NSPRA Golden Achievement Award Submission 2022
Category: Branding
Project Title: ESD 105 Logo

Completed Logo Design:

[Logo Image]

Goal for this project:
The goal for this project was to create a new logo to represent the agency that was modern, fresh and representative of the south-central region of Washington State, prior to the launch of our new agency website. The deadline for completion was set at September 1, 2021 which was a little more than a month prior to the deadline given by our website provider.

Project Phases (Including research, implementation & evaluation):

Step 1: Program Interviews
In March 2021, our public relations & marketing department began hosting program interviews with all directors here at the Educational Service District 105. The purpose of these interviews were to help identify key areas of growth for our ESD 105 PR & M Strategic Plan. During the interviews, several directors shared dissatisfaction with the current branding elements for the ESD 105. After all program interviews were conducted, it was decided that an evaluation of, and potential rebranding of, our agency logo and marketing materials would be outlined in our strategic plan. The goals associated with this project have been highlighted in the linked document.

Step 2: Communications Survey (Internal & External Stakeholders)
The second step in our rebranding was the evaluation of wants and needs of our stakeholders. To guide our work, we added questions about the existing logo in our communications survey.
This survey was sent to all internal staff members, ESD 105 board members, and all school district staff working within our ESD 105 region boundaries.

During this initial evaluation, we asked 3 questions: 1) Do you think our current logo is visually appealing? 2) What can we do to improve the appearance of our logo? 3) Are there any elements of our logo that you think are easily recognizable and should not be removed?

We received mixed feedback. 51% of our external stakeholders thought the existing logo was just okay, 10% thought it was not visually appealing and 39% thought it was visually appealing. In contrast, 56.8% of our internal stakeholders thought it was visually appealing and only 35.1% thought it was just okay. Both surveys indicated that the most impactful change we could make to increase satisfaction was a color change.

**Step 3: Three Logos & Another Round of Stakeholder Surveys (Review Full Data)**

Receiving mixed feedback from our initial survey, we initiated a second round of surveying to determine whether it was necessary to create a full new logo or just update the colors of our existing logo. This survey was only administered to those external respondents from survey 1 and all internal stakeholders. For this round, we provided our stakeholders with three logo designs. The first design they were asked to evaluate was our existing logo. The second design was a refreshed version of our existing logo with new colors. The final design was a completely new logo. Data collected showed that the design with the least satisfaction was our existing logo. Overall, more than half of those surveyed indicated that they thought the new design was the best representation of our agency.

**Step 4: Directors Meeting to Discuss Data & Rebranding**

At this point in our project, I brought the data to our directors’ group for a discussion. At this meeting it was decided that I would proceed with creating an all new logo similar to sample 3 in our second round of surveys. To do so, I would use feedback generated in our first two rounds of surveying. We also used an online Psychology of Color tool as a group to help determine which colors would be used in this new design based on how we believed our agency should be perceived. We landed on green and blue: green to represent innovation/life/vibrancy and blue to represent trust/tradition. It was also decided that this new logo should represent our region (agriculture, sun, life).

**Step 5: Logo Design**

During this step we used data collected from our second round of surveys and our directors’ meeting to create an entirely new logo design. We used several colors of green to represent the rolling hills of orchards and vineyards in our rural topography. The two dark green hills represent the “gap” as it is referred to in our region. We added a wavy blue line under the hills to represent the rivers that serve our region and bring so much tourism to our area. We added a sun popping up between the rolling hills to represent the good weather we are known for and also because the sun represents hope and new beginnings or innovation. We made the ESD 105 prevalent and bold and kept our fonts very simple and modern.
After completion, I presented the new logo to the directors’ group and it was a unanimous decision to move forward with the design. The ESD 105 Board of Directors also agreed that it was a great update that felt more like our region and ultimately approved the final logo design for use. We contracted with Field Group of Yakima to turn it into a vector image and to create a branding guide. See branding guide here. We did not meet our goal deadline, but our project was completed before the deadline provided by our website provider on October 8, 2021.

**Step 6: Logo Launch**

After approval, we planned our launch of the logo to our various audiences ([review Launch Stages](#)). After sending our logo to our new website provider on October 8th, we launched to staff during a virtual staff meeting. During this meeting we shared the process we went through along with the final design. We also launched an [apparel store](#) for staff to purchase clothing with the new logo. Staff were given branded pens, custom sugar cookies with our new logo and face masks in celebration of this big moment. ([See swag here](#)) We also provided them with a collection of [Zoom backgrounds featuring the new logo](#). In addition, staff were also introduced to our [new business card designs featuring a full color front and back](#). The new business cards allow staff the option of having their staff photo displayed, as well as the option to add their applicable pronouns, in an effort to create connections and respect the diversity of our employees. We followed this announcement with a Smore e-news to all staff.

After launching to staff, we launched to our regional superintendents at their monthly in-person meeting. They were given swag bags with pens, masks and custom cookies.

Following the launch to superintendents, we changed the colors and logo on our [website](#) and sent an [email message to all school district employees in our region](#). Since launching, we have received tons of positive feedback about the change. This email message is rated as one of our highest for the year with 9.3 rating. ([See screenshot of data](#)).

Since the initial launch, we have been slowly working toward revising all marketing materials to our new branding colors and logo. [Here is an example of one such material](#). I anticipate that the process to fully switch all marketing materials for all programs in our agency will take the remainder of the 2021-22 school year.

**Evaluation of Project Goal:**

Before beginning our redesign, we collected survey data from internal and external stakeholders as mentioned above. When asked to evaluate the visual appeal of our original logo([Click here to see the original design](#)), using a 1-5 scale with 5 being the highest visual appeal, respondents replied as follows: (Rating of 5 = 16.4%, rating of 4 = 22.6%, rating of 3 = 31.4%, rating of 2 = 21.4% and rating of 1 = 8.2%). People described this logo using words like “old, dated, boring, professional, familiar, impersonal, etc.”

To evaluate the effectiveness of our new logo design, we used the same set of questions used in the second round of surveying. When asked to describe the new logo, words used were
“fresh, modern, happy, flourishing, vibrant”. When asked on the same 1-5 scale to evaluate the overall visual appearance of the new design, people responded with (Rating of 5 = 55.6%, rating of 4 = 33.3%, rating of 3 = 11.1%, rating of 2 = 0% and rating of 1 = 0%). This data showed a clear shift and much higher satisfaction levels with our new logo. Along with quantitative data, we have also received numerous praises from individuals in response to our mass messages announcing the new logo.

**What would I do differently?**
Between phases 2 & 3, we originally planned to outsource the design to a local marketing firm. This decision was made in an effort to reduce tensions on our new team, as one of the existing members was the creator of the original logo and very resistant to change, despite being presented with clear data.

The firm produced several examples and none were unique or representative of our agency. In the end, I made the decision to create the logo myself, despite some growing contention with the resistant team member. Ultimately, it was the correct decision and the logo has had a very successful roll-out.

Outsourcing to the local marketing firm cost us money and resulted in a delay in project completion. We were able to use our contract with the marketing firm to save us time in the creation of the vector images and style guides as I planned for the launch. If I were to do this again, I would have presented the team with data and moved along on the correct path without outsourcing to another agency that didn’t fully understand the vision for the project.