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Killing Boring Graphics.

There are a few simple design techniques that are sure to shine a new light on antiquated artwork. Without rebuilding a logo or redesigning a graphic, consider a modest adjustment to liven things up. The simpler the change, the easier it will be to maintain production results. Plus, smaller variations are more likely appreciated and approved by the client. Often our clients get scared of any design change. They likely reflect on the pains endured when originally developing their logo/mascot art the first time. They are reluctant to 'think outside the box' on a subject so delicate as their representative art. Here are a few ideas to 'update' their old-school graphic, that are easy enough for you to apply and present without wasting too much time.

Negative Printing or Substrate through. Most logo graphics are vector layers, creating shapes and color, compiled to show a design, right? Negative Printing refers to the removal of some or all of the prominent portions of the design, without losing its essence. If difficult to conceptualize, try to think of the graphic as an equation. The vector &/or digital pieces are coefficients, simplify to solve... too nerdy? Let's get specific using some simple outlining techniques: Apply an outline to a portion of your graphic, then convert that line to a layer or graphic itself. >Object >Convert outline to object -in CorelDRAW, will give you a nice outer edge of the original art as its own object. Then simply delete the original or inner area. While the outline, in the thickness you chose, remains, the substrate or background shows through. The remaining outline is scalable, vinyl cut ready, and will be recognized for digitizing... Find a free video on this method at: CorelTrainer.com/build-your-client-a-logo

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This technique can be applied multiple times to the same graphic. Think of a vector image, no matter the number of colors, where every other area is combined to the same color. Then imagine that graphic with the remaining sections simply gone. They are not transparent in the sense of a Transparency Effect, but in the sense that there is nothing there, just tee-shirt, empty area, see-through... Take the remaining area(s), apply an outline to them, then again, remove the original inner areas. You'll need to be converting the outlines themselves to objects as you go. To describe the process another way. Outline everything. Make the outlines objects. Remove the original areas. Select what is remaining (which used to be outlines) and apply an outline to them. Make the new outlines objects. Remove what used to be outlines... The process is relatively simple, does not necessarily 'change' the client's original artwork, but shows a new perspective. This technique can be used to simplify a large complex design to a smaller, still recognizable logo or image. This technique can also be used to bring the color count down on an image, or 'flatten' the entire graphic altogether. Simplifying your art this way will make it more manageable for Screen Printing, Vinyl Cutting etc. Use the color of the substrate as an inner part of the graphic itself, plus it looks pretty cool!

Familiarize yourself with the Cropping, Erasing, and Shaping Tools to apply similar techniques to photos and digital images. Combine digital textures with the above technique to simplify a message while drawing more attention to portions of it. With a digital or pixelated logo, creating a 'transparent background' will accomplish similar goals. Try using the >Color mask- functions to remove unwanted or dominant color(s) from the logo, then >Convert to Bitmap- again in your design software, thus saving the masked version as a solid 'flat' layer with a truly transparent background. You'll need to export as a PNG instead of a JPEG to maintain this effect. "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking." -Albert Einstein





Another relatively simple design technique to give a new perspective to your client's graphic is a classic alteration, but often an overlooked option. Color contrasting with singled out portions of the art is a striking design technique. Applying simple contrasting color(s) to a design, particularly to highlight specifics draws attention to an image. Highlighting specific areas, while alternatively using contrast colors & seasonal themes is fun to apply, while not technically changing the original client artwork, photo, or digital image.

Take a photograph for example or a full digital color logo. Select the image and copy/paste it on top of itself. Take the top image and >Convert to Bitmap, choose "grayscale" as your color mode. Remember that the color image is under the boring gray version, use your Crop, Erase, or Knife Tool(s) to remove portions of the top layer exposing the color beneath. This draws attention to specific portion(s) of the art. Think of a sports logo or mascot exactly as it's original, just tailored for a specific season, color, or promotion, while the rest of the image/art is 'grayed out'. This technique is especially popular in the wedding photo market. A full-color image is converted to greys, then specific sections are highlighted. The groom's tie and the bride's eyes. The flowers and dresses etc.



To take this technique one step farther, apply a new object in-between the color (bottom) and grayscale (top) image. Apply effects, lenses, new colors, and transparencies to that 'middle' object. Feel free to make near-unrealistic color adjustments to the small highlighted area (middle or bottom layer), such as increasing color intensity. Note that this may change the art more than the client may like, but will also intensify the focal point of the graphic.

Less is more with this technique. The less you show in color the more attention it will bring. I also recommend you use more universally recognized themes or colors. Primary colors and basic shapes are usually best.

Stay relevant to the message of the graphic. Expose school colors, specific products, and highlight important details. While producing these graphics, it is often helpful to save multiple versions along with your steps in creating this effect(s). The client may want something from several steps back, and using that option is easier than producing the whole effect again. When moving to production be sure to export a solid layer or 'flattened' image. >Select all (layers/order) >Export etc. Some production equipment may get confused or show the 'cropped' areas with contrast or boundary lines, so create that additional version without the layers. "...We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" -Corinthians 15:51.

Faux-multi-decoration. Between our initial excitement in deciding to buy new production equipment, learning to use it, and actually producing something new, we often forget one of the strongest reasons we made the decision to buy it in the first place; Blending production processes. When we finally get around to remembering the 'multi-decoration' applications of our combined equipment, the new machine has already established its own niche in our workplace, production flow, and client base. This I feel, is a leading reason why so many digital printers are picked up by shops that already have more than one production process. It allows us to bridge the gap with faux-processes. Being able to print an image that looks like embroidery, or engraving, or a texture area is so incredibly exciting to us, and our customers.

Beyond adding the 'phony' production process, many of my clients eventually apply a small amount of the original mimicked process itself. For example, printing an embroidered patch on a garment, then simply outlining it with a dense run, zigzag, or even a satin-stitch is cool to the eye, and to the touch. Print a metallic look, then apply rhinestones. Multi-decoration is not new, and we already do it each time we heat-apply names & numbers on the back of a jersey. The trick is to get one process to look like another, usually using a digital printer.

This style may require a couple of pages in your design software or an additional art-board. In Corel you can simply >File >Export >Selected only, to move to production with a portion of your multi-decoration artwork. Note that some sort of cross-platform registration mark(s) will make production much easier. Some of my clients simply include typed instructions on their production sheets, such as: "first printed S begins rhinestone application" &/or "remove top two rhinestones before heat pressing" or "whole pocket inside the hoop. top-center. Do not hoop any of the sleeve". Two points of reference are necessary for application on our two-dimension substrates.

Attempt the design techniques above on smaller orders or something for yourself first. There are equipment specific speed-bumps and process-unique scenarios a-plenty. Keep your design and production times in mind when pricing some of these more complicated effects. When you accomplish these techniques, people notice. It's very rewarding. Having the opportunity to take the risk and coming up with something new is what success is all about. Just don't forget to consider the value of your time. Nothing ventured nothing gained is certainly an axiom to us in the Imprint Industry. We're more used to taking a little risk, being small-medium sized business owners. But, keep in mind the legitimate fear our clients have when we offer something new. Change is scary. "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new." -Socrates.

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<https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/impressions/202001/index.php#/p/108>

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