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**Identity**

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This is Tony Spaeth's eighth annual report on noteworthy identity programs. His own work (mentioned in this article) includes the Malden Mills and Flowserve programs and the Dow Jones identity platform.

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# Fresh Faces for

Some new corporate names and logos you can't recognize without a scorecard. Here's that scorecard.

**T**he world's economic engines, ever more free of artificial constraints, are generating extraordinary creative energy. Veterans of the identity business can recall no precedent to current demand, the result of corporate churning in the form of mergers, spin-offs, divestitures, radical corporate repositioning, or merely re-tuning. The associated fanfare is visible almost every day in full-page ads and spreads in *The Wall Street Journal*, signed proudly with brand new logos and, often, strange new names.



It's no surprise that Dow Jones, perhaps the world's leading business scorekeeper, was itself caught up in all this creative energy. It started with chairman Peter Kann's modest suggestion to designers Belk Mignogna Associates, "Perhaps we should have a logo . . ." and his readiness to consider Dow Jones, the previously low-profile parent of brands like *The Wall Street Journal*, *Barron's*, and Telerate, as itself a brand. The next step was to build an identity platform defining that brand—its intended positioning, corporate purpose, mission, composition, culture, and personality.

With no fanfare (it was a "stealth launch"), Dow Jones' first official logo appeared on the top left corner of the Jan. 2, 1997 *Journal*. The "world-

mark," with *Dow Jones* astride a horizon, was designed to position the company as "the world's preferred source of business knowledge," guided by a personality statement different from its heritage: "We are *not* a bronze plaque. Our defining personality is dynamic, fast-moving, real-time. We are innovators."

To evolve Dow Jones more rapidly, Kann was determined to break down traditional unit barriers and forge a more global multimedia culture. So this composition statement was perhaps as important as the new logo: "Although historically we are formed of strong, freestanding businesses, today convergence and coherence are more important to us than division. Our purpose is best served by an open flow of ideas, skills, people, and information throughout Dow Jones." To express and promote this convergence, the Telerate component of the vision was rebranded "Dow Jones Markets."

Thus Dow Jones provided a classic illustration of all three ways a leader can use identity tools—to assert corporate direction, promote the required culture, and clarify the supporting corporate composition.

The fully equipped Merrill Lynch bull, designed for CEO Donald Regan by King Casey in 1973, still wins my Hemingway award for logo courage. But Meritor's flying bull is an honest contender.

Meritor is a \$3.1 billion automotive-parts supplier, spinning off from Rockwell. The new name is excellent but a bit soft-sounding, suggesting perhaps a financial-services firm. (It is, in fact, a bank's name too.) If you were to replace a rock of a name like Rockwell with this softer coinage, you would be well advised to *nail* your new identity with an unmistakable visual element. Consultants Landor Associates provided the good advice and memorably emotive execution.

Visteon is in auto parts too, the same industry as Meritor, and it retained the same

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identity consultants (Landor Associates), but this one sends a very different message. At \$16.4 billion, Visteon is five times the size of Meritor: It is Ford Motor Co.'s Automotive Products Operations division, repositioning for marketing autonomy if not independence. Meritor, despite the wings, is solid and earthy; Visteon, with its ring of "energy dots," is ethereal, somewhere in outer space. (We might assume "vista" plus "eon" means "we take the long view.") The difference in message can be explained only by a difference in top management intentions. Visteon president Charlie Szuluk confirms that "the new identity is a deliberate departure" that will promote a "futuristic, innovative, and visionary" organization. (Will you, someday, drive a Visteon?)

Last year, Monsanto, known to most of us as a chemical company, spun off its chemicals business (and much of its debt) to focus on its higher-margin agricultural and life-sciences markets. You probably saw the ad, providing "a simple way for business people to understand the difference between the two companies Monsanto is becoming . . . Stalks & Bonds," with pictures of a cornstalk and a chemical atom model. Like me, you may have wondered why the Monsanto logo was under the cornstalk. The answer, I strongly suspect, is management ego; the Stalks leaders just couldn't let go of that household-word fame, so much a part of their own identities.

Under the circumstances, how would *you* name the spin-off, once Monsanto's core business? CEO Robert G. Potter is better off with a clean slate, in full control of his destiny. The two-edged name, Solutia (chemical solutions, business solutions), by consultants Addison Seefeld & Brew, works well enough. The logo itself, however, with three graphic devices—wordmark, box, and dots—strikes me as trying too hard; one good device is usually best.

Meanwhile, at Monsanto, chairman and CEO Robert Shapiro is left with the costly task of changing Monsanto's position in our minds. "Even though the name Monsanto

isn't new, the concept of a life-sciences industry is," he has said. "We hope to capture the essence of our role in this emerging industry in our new positioning." At this writing, we await the new Monsanto logo (reportedly in the works) that will address this challenge.

In financial services, the new/old "The Hartford" logo rates as noteworthy simply for dropping the baggage "ITT." ITT Hartford, you will recall, was one of three ITTs created in Rand Araskog's December 1995 trifurcation, the others being ITT Industries and ITT Corp. (a.k.a. Sheraton/Caesar's Palace and Rand Araskog—perhaps the extreme example of the "can't let go of the logo" CEO).

In the same way that a product brand is the maker's mark, a corporate brand conveys the presence of the ultimately responsible leader. When three or more entities share a brand still associated with a strong leader like Araskog, the message can only be, "I'm still in charge." It took Hartford chairman and CEO Ramani Ayer less than a year to realize this and seek shareholder approval to drop the false ITT brand.

Another disadvantage of sharing a corporate brand is loss of control; it's never a good idea to saddle your company with an identity whose meaning you don't fully, exclusively control. Historic exceptions relied on geographic separation to avoid confusion, like the Dutch and British Shells, the U.S. and international Hiltons, and some of the Baby Bells (Southwestern Bell, Bell South, Bell Atlantic). Of course, when everyone goes global, that no longer works.

Few logos have fallen so far, so fast, as the Bell symbol designed in 1969 by the late Saul Bass—the direct result of having been shared promiscuously by unrelated companies, no

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**Monsanto**



**NYNEX**

**Bell Atlantic**



**CS FIRST BOSTON**

**CREDIT SUISSE** | **FIRST BOSTON**

**BRITISH AIRWAYS**

**BRITISH AIRWAYS**

**USAir**

**U.S. AIRWAYS**

longer with shared vision and control. Witness the new Bell Atlantic logo, in which the once-great bell has become vestigial; from a design standpoint, it is now clutter, the ultimate indignity.

The new Bell Atlantic “box” logo was actually designed in the late ’80s (by Landor Associates) in an upgrade exercise, but it wasn’t implemented. It was pulled off the shelf this year, by others, to express a changed Bell Atlantic in the wake of its merger with NYNEX . . . a rather cavalier branding process for any company, and surprising for one of this intended stature.

The not-much-loved NYNEX acronym (launched 12 years ago as “New York, New England and the Future!”) is now past. Contrast the excellent NYNEX logo (one design idea) to Bell Atlantic’s, where *four* graphic things are competing—the Bell symbol, a wordmark, the wave idea, and the box to try to hold it all together. Frankly, it reads as a triumph of questionable market research over design judgment.

Credit Suisse, under chairman Rainer E. Gut, has shown us a controlled and brilliantly executed corporate-branding exercise. The identity goal is to launch Credit Suisse as a new global leader . . . retaining the special equity in such brands as “First Boston,” while establishing Credit Suisse as clearly the master brand. This illustrates the flip side of the ITT “shared brand” principle; here, Credit Suisse is legitimately shared, indeed, in charge. The planning and design work (by the London firm Wolff Olins) is noteworthy for the directness and simplicity of the solution. The mark is functional in black and white, as you see here, but it gains excitement and distinctiveness from a bright blue *Credit* and red *Suisse*, always on a snow-white field.

Two “Airways” changed their liveries in 1997, British and U.S. . . . their goals identical, their tactics virtually opposite. First, consider proud British Airways, as re-designed by Interbrand Newell & Sorrell:

The logo change itself, from a sharp little

chevron “speedwing” under the name to a flying-ribbon “speedmarque,” softens and warms the brand. The more profound identity change exploits new printing technology to replace the Union Jack-inspired graphics on the aircrafts’ tails with varied vivid images from art around the world, Celtic to Kalahari and points in between. CEO Robert Ayling’s idea, summarized by London’s *Observer*: “By dropping the Union Flag from all aircraft apart from Concorde, and serving up design from a range of ethnic palettes, BA is trying to signal that it is a global company rather than a parochial flag-carrier.” It is a risky strategy, however, in that British Airways will require constant design vigilance to prevent an impression of chaos.

There’s nothing “parochial” about flag-carriers, however, to Stephen Wolf, chairman of scrappy USAir (itself once Allegheny) and now a flag carrier wannabe; in his view the way to signal that you are now global is to wrap yourself in your nation’s flag, a strategy executed for USAir by Luxon and Carrá in association with Deskey Associates.

