

## THE EVOLUTION OF A LOGO DESIGN- A CASE STUDY OF THE LOGO OF THE PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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### ABSTRACT

*Very often, people do not appreciate the thought process that goes into the production of artworks, be they logo designs or paintings and tend to under-value them. Others, including even Academics and the enlightened in society, go to the extent of believing that artists and designers do not have any serious thought behind the artworks they produce. Some even go to the extent of saying that artists are not intelligent people. This paper is an attempt to educate such people, to an extent, by discussing what went into the design and adoption of the new logo of the Presbyterian University College. Much research was carried out and creativity employed in the basic creative process, from the time the request for a new logo was made to the time the design was finished. The study is also aimed at encouraging users of the logo to appreciate the design better and help, through its application, secure and maintain the identity of the Presbyterian University College.*

**Keywords:** Brief, Logo designs, design development, design refinement, documentation

### INTRODUCTION

The job of the graphic designer is, basically, to create awareness, communicate a message or project an image. To do this, he uses impact, creativity, originality, psychology, aesthetics and even sciences such as biology, via the medium of words and pictures and touch and sound. (Jefkin, 1997). The ensuing positive reaction by the viewer is of prime motive to him.

John Frostel of the American Graphic Designers Association (AGDA) buttresses this fact when he claims that "Graphic designers at their best hold attributes such as creativity, analytical power, business acumen, relationship, skills, technical disciplines and organizational ability within their range of skills and talents." (www.AGDA.com The Graphic Design Profession). The designer, thus, has certain qualities which he employs in the creative process of producing his artworks. There is a wrong notion that the graphic designer, and for that matter the artist does not give much thought to the

execution of his work. This paper seeks to correct that notion by making a case study of the new logo of the Presbyterian University College to show what went into the design.

Although each identity programme is shaped to the needs of the client, the basic creative process is similar for most projects. Generally, each project goes through, basically, four phases- Analysis, Design Development, Design Refinement and Documentation. (Aldrinch-Ruenzel and Fennel, 1991)

### Analysis

Uniqueness, memorability, flexibility, strength and longevity are widely accepted general criteria for most corporate identities and they exert an influence on the final design. Interviews and personal contacts normally yield a list of specific attributes to convey, forming the basis of the design platform against which design exploration is evaluated.

The Presbyterian Church of Ghana took a decision in the year 1998 to start a University. The main aim is to provide quality tertiary education to the many senior secondary school graduates who do not gain admission into the public Universities. A committee was established to see to the implementation of that decision. As part of the preparations towards the start of the University, the Implementation Committee held a series of meetings to analyse all the inputs from the church to be incorporated in the design of a logo for the University.

The committee put out a design brief to institutions and individuals requesting the design of a new logo for the proposed Presbyterian University College. A design brief is an important written document produced either by the client or a creative director which gives instructions or information about what is to be incorporated in a particular design. It is sometimes referred to as the creative strategy. Bob Gill, a well known graphic designer sees the main problem in design as getting the right brief. He goes on to say that "if you don't get a proper brief you shouldn't think of a solution... it is impossible for the designer not to get a full brief and yet carry out the job".

The design brief received from the Implementation Committee defined two primary criteria. These were that the intended logo must reflect the enviable, age-long identity and image of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. Secondly, it should depict aspects of knowledge and technology. The Presbyterian Church is noted for its discipline because the church's policies are based on Biblical principles. The church's name is virtually synonymous with discipline because of the sort of training the early missionaries gave and the legacy they left behind.

As a related criterion, the logo was to depict the University as the "light" which will lead and direct others along their different paths of endeavour. The University must be a centre of excellence. There were secondary aspects to the design brief. The logo would have to be simple, translate well in different media and eventually stand the test of time as a strong symbol.

### Design Development and Refinement

When the designer has satisfied himself that he has analysed, answered and considered all the points

raised in the brief, he sits down at the desk with layout pad and pencil to think of an idea. An idea is a creative means of answering the problem, visually. This can be achieved through the creative process - thinking, and that brings out the creativity in the designer.

