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# 1999

“Making Their Mark” is Tony Spaeth’s tenth annual report on noteworthy identity programs, written to honor CEOs and designers alike.

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*This “1999” article, as well as “1998,” “1997” and “1995/1996,” can be viewed or downloaded at [www.identityworks.com](http://www.identityworks.com).*

The significant identity work of the last year has been driven by the vision of the executive suite.

# Making Their Mark

**W**e may well remember 1999 as the year that quantity overwhelmed quality in new logos, as in IPOs. It was a year of cliché-ridden e-marks and dotcoms. (Dozens of them are orbit swooshes with earth-balls, usually doubling as the dots on i's. When Ameritech did this in 1993, it was amusingly postmodern; now it's just boring.)

But as always, through the smoke and puffery one can see the substantive efforts of serious leaders, using names and images in deliberate acts of leadership. Some CEOs, to be sure, are better-advised and more aesthetically skilled (or courageous) in this area than others. But only fools fail to understand that the shaping and management of their corporate brands is their single greatest responsibility.

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**By Tony Spaeth**

The easy solution, “Just put together our two names,” is generally not a good idea for naming mergers-of-equals like this (the biggest drug merger in history so far, and the biggest European merger yet). It's usually a sure way to perpetuate two cultures; consultants generally recommend the *Unisys* strategy in preference to *Sperry-Burroughs*. But I think this one works. These two cultures, British Zeneca Group PLC and Swedish Astra AB, merged in April 1999 to pursue global leadership (read “to take on the Yanks”). Expressing their duality seems an honest and constructive identity premise. And it helps that their initials spell the all-embracing “A to Z.”

While it isn't exactly a double helix, the AZ symbol does suggest a biochemical model. Credit CEO Tom McKillop for commanding

AstraZeneca 

this expression of “innovation, quality, and excellence.” Designed by Interbrand's London office, its aggressive three-dimensional modeling is trend-setting. It's also pretty cool.

The first U.S. factory for hypodermic needles was built by Maxwell Becton and Fairleigh Dickinson's young company in 1907. Today it's a \$3 billion global “medical technology” company, with diverse units that make hypodermics and a whole lot more. In a top-to-bottom business review, chairman Clateo Castellini saw fragmentation. Healthy units, chafing under the founders' names (and a relatively dull, cumbersome logo) were understandably boosting their own units' identities, while customers were increasingly seeking more seamless, comprehensive solutions. The fix? Reinventing and reimposing a stronger, more assertive corporate brand. Says Castellini, “We have a tremendous opportunity to fortify marketplace impressions of our company, simply by

**BECTON  
DICKINSON**



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leveraging our highly regarded brands and linking them more closely.”

While there are pros and cons to using initials, the cons usually predominate. In this case, the consultants at Lippincott & Margulies felt the advantages of *BD* (its brevity, translatability, and branding utility) outweighed the disadvantages (loss of distinctiveness and meaningful content, and possible confusion with other BDs like Black & Decker). The person/sunburst symbol, one of the more complex I’ve seen of late (especially in its purple and orange colors) provides the needed distinctiveness.

Two years ago, Silicon Graphics’ directors recruited chairman and CEO Richard Belluzzo to lead a turnaround. One of his first actions was to retain the services of Landor Associates. As it happened, the implementation of Landor’s recommendations was also among Belluzzo’s final actions before he in turn was replaced.

Landor’s year-long study concluded that the current name was impeding Silicon Graphics’ growth beyond its graphics-workstation reputation, but instead of a real change

Landor recommended the half-way solution of “initialization” and designed this squiggly, curiously playful monogram.

One problem with initials is that they never mean as much to outsiders as insiders think they do. And if the idea is to get away from the original name—as SGI intended—it never really works (or takes forever); *SGI* will always point back to Silicon Graphics Inc.

