

Will a new logo raise money?

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Will a new logo raise money? Will it attract a new donors and volunteers? Can it transform your nonprofit's relationship to the community? Maybe. The answer depends on the amount of work completed prior to bringing on a graphic designer. Let us start at the end: if you invest in a logo instead of asking hard organizational questions your logo may not deliver what you want it to. There really are no shortcuts to raising money.

Here's why: creating a new logo requires your designer to ask many questions. The answers will inform the extent to which your logo becomes a recognizable symbol for your nonprofit. The questions may be short, but they take time to answer. For instance: What are you seeking to achieve short-term and long-term? What is the message you want the logo to communicate? Who is your target audience? Where will the logo be used? Who are your competitors? What makes you unique? How do you want the audience to respond to your logo? Colors, symbols and fonts come after these questions are answered.

Here's our suggestion: Ask the organizational questions that drive your fundraising – and logo development – before engaging a designer. Review and reaffirm or modify your mission and vision as appropriate. Define goals. Identify what your organization is raising money for. Determine how and when you will measure impact. Establish impact projections. Ask the hard questions: will this nonprofit make a meaningful impact on the lives and futures of those you serve, represent or advocate for? How does programming tie to the strategic plan? Which programs could be sustained should current funding be reduced?

If your new logo is a success it may catch the attention of a new giving audience. But the fundraising question will remain: how do you engage that audience in giving? That brings you back to the basics of fundraising: defining your case for support, attracting strong leadership, and identifying potential donors.

Consider American Airlines. Their new logo was revealed as the airline seeks to emerge from bankruptcy and possibly merge with US Airways. The chairman and CEO explained it this way, "Since placing our landmark aircraft order in July of 2011, we've been building anticipation toward a moment in time when the outside of our aircraft reflects the progress we've made to modernize our airline on the inside."

Travel industry analyst Henry Harteveltdt thinks differently, "What will make a difference to the traveling public will be the airline's on time performance, the customer service that they receive, the quality of the passenger experience," he said. "This isn't going to change the fact that legroom is tight."

How will your constituency respond to your logo? Should you start with the logo, or do the "hard work" first? Let us know your thoughts.

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