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Developing a brand

Creating an identity is an intricate process. We show you what's involved in creating a logo and applying it across a brand…

Over the following pages we take you through the process of creating a logo and subsequently applying it throughout a company's branding. We show you how an identity design job progresses, explain the twists and turns, and offer practical tips and working practice to help you reach a successful conclusion.

The identity created in this tutorial is for a contemporary florist and gardening store in London. The project demonstrates how to work with a characterful client and satisfy the demands that can be expected of you when designing something as personal as the identity for one individual's dream.

We take you from initial briefing to coming up with ideas for the first presentation. You then need to develop the idea until the client is satisfied. The resulting logo is then applied across a range of materials that help form a cohesive and functional identity.

This tutorial will give you a useful insight into the process of getting a job from sketched ideas to worked up marks, taking you through rounds of client discussions, assessing the information, making decisions from the feedback and reaching a positive solution.

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Part 1: Making a start

Get some ideas together before heading for the computer…

1 During the initial briefing with the clients it soon comes to our attention that they're extremely passionate about their identity. We are supplied with several mood boards they've put together to help us get an idea of what they want. Even if you get this much help though, you should still do your own research too.
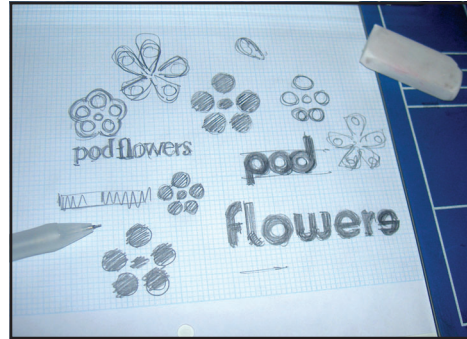

2 Before you go anywhere near a design application, sit down with some paper and a pencil and sketch out your ideas based on the reference material and your interpretation of the brief. Even though you'll ultimately be building your logo on a computer, use this stage to create some roughs.
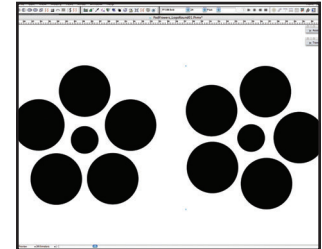

3 Now start using design software to build your logo. The basis of the logo is to create a pod-like icon that also represents a simple flower shape. Simple shapes positioned correctly can produce effective graphic images, and an uncomplicated image will give the impression of an unforced composition. Another thing to consider at this time is how you can simplify the elements but still communicate the idea.

Part 2: Combining type and logo

Begin to combine type with your initial logo ideas to produce quick and effective solutions…
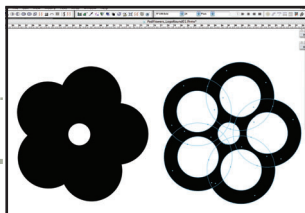
1 Once the base shapes have been worked up it's easy to explore them further. Creating inset paths around the initial design gives a more solid graphic and helps to reinforce the flower shape. It also allows the logo to work in one colour, which is usually a requirement for any logo.
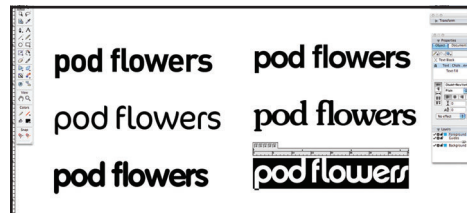
2 Now you need to set the type. A good exercise is to quickly try several fonts that you think might be suitable as well as some that might not be so appropriate. What this process does is show how the characteristics of certain letters work with the words to create certain impressions. This can also lead to further development of how letters combine within the type element. Also experiment with weights and upper or lower case versions too.

Logo design

A logo should always work in one colour so that, where necessary, it can be used in its simplest form. It should also be re-scalable, so it can be used small or large without losing definition or readability. If the brand identity consists of two colours, the logo can be developed to reflect this.
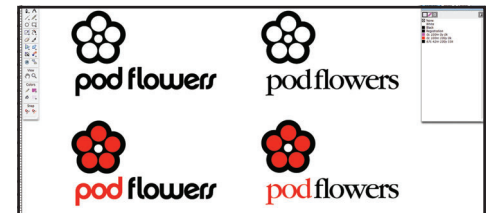
3 Once you've organised your logo and type, you can see how they work together. Remember that it may not work at this stage, but it's simple to go back and look at a different combination or try positioning the elements differently in relation to one another. If you rough out your ideas to begin with, many of these questions can be answered early on. Now is also a good time to be aware of how your logo might work in two colours.

Abstract out

A good logo must encompass the various aspects of a company — its product, principles, aims and ethics — and trigger an emotive response. It often needs to do this in a single glance. Taking an abstract approach (rather than a literal one) to the final image is crucial to achieve this result.
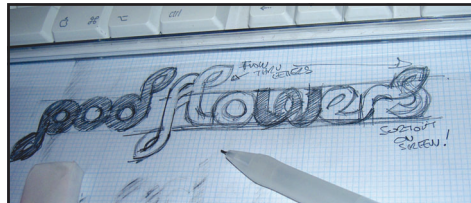
4 Sometimes the existing type you've chosen might not be working, so it's worth considering building your own type solution to become part of the identity. Once again, go back to the sketchbook and rough up what it is you're aiming for. This approach is useful for 'punchy', less corporate jobs.

5 As a result of the fonts used in Step 3, we decide to create a more bespoke type solution. By using a base element of the logo and its properties as a building block and taking the existing type characteristics, a combination of the two is formed. This allows a common proportion to run through the type and logo and gives us extra graphic devices such as the leaf shape that 'glues' the letterforms further.

6 The type element and the logo can be combined and worked up into two colours. The type is now working in harmony with the logo and becomes recognisable in its own right as part of the branding. The 'pod' element could stand alone and this becomes a logotype.

Part 3: Responding to feedback

Show your initial ideas to the client, take the feedback on board and move on to the next stage…

1 Now comes the crucial moment when you present the logos to the client. There are several trains of thought as to how many options should be shown. Three is usually a good number, but sometimes it's worth showing just one if you believe it hits the mark. Now all you have to do is wait for the feedback… which may not be what you want to hear.

Bespoke type

Often a key ingredient of identity design is a bespoke typeface. An individual typeface means that it will not be compromised by clashing with, or relating to, another identity. This can be applied to letterforms used within the logo and more broadly to identity work that demands a copy face and family. See examples at www.daltonmaag.com.
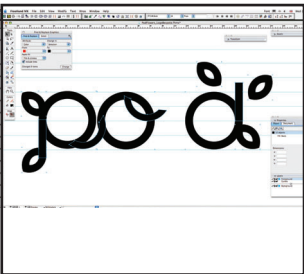

2 The first two logos are dismissed immediately. The main point that arises from our discussion is that the identity needs to be more delicate and less masculine. The bespoke type option is decided upon as the correct direction in which to go, so a slimmer version is drawn up.
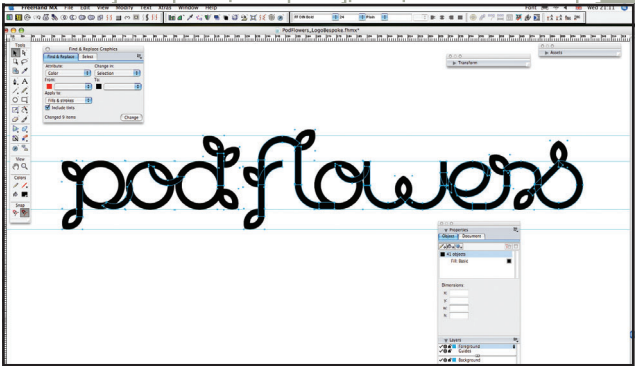