Another problem is that until you spend millions or billions over many years on your initials (like IBM), you can never really own them. In every little town and niche, they may already mean something completely different. Sure enough, as soon as Silicon Graphics launched its SGI logo, *The Wall Street Journal* reported confusion with Soka Gakkai International, a Buddhist institute.

To better focus on its core computer and printer businesses, Hewlett-Packard last March announced the Nov. 1 spin-off of its \$8 billion measurement-equipment business. Spin-offs like this start life as rejects, deemed peripheral by the parent. The identity challenge, for CEO Edward W. Barnholt, was how to turn employees’ sense of loss and abandonment into a winner’s confidence and excitement.

Barnholt, like Belluzzo, turned to Landor Associates, who in short order (about four planning months) produced a winner’s name and symbol. That left three months for the aggressive and elegantly executed Agilent

Technologies announcement campaign we have seen in business publications. The “agile” name is good (Agilent calls it “lightly coined”—I like that).

But it does sound a lot like some others (Teligent, Lucent), which is one rationale for adding the starry symbol that lifts this new brand out of the ordinary. Well-planned, Mr. Barnholt, and well-executed.



**Agilent Technologies**  
Innovating the HP Way

Like Hewlett-Packard’s Agilent employees, Motorola’s Semiconductor Components Group faced losing the comfort of a power-brand, as Motorola prepared to shed this high-volume (15 billion units) “power and interface products” division. It’s the same question: How do you make a “strategic divestiture” look like a winner? This answer, *ON*, is the direct and simple kind of identity solution that seats itself instantly.

When Pentagram designer Lowell Williams interviewed the division’s officers to plan their new freestanding identity, he heard, “We want our name to be on everything,” and *ON* clicked on in his mind. Pentagram Design later generated many other names and presented five finalists, but *ON* was still on the list.



**ON Semiconductor**  
Formerly a Division of Motorola

As it happens, the credenza in president Steve Hanson’s office displayed his collection of vintage radios. In the name-selection meeting, Williams pointed to one of them with a red *on* button. That helped nail the name decision, and the design idea as well. Later, red got changed to green as the more universal color of *on* and *go* and similar positive thoughts, and a rendered button, 3-D like AstraZenica’s *AZ*, was chosen for the logo. Good work by all, and in a 90-day time frame as well.

Hyperion Solutions and Arbor Software merged in 1998, to form “the world’s largest analytic applications provider.” Their first good decision was to retain the Hyperion name. (Hyperion was the Titan who fathered Sun, Moon, and Dawn. Impressive genes.)

A safe, conservative logo was designed for the new company. But then-CEO John Dillon wanted a bolder, more assertive corporate brand. The challenge went to busy Landor Associates, who in due course presented a choice of solutions ranging from conventional to far out. The farthest out was a multicolored circle-H, derided by many as toylike but the professionals’ secret favorite.



**Hyperion**



**SiliconGraphics**



To his credit, Dillon went directly to the circle-H symbol, saying, “*That’s* who we want to be.” Good decision No. 2. I think it’s the year’s best new mark: completely unique and memorable, and conceptually appropriate in suggesting the ordering of diversity. It’s especially brilliant for setting up the ingredients of an extendable, endlessly variable visual system; see how circle-play is used at [www.hyperion.com](http://www.hyperion.com) to create visual excitement, while at the same time reinforcing the corporate brand. As a bonus, this mark is equally beautiful in black and white.

Every once in a while, a startup’s new identity appears that is so refreshing it must be recognized. Behind it, there is always a leadership story.

Klaus Besier, formerly CEO of SAP America, joined FirePond Inc. in 1997, when it was called CWC—initials more fortuitous than SAP, to be sure, but still just initials. (Their meaning: “Clear With Computers.” Go figure.) Besier knew *CWC* was no asset, especially for an enterprise-level e-commerce software developer supposedly expert in visualization and clarity. And as a champion of design (and a painter by avocation), he hated the CWC logo: “Ugly things hurt my eye.”

For the naming process, Besier retained namer Lois Kelly, a.k.a. The Name Chick, whose company’s name was . