

OPINION

CORPORATE INHOUSE: BOOK 'EM, DANO! (MANAGING YOUR COMPANY'S BRAND)



GLENN JOHN ARNOWITZ IS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF WYETH CORPORATE GRAPHICS, THE INHOUSE CREATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT OF WYETH, A RESEARCH-BASED PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY. HE IS ALSO, ALONG WITH ANDY EPSTEIN, CO-FOUNDER OF INSOURCE, AN ASSOCIATION DEDICATED TO ADDRESSING ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE IN-HOUSE DESIGN COMMUNITY.

CONTACT: WWW.IN-SOURCE.ORG

"I'm sorry ma'am but we're going to have to take you downtown. You're in violation of Logo Code # 48657892: failure to print your company logo in the correct PMS color. My partner wants to take it easy on you, but I'm ready to send you away for a long, long time. You're lookin' at 5 years minimum of paste-up."

Oh, if life were only like that. Chances are, if you manage the in-house graphics department for a company, you've been involved at some level with managing their corporate logo and/or identity. This is no easy task because it requires the cooperation of each employee and a huge investment of your time on a daily basis to ensure that your company's logo is being used correctly.

Your company's logo is their face to the world. It represents and articulates the company's vision and speaks directly to employees, clients, investors and the media. And it is your responsibility to make sure it is well-dressed and well-behaved at all times.

The stories you are about to read are true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent. Betty Farbis was arrested yesterday on four counts of company logo defacement. Farbis has eluded authorities for years but was caught in the act of spherizing, distorting, recoloring and placing her company's logo on various HR policy brochures over a lime green background.

How many times have you seen your company's logo disproportionately resized? Printed in the wrong PMS color? Distorted beyond recognition? Too many. What's more frustrating is that most people don't recognize the difference whether obvious or subtle. The guilty ones are not only Microsoft Word users but Photoshop novices who have learned how to stretch, distort and add a drop shadow to almost anything in their path. So education is key.

Communicate to employees the value and importance of a strong brand identity and how it effects your company in the marketplace. Publish a brand guidelines toolkit and illustrate how color, fonts, clear space, and placement are all integral to building strong brand recognition. Create a brochure that will serve as a reference guide and assist employees when basic issues arise concerning logo usage. Make your brand guidelines accessible on the company website and alert employees to the fact that information is readily available.

Contact your vendors as well. Make the brand guidelines accessible to outside contractors and make sure your clients are mindful of the fact that extra care must be given to logos silk screened or embroidered on promotional items and apparel or the results will be unsatisfactory.

Create a "Hall of Shame". Display samples of both correct and incorrect logo usage so your clients begin to understand the difference. These examples can be posted on your corporate website or periodically in your company newsletter.

Become the "Chief of the Logo Police". Require that employees contact you for all logo-related issues and become the repository for all company logo files. Let them come to you when they need the corporate logo. That way, you can manage the artwork and maintain a certain level of consistency. If you email clients the logo, make sure to include a copy of the brand guidelines with detailed instructions on logo usage and printing. If your company's logo is a custom color don't forget to have swatch sheets readily available to both internal clients and external vendors that specify the ink mixture for different paper stocks.

An agency that specializes in brand management may spend a year developing a corporate identity package for your company but they often don't stick around long enough to manage its implementation. You and your staff are on the front lines everyday and must "police" the vast landscape of printed corporate collateral for offensive logo usage and also provide your clients with the necessary tools to help them understand the importance of brand consistency.

Johnson McHubbel was last seen enlarging his company's logo without holding down the shift key. When the Graphics Police arrived, it wasn't pretty. All that remained was a logo that looked as if it were standing in front of a carnival mirror. McHubbel is still at large.