3 This in turn leads to more ornamentation. Losing some of the weight of the letterforms means that a 'script' flow is developed, in which the letters are entwined. This also serves to combine the impression of individuality with strict graphic proportions, which the client wants to retain for a contemporary design.
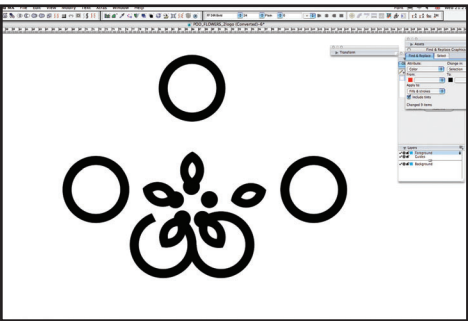

4 The client also dismisses the logo in the initial presentation. This means it has to be redesigned from scratch but, luckily, we can use the base elements and proportions from the new letterforms. The result is a more ornamental design to complement the type.
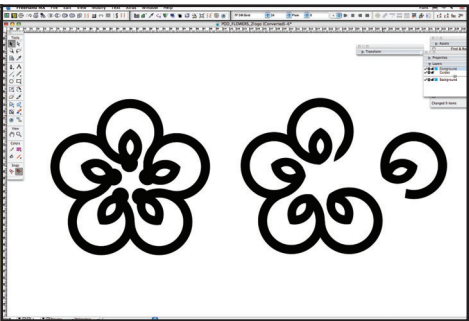

5 Once you've got good base elements to work with it's easy to recombine them to create versions around a similar starting point. You often find a natural rhythm to combining elements like this and subtle changes create new flows and finished designs.
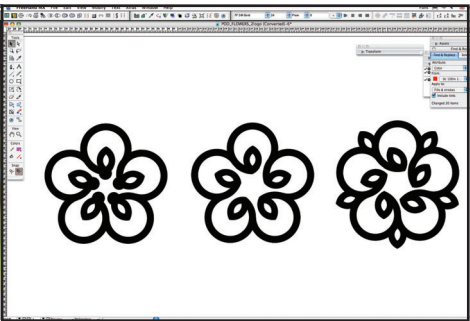

6 The main aim is to create a graphic that communicates several messages to the viewer. This is done by abstracting the idea of a flower and trying to represent it in a new fashion that works as a solid graphic mark. A good logo is a marriage of several ideas that can define an identity.
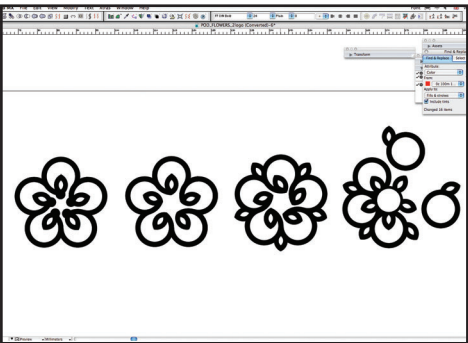
7 A crucial point to building a good logo is to consider the positive and negative space created by combining the shapes. Sometimes it's the negative space that can define the extra levels you want to be seen in the logo. Again, slight variations, small repositions, rotations and extras all add to the overall effect.
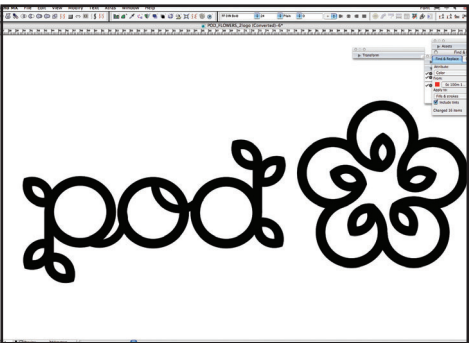
8 Next, combine the logo with the type. At this point, another discussion with the client yields the possibility of dropping 'flowers' from the identity and allowing 'pod' to stand alone. Having a bespoke logotype gives you the flexibility to deal with this type of decision.
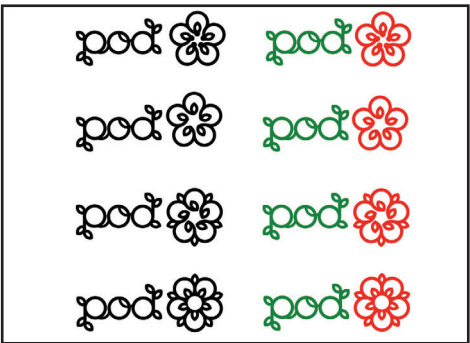

9 Now we present the logo to the client in one and two colours. Remember that logos/identities are very personal to every client. Things have to be just right for them and this is the biggest challenge of identity work. The type is agreed upon, but another round of logo design is suggested.

