

## **Q: I've heard that redesigning a logo and stationery is difficult. How can we do it successfully?**

**A:** Logos and identity materials are *very* personal to lawyers. They are the visual embodiment of their entire professional lives. All the years of school and practice are tied up in the little cards they carry in their wallets, thus many have a very visceral, emotional reaction to any changes -- especially those they perceive as frivolous or diminishing of their dignity or professionalism. Remember, most lawyers don't pay much attention to other firms' marketing materials, so any modernization is going to scare a bunch of them.

We've designed dozens of law firm logos in recent years as part of larger re-branding programs and have found that it's difficult to predict the internal process, because there's no way to tell from the outside how the firm is going to make these decisions. It can be remarkably complicated, requiring twice as many meetings as you'd have guessed, which can really run up the fees.

And, ultimately, what we're selling is "art," so everyone has a personal opinion. Even people who know nothing about art or design will know what they like. What's really the "best" shade of blue to use? The process can be like seeking unanimous agreement on the best painting at an art museum. Or the best style or artist. Monet? Picasso? Dali? Warhol? Each is an arguable possibility, but they are very different, and you need every single member of a large committee to agree -- and then achieve the buy-in of hundreds of others who also have opinions based upon their age, experience, gender, style, personality, etc.

And we know that if the internal education/sales process isn't handled effectively, there can be big problems. I've been brought in to "fix" the identity materials of some firms with relatively new materials where the last costly make-over was not well received by the lawyers and were dumping it and starting over. The lawyers simply weren't using it; some felt that they were a little too cute or colorful.

I've had the re-design process take over a year, for a firm with a huge dysfunctional committee that demanded unanimity at every step, had an especially intransigent and vocal senior partner, and was eliminating four practicing lawyers from the logo. Near the end of the process they completely changed the committee -- and a new member took an art class once, and so claimed to be "a bit of an expert."

And another one said, "well, we just redecorated our kitchen, so I know a lot about color, and I think. . ."

And another one had an "artistic" spouse who had "some suggestions."

And another one said, "I like the *old* logo."

Alternatively, we completed a major overhaul of a firm's logo and identity materials and rolled the whole thing out for a 400-attorney firm in *one month*. Of course, they had a streamlined decision-making process, a trusted management team, a terrific marketing director, and a looming deadline for an all-attorney meeting.

The point is, an image overhaul is a difficult, complicated and important process, one that has to be managed aggressively and carefully. You have to have a small committee of people your lawyers trust to make the right decisions, and you have to bring people into the process.

You need to let people feel that they're being consulted, that their opinions are being solicited and taken into consideration, without promising to make all of their changes. Because, ultimately, not everyone will be happy; it's just not possible. But if you have a process that makes sense, a strategy people understand and support, and a design that flows from the firm's history and culture and fits the new aspirational strategy, you'll have much greater success. And having a firm deadline (*e.g.* an office move, firm retreat, party, or new fiscal year) keeps the process from bogging down in endless unnecessary delays.