our logo catches people's eyes.	If your logo were printed on a page next to the logos of 5 of your competitors, your goal is that people can't stop looking at your logo.
YES - IDK - NO	02. There is something distinct or clever about our logo.	Is there a visual pun? A cool detail? Something that delights new people when they take a look at the logo for the first time? This is usually the first thing that someone says to you after they see your logo.
YES - IDK - NO	03. Our logo is authentic and stands confidently apart from the pack.	Just like in high school, you don't want to try too hard to fit in. You also don't want to try too hard to stand out. Be yourself and be confident!

II. Visibility

YES - IDK - NO	04. In its primary environment, our logo is easily identified.	If you are a logistics company, your logo will be seen on the side of trucks. If you are a social media startup, your logo will be seen on your app, and your website. It should look best in this primary environment. If there are any compromises to be made within your branding system, it must happen in its secondary and tertiary environments.
YES - IDK - NO	05. There is no unnecessary information or frivolous graphical detail within our logo.	A logo should not have to tell the story of your company.

III. Adaptability

YES - IDK - NO	06. We don't just have a logo, we have a full branding system.	Branding system: logomark + typemark in multiple configurations (vertical, horizontal) and in different formats (full color, single color). This is just a start. A branding system should be comprehensive.
YES - IDK - NO	07. Our logo keeps its visual integrity when it is really small and really large.	Logos should look good when as small as an app icon or on the corner of a business card. It should also look proportioned well when it is significantly enlarged (when projected onto a large screen behind the stage.)
YES - IDK - NO	08. Our logo "gets along well" with other logos.	Many times your company logo will sit next to other logos: parent company logo, sibling company logos, partner company logos. If your logo "pushes others away" or looks awkward in a lineup of other logos, it's not getting along well.
YES - IDK - NO	09. Our logo has reasonable dimensions.	Examples: • Too wide: 1 unit tall by 10 units wide. • Too tall: 5 units tall by 1 unit wide. Humans generally like a logo to have dimensions somewhere between a square and a Golden Rectangle.

IV. Memorability

YES - IDK - NO	10. If we asked customers to verbally describe our logo, they could get the key elements correct.	"Starbucks is a green circle with a mermaid inside. Sometimes there are white letters that say *Starbucks Coffee* on the outside."
YES - IDK - NO	11. If we asked customers to draw the logo, they would get the basics right.	"I drew an apple with a bite taken out of it."

V. Universality

YES - IDK - NO	12. Our logo is likeable and interesting to people outside of our industry.	A logo shouldn't just "make sense" to people in your industry.
YES - IDK - NO	13. Our logo would get a "thumbs up" from a younger or older demographic than our primary customer.	You can't please each generation's whims, but good design has a universal appeal.
YES - IDK - NO	14. Our logo cannot be easily misinterpreted.	Nothing confusing or strange.

VI. Timelessness

YES - IDK - NO	15. Our logo doesn't fall into cliches of today's trends.	There's nothing wrong with being cool and forward thinking. However, it is problematic when your logo is white hot today. This usually means it will look dated in 5 years.
YES - IDK - NO	16. Our logo doesn't rely on a "right now" color.	A single color, by itself, isn't defective. However, if an off-beat color is overused, people get tired of it and want it to go away. What colors are timeless and what colors are trendy? It's usually whatever color defines the hippest bridesmades dresses for that year. Or it's neon colors. We only love neon until we hate it.

Totals

YES - IDK - NO

Words by Matt S. Smith, MBA | smithHOU.SE |

EVALUATING YOUR SCORE

"Know the rules. Know when to break them."

Is it possible to have a perfect score? Maybe. But that's not the point.

Yes, a good logo should score high. But given that each company has a character in a unique marketplace, it's necessary to break rules if you believe it is essential for the success of your business.

To see when and why we broke the rules, visit http://smithHOU.SE/scorecard

SCORING

14 - 16 YES - You are awesome.

10 - 13 YES - You are doing well, but take the steps to make it awesome.

06 - 09 YES - You have work to do.