The brief from the Implementation Committee presented a number of challenges which had to be surmounted. The first consideration was to make the logo simple and easy to understand. This consideration was the guiding principle in the process of designing the logo. The simplicity had to reflect in the artistic elements to use in the logo. The main challenge, however, was how to make the new logo reflect the identity and image of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana without incorporating the existing logo of the church as shown in Fig. 1. Thorough research was conducted to find out the meaning of the motifs used in the logo.



Fig. 1: The existing logo of the Presbyterian Church

The existing logo of the church is principally made up of two symbols: the Swiss flag ([www.3dflags.com/html/gif](http://www.3dflags.com/html/gif)) as shown in Fig. 2 and the cross of St. Andrew, ([www.Allflags.com.au](http://www.Allflags.com.au)) the apostle of Jesus Christ as shown in Figure 3. The reason behind the use of the two symbols is that the church was first called the Basel Mission because it was started by the Mission mainly from Germany, Switzerland and the West Indies. It was renamed the Scottish Mission Church after the First World War. ([www.Presbyterian Church of Ghana.com](http://www.Presbyterian Church of Ghana.com)). A third symbol, the palm tree which appears in the middle of the logo, is a symbol which appeared on the emblem of the then Gold Coast.



Fig. 2: The Swiss Flag



Fig. 3: St. Andrew's cross

How to crystallize all the ideas into a one – unit logo became the design problem or the physical graphic challenge. The design brief was critically examined to extract the salient points in it. The first issue to be addressed was how to symbolize “knowledge”. A few ideas came up but the element that was eventually chosen to represent “knowledge” was a book. The next question was, should it be a closed or an opened book? An opened book was preferred to a closed one, to signify that the Word of God is at all times open to mankind for reproach and instruction, and also to symbolise “knowledge” which must be acquired by all. The opened book was used to form the base of the logo design. (Fig. 4)

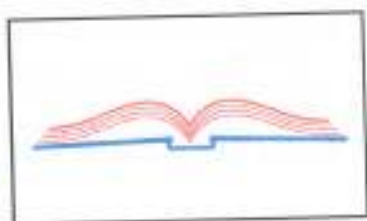


Fig. 4: The opened book

This was done to stand for two ideas. They are first, that the Word of God is the foundation on which the church's policies and principles are built and secondly, that the acquisition of knowledge is also the basic goal of all the learners in the Presbyterian University College. The leaves of the book were depicted in red to stand for the blood of Jesus which, symbolically, is what He shed on the cross to cleanse mankind of all sins. The cover of the book was left in blue significantly for balance of colour and to harmonise with the overall colour scheme of the logo design.

Having obtained the base of the logo design, the next problem to address was how to incorporate the identity of the church into it. The logo of the Presbyterian Church was literally torn apart to find out whether if each of the artistic elements making up the existing logo stood on its own, it would bring out the identity of the church. That did not work because none of the elements, on their own, could bring out the idea. The final option left to the designer was to incorporate the existing logo of the church, in its totality into the new one for the Presbyterian University College. (Fig. 1)

The next problem was the placement of that element in the new logo. It was decided to put the existing logo of the church just above the book. The church's policies and principles, as already stated, are based on the Bible so the position of the existing logo had to portray that fact, hence its placement above the book. The colour scheme of the logo was not altered in any way because it forms part of the identity of the church.

The next problem to solve was how to symbolize “technology”. This was quite challenging. The idea of using the computer and the gear to symbolize “technology” came up. The author, however, settled on the use of the gear because it is the most common part which makes machines move. (Fig. 5) Even though gears are circular in shape, only one half of the gear (semi-circular) was shown in the logo for aesthetic purposes and for the stability of the design. One of the many design options put forward, showed the lower half of the gear substituted with the slogan or motto of the University “Discipline in Leadership” in a semi-circular shape. That option was, however, rejected because it did not make the design stable. The colour black was used for the gear to depict its solidity, toughness and durability.

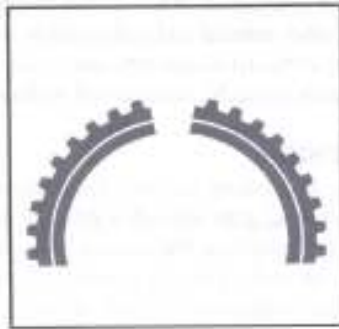


Fig. 5: Part of a gear

The last problem to solve was how to depict the "light" aspect. What readily came into mind was a lighted torch (Fig. 6) which is often used to symbolize enlightenment. It was incorporated into the logo design and shown to be emerging from within the existing logo. The torch was thus positioned in the logo to give credence to the fact that the Presbyterian Church continues to be a guiding light. By inference, the Presbyterian University College will continuously be a source of light as far as education is concerned.



Fig. 6: The flaming torch

The font selected for the slogan or motto was a simple, sans-serif type since the author did not want to use any illegible letter style. (Fig.7) The motto was written in all caps for legibility and boldness, and to form a solid base for the logo.

**DISCIPLINE IN LEADERSHIP**

Fig. 7: The new slogan or motto of the University

#### Assessment and Evaluation of the Logo

Having developed what was thought to be the solution, the logo design of the Presbyterian University College was measured against the criteria that had been laid out in the brief.

- Does the logo reflect the enviable, age - long identity of the Presbyterian Church?
- Does it depict both knowledge and technology?
- Does it portray the light aspect?
- Does the logo depict the fact that it is based on the ultimate source of knowledge, the Bible?
- Is it simple enough to be understood by people?

The final logo design (Fig. 8) was shown to about 100 respondents; children and adults alike from different backgrounds both within the Presbyterian Church and outside it for their opinion. They were to give their opinions under the following.

- Satisfied with the design
- Cannot make out the design

Majority of the people, 96, to whom the logo was shown were satisfied with the design. Only 4 out of the number were not satisfied with the design.



Fig. 8 The finished logo of the University

To further support the mark as a viable identity, it was put through the standard tests that every identity symbol is normally subjected to.

- Does the logo work in one colour?
- Does it reduce?
- Does it enlarge?
- Does it translate well into other media?
- Could the logo be deconstructed and reconstructed?

The new logo design of the Presbyterian University College passed all the tests before it was finally submitted to the University Implementation Committee.

### Application and Extension

Naturally the design is only a sign when it remains just a logo in itself. It only starts to work and to become an identity once it is applied and proliferated in various ways. The first phase of application related to how the identity symbol would be used first on the headed letterform of the University and also applied in the production of stickers. Those aspects were prepared for the client. (Fig. 9 and 10).



Fig. 9: The logo as applied on the letterhead



Fig. 10 The logo as applied for a sticker

### Documentation

Generally, corporations place a high value on communicating an image of reliability and stability. However, visual audits often reveal great inconsistencies in the use and applications of existing identity symbols that contradict the desired image. These inconsistencies are often the result of poor or non-existent programme documentation.

As a concluding thought, it is essential to mention how important it is for patrons to be made aware of their responsibilities concerning the strategic and tactical uses of the identity symbol. Control of the identity symbol must be ensured through an

understanding of all aspects which could impact on the stringent application of the identity symbol. An identity symbol manual and consultation with the designer are critical if the strength and the continuity of the identity are to be secured and maintained.

### CONCLUSION

It is quite rewarding for one to achieve ones objective, having gone through a difficult process of trying to crystallize fragmented ideas into an acceptable artwork. There is a high level of hard work and commitment on the part of the artist and the designer who are involved in the creative process. This fact must be recognized at all times. The logo of the Presbyterian University College was arrived at after careful research and execution right from the time the idea of getting a new logo came up till when it was adopted for use. The final logo design is unique, strong, colourful and can stand the test of time. It is recommended that the logo be protected against misuse by the clients, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and other users.

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