Part 4: **Getting personal**

The latest feedback leads us to include a more personal aspect…

1 In the second round of discussions, it becomes evident that the character of the client has been lost. Although graphically strong, the logo has become too impersonal. So we go back to the drawing board to combine key aspects of the identity: Japanese gardening, delicate, contemporary, friendly, humorous and an individually led business.
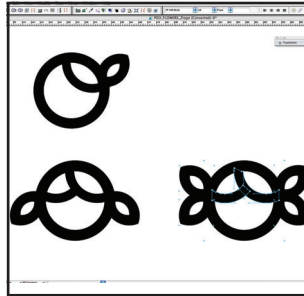
2 Using the same process of building a logo from the letterform elements, a mark involving a character is created. This is too literal though, and is not a good starting point. The flower angle is lost and needs to be re-included in the design.
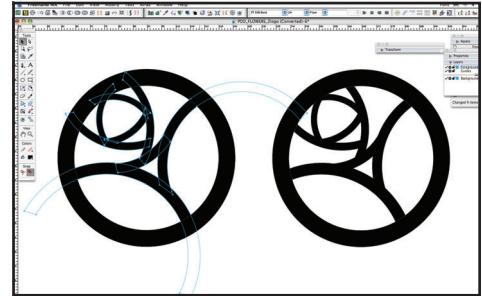
3 This in turn leads to a Japanese-inspired flower design, still produced from the type elements but not as regimental. Again this has stepped too far from the character idea and has become decorative. Once more this is where keeping perspective on the work is important – we've created a couple of good solutions in their own right but what is needed is a combination of the two.
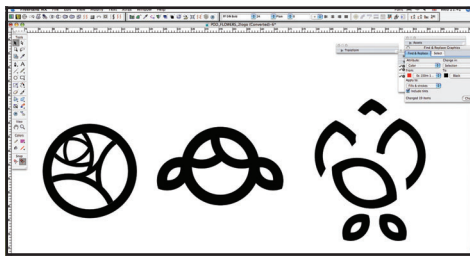
4 Place the two solutions side by side and judge which parts of the logos are successful and which are not. This also helps you to understand which aspects are crucial to its communication. From the first option, it's the unveiling of the bud. From the second, it's the feminine gestures of the character. We take these two elements and join them.
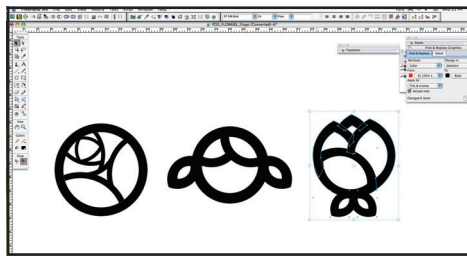
5 By combining these two angles a new mark is formed. It shows the flower aspect, still delicate but not just ornamental, and also includes an individual, fun character. The mark is still made from shapes out of the bespoke letterforms so should sit comfortably alongside the type.
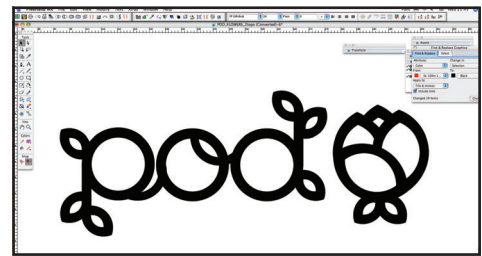
6 Now for the moment of truth. The logo is positioned with the type element to see how they work together. Confidence is high this time that the solution is right and the client will be happy.