For good measure, Wolf tacked the more formal “ways” onto the casually American USAir name. Does it work? In naming, longer is rarely better; I suspect people will tend to hang on to “USAir” for its convenience, if not its friendliness. Visually, however, U.S. Airways as a whole is greatly improved, not so much by the flag idea (a minimal event) as simply by *having been designed*; USAir was not previously noted for its visual distinctiveness, or distinction.

Few industries are spawning as many identities as the deregulating utilities; from a long list, I picked two examples, Energis and Enron.

Energis Resources, to use its full formal name, is a “how to do it” model. The story: New Jersey’s PSE&G, Public Service Electric and Gas, created a legal vehicle for expansion initiatives called Enterprise Diversified Holdings Inc., which in turn named its “retail energy services” initiative RESCO. Both names are classic examples of executives talking to themselves and naming things from an insider perspective. Recognizing this, PSE&G picked consultants Anspach Grossman Enterprise to create a better marketplace identity than RESCO.

The result, both name and logo, is one of the best of the 1997 crop. The global population of names is exploding so rapidly that to generate a communicative name that is distinctive, short, and appropriate (and still legally available!) requires ever more massive generation and screening. Energis was the best survivor of a master list of some 700

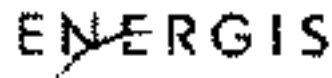
candidate names and of the 50 finalists poured into the top of the legal-availability hopper. (See “Are We Running Out of Names?”, below.)

The Energis logo is equally direct and simple; like most good marks, it gets its distinctiveness from just one graphic idea, in this case a sliver of horizon. Is it reminiscent of the Dow Jones horizon? Yes. Are there a lot of horizons, globes, orbits, and swooshes out there? Absolutely. There is a limited menu of graphic devices available to express such ideas as geographic scope, space-age technology, farsightedness, and innovation. When the *idea* is true to the entity, it is perfectly acceptable to use the device that conveys it. If the design is then executed with freshness and integrity, it will escape “cliché” to become its own new thing . . . like the Dow Jones mark, and Energis.

And what is behind the new Enron logo, the “big E”? An even bigger energy story—the

attempted repositioning of America’s largest independent natural-gas company from pipeline-based wholesaler to consumer-market powerhouse. Says chairman Kenneth L. Lay: “We have a chance to create a world leader, an AT&T for the electricity business.” The challenge he addressed to himself, to all employees, and to the designer: “We want Enron to become a household name like Shell, American Express, and IBM.”

Who better for this challenge than Paul Rand, the American master who designed IBM itself (and other marks of greatness like Westinghouse, ABC, and UPS)? Enron would be Rand’s last logo (it is likely that he knew this), and he said it was his best ever. That is a tall order. But it *is* a



## Are We Running Out of Names?

Visteon? Miravant? *Diageo* (the recently announced merger of Grand Metropolitan PLC and Guinness)? In the naming business, are we beginning to scrape the bottom of the barrel?

In a word, yes. There is a numeric limit to the universe of names, the combinations of letters of five syllables or less that are pronounceable, avoid offense in principal languages, and are not someone else’s property. A population explosion of business entities, on top of product proliferation, means we are rapidly depleting the supply. And as more companies think “global,” more seek global name protection, vastly increasing the pool of possible conflicts.

In especially crowded categories like financial services and computers, you can pretty well assume that any letter combination both appealing and meaningful is already taken. Colleagues in the naming business confirm my own experience; our “short lists” of candidates that go into the top of the legal search hopper are getting longer. Where we used to screen 10 names to get a final choice of two or three

“probably available,” today we must screen 40. In turn, the master lists that must be generated to pick those 40 often expand into the thousands. (The list from which American Express drew “Optima” exceeded 2,500 candidate names.)

At the same time we are depleting the supply, we have raised the availability hurdle. In January 1996, Congress (in its wisdom) further shrank the pool of available names via HR1295, adding an “anti-dilution” provision to the Lanham Act, section 43(c) (1). Previously, your rights to a name were limited to your product and related categories; the test was simply whether real customers might reasonably be confused by someone else’s use of the same name. Thus Lexus (or even Lexis) vehicles and Lexis information services could comfortably coexist. HR1295 said, “Not so fast—whether or not consumers are likely to be confused, if your name is sufficiently famous, you may deserve protection in *all* categories.” This immediately added boundless monopoly power and greater wealth to owners of famous brands, making it much easier, for exam-

ple, to license their brands across product categories they never before dreamed of directly entering. And HR1295 also increased costs, risks, and uncertainties in naming.

The Internet adds yet another hurdle. Companies (reasonably) want company names that can be domain names too, without alteration. But anyone in the world may innocently have registered a given combination of letters, sometimes with wholly unrelated meanings, as a domain name . . . and probably has.

Two predictions. First, expect more “combination” names, the unexpected splicing of two ordinary words—a technique that geometrically expands the pool of real-sounding, meaningful possibilities. I have found company names like Flowserve (and last year’s Footstar) easier to clear and protect, as well; a given combination either has been used or it hasn’t, with little room for ambiguity.

Second, expect more strange new names like *Diageo*, distinctive yet functional, that take some getting used to. We really are scraping the linguistic barrel and have to reach further beyond our comfort zones to make names that work. —T.S.



CIBA-GEIGY

 SANDOZ

 NOVARTIS



fine mark: bold, one big idea, but richer in layered ideas and associations than might appear at first glance. Like great names, great marks often have more than one layer of possible meaning; this one is of course a big E, but one can also see in Rand's Enron ideas of household power as in a plug, industrial power as in stacks or towers, and connectivity (whether pipe or wire) between the E and N.

These days, 23 years is a good lifespan for a logo, well above the actuarial curve. (The norm for at least "refreshing" identity systems is closer to a decade, with reviews at three- to five-year intervals.) The Humana identity was created in 1974 by consultants Lippincott & Margulies when "Extendicare" sold its nursing homes to focus on hospitals. Today, Humana has just about completed its next big shift, out of "hospital operator" and into "managed plan provider" . . . and called in today's generation at L&M to express this change and "reinvigorate" the entity.

How do you put more humanity into Humana? L&M did it with this distinctively drawn figure, not quite winged, rough-edged, and handmade (reminiscent in this of Lucent's 1996 red ring), bursting with energy. CEO Gregory H. Wolf: "The figure's vitality speaks to our strength of purpose." It may take more courage to propose solutions like this than to approve them; shown a range of alternative designs, focus groups as well as the top management team easily gravitated to this most humanistic direction.

Churning in the health-care industry also produced Novartis, formed by the merger of Ciba and Sandoz to claim the position "world's leading Life Sciences company." So why not call it Ciba Sandoz? There's a long list of possible reasons (including focus on the past, split cultures, and dullness), but the strongest is economic: It's *cheaper* to seat a good new name in our minds than to change or revitalize what an old name means to us.

Surprisingly, Siegel & Gale's London office wasn't consulted on naming strategy but instead was retained "to name a new Sandoz division." The result, "Novartis" (from "new

skills"), was a decent enough solution, but one wonders how much better S&G might have done if they were working from truth.

The eloquent graphic symbol functions well with Novartis. It is unimportant whether it represents a mortar and pestle, flower, or something fancier like "the intervention of human intelligence in nature." As in the case of Meritor, what's important is that it transforms "just-another-new-name" into an unmistakable identity.

To focus on life sciences, the Novartis deal required the spin-off of Ciba's industrial-chemicals business under (it was agreed) a new name. The identity process was unusual. In Switzerland, chairman-designate Rolf Meyer and CEO Hermann Vodicka hired Australian Gillian Welsh to plan the new identity in secrecy. She retained four identity firms to conceptualize a more consumer-focused, friendlier competitor to the likes of ICI, Bayer, and Hoechst. In due course, she presented two designs from each firm, eight in all, saving the butterfly designed by the Canadian offices of Gottshalk & Ash for last. The management response: "That's it."

The mark is indeed brilliant: a soft butterfly, symbol of transformation, made of hard-edged dots. In five bright basic colors, it lifts to another level of energy, beauty . . . and appropriateness (the business has five principal units, two of which are Pigments and Textile Dyes).

Gottshalk & Ash had completed a naming process too, and cleared an acceptable coined name. The question then: Given the butterfly, why do we really need a new name? Because the butterfly completely changes "Ciba," the Novartis partners agreed to release the Ciba name, making this a rare case of the design decision driving the naming strategy. (Ciba also proves there can be new life in old names.)

Normally, when you merge companies you don't want to perpetuate two cultures, so the ground rule is "don't combine the two old names." (Novartis in this way is a better name than Sandoz-Ciba, as Unisys was better than Sperry-Burroughs.) Advised by Landor Associates, Fort James may be the new exception that proves this rule.