Part 5: **The final logo**

Presenting the logo to the client, getting the thumbs up and making the last tweaks…
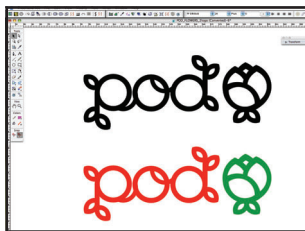
1 This is now shown to the client. There are no other options any more, because the process has filtered down to this final choice. The whole job rides on this proposal. Thankfully, the client is satisfied and happy that this is perfect for her. It does exactly what she wants it to and answers her brief.

2 Knowing that the logo is now going to move on to production, we sit down with the client and a Pantone book to discuss colour options. Although colour combinations have been suggested in the logo presentation, those were simply to show how it works in two colours. Now it's time to talk about the use of colour throughout the rest of the work.
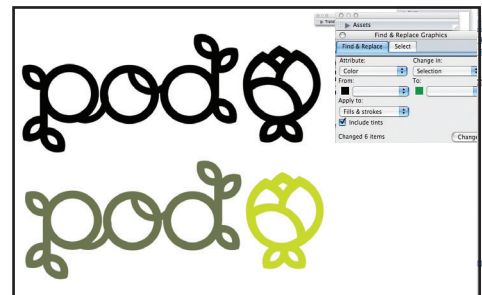
3 The colours are chosen, some final tweaks are made to the weight of the logo and its position, and we get sign-off from the client. It's now time to apply the new logo to all the relevant material.

Part 6: Stationery

Apply the logo aspects of the identity to basic business material…

1 Working on the letterhead first, the logo is positioned and a complimentary typeface is chosen to work as a copy face. This font is chosen from an earlier logo shown to the client. The two colours begin to reinforce themselves and the letterforms are made into a whole alphabet so they can be applied to new words in keeping with the branding.

2 Things really pick up pace now as we apply the identity to business cards, compliment slips, and price and gift tags for the store. All now incorporate the logo, extra specific type, colour and all are printed on the same material to glue the identity together further.

3 All the designs are signed off by the client, sent to the printers then returned as physical items for the business. Now the identity really comes into its own – the business is running and will hopefully prosper with a little help from the design work.

Part 7: Growing the brand

How the identity evolves, spreads across areas and flourishes…

Save it

Identity work can be a lengthy process. Keep everything you sketch, note, draw up and try, because somewhere in amongst all of that is the solution. It may be a combination of an early scribble and the result of weeks of painstaking rounds of logo presentation, so reflection back on what has been tried, worked and not worked is crucial.
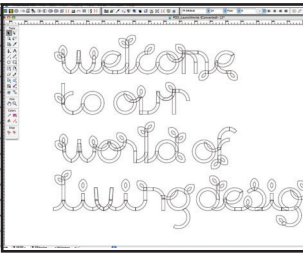
1 The launch of a new store needs to be promoted, so next on the agenda is a launch night invite and a flyer. The bespoke type is applied across more and more items because it's now such an integral part of the identity.

2 The type element becomes a healthy offshoot from the initial identity work. It allows itself to become part of the identity alongside the logo and works in harmony with it. It will be applied more and more to extra items as and when required.

3 Again, items are produced that move the identity on. The most important thing is the response to the identity, now seen in public and being used to help a business attract interest, function and trade successfully through flyers, message cards, gifts and price tags.

4 Sometimes a new demand is placed on the identity that is specific to a certain event or development. To help promote a crucial time for a florist, St Valentine's Day, the type is reworked for promotional material and the logo tweaked again to lean towards a heart shape. Although logos should not be altered, specific variations are sometimes called for.

5 It's also easy to apply the work to the web. For a basic presence that doesn't drain a budget, a simple active home page is built that allows contact to the shop and helps tie in with the promotional items. This is a simple presence but with business growth it will be expanded upon.

6 Finally, the store opens to a great response. Business is good and its look and approach attracts interest from beyond its target market. The identity is applied to the shop itself through signage and point of sale, and together the perception of contemporary, quality and fun gardening is achieved. **ca-p**