It sounds familiar—but there never was a "Fort James." There were, however, Fort Howard and James River corporations, together a \$7 billion tissue-products leader, and this is their cleverly named merger. There is little if any loss in name equity, yet the two names fit into a new unity.

The design is also clever, maybe a bit too clever; the tangram (paper puzzle) symbol shows two birds "flying in harmony," an allu-

sion to the merger and in that sense to the company's past rather than its future.

Flowserve is like Fort James, a merger of two companies to create a new industry leader as well as a new Wall Street brand. They were the industrial pump, seal, and valve companies Durco International and BW/IP (formerly Borg Warner Industrial Products), both strong in highly engineered fluid-handling equipment for chemicals, petroleum, and other performance-critical industrial applications. CEO Bernard G. Rethore personally directed the positioning, naming, and logo decision processes.

The name "Flowserve" won over others because it so precisely expresses the new company's positioning, its challenge to itself to be "the world's premier provider of industrial flow management services." Dallas designer Jack Summerford produced a classic "one idea" logo that neatly integrates the two-part name, using a curve that shows both "flow" and the outline of the impeller blade that puts the flow in motion.

If a "one idea" logo is good, could a "no idea" logo sometimes be better? "Primedia" makes the case beautifully, using merely a carefully refined but otherwise unadorned, no-gimmicks typeface. The result is an emphatic and confident "We are here" statement that focuses all our attention on the name itself . . . and it's a super name.

Primedia Inc. was formerly K-III Communications, a placeholder kind of name, where K stood for Kohlberg Kravis Roberts and III stood for three other people who left Macmillan in '89 to build, by acquisition, a media giant. Twenty-plus acquisitions later, it is a \$1.4 billion powerhouse. "K-III sounds like a financial holding company," says CEO William F. Reilly; "Primedia states our strategy in just one word." Positioning, naming, and design were provided by Siegel & Gale.

Richard S. Friedland, CEO of General Instrument, orchestrated one of '97's larger trifurcations, producing General Semiconductor, CommScope, and NextLevel Systems. Friedland stayed with the NextLevel component, which focuses on systems and hardware at the rapidly evolving interface of cable, voice, and Internet. He appropriated the NextLevel name (a permanent internal challenge) from a recently acquired subsidiary; then he absolutely nailed the new company's launch with a first-class new logo, an elegant word picture designed by Chicago's Bart Crosby.

NextLevel's initial sales didn't match the expectations set by the logo, and Friedland resigned last October. New CEO Edward Breen, with a new \$4.5 billion order in hand,

intends to change the name back to General Instrument. Go figure.

On a black night in December 1995, Aaron Feuerstein promised his employees he would rebuild the still-blazing mill buildings in Lawrence, Mass., regain all their jobs, and meanwhile keep as many at work as long as he could. On a brilliant Sunday last September, he dedicated the state-of-the-art textile factory that would fulfill this now-famous promise, and catch up with explosive demand for his innovative Polartec and Polarfleece textiles. The Malden Mills flag that went up the pole that day also carried a new Malden Mills logo.

The story: Early in 1996, Feuerstein's selfless action was drawing national attention; in this sudden visibility, his marketers saw an opportunity to clarify the company's branding. Identity strategy then hinged on articulating the company's defining vision in a positioning statement: Alternatives were leadership in (a) textile innovation or (b) corporate social responsibility. It is a measure of Feuerstein's stature, I believe, that he chose (a) because every employee could identify with it, while ultimately he alone could own (b).

The new logo implements the positioning by elevating a symbol of innovation, the Polartec "mountains" icon (nicely redesigned by Jorgensen/Quint), to the corporate level, where it now means "innovative textiles, engineered for performance and beauty."

From Peter Kann to Aaron Feuerstein, that's how some 21 CEOs have recently used identity changes as a tool in managing—some by default, but most of them quite deliberately, by design.

For Enron, Humana, and the two Airways, the design intent was to refresh and reposition an existing brand . . . for Dow Jones, Credit Suisse, Primedia, and Malden Mills, to elevate a low-profile corporate presence into the leadership brand. Ciba, Solutia, Energis, Visteon, Meritor, and NextLevel launched spin-offs with graphic self-determination; Fort James, TELUS, Flowserve, and Novartis used identity to achieve in mergers "a more perfect union" and assert leadership intentions. ■



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*This “1997” article as well as “1995/1996” can be viewed or downloaded at [www.identityworks.com](http://www.identityworks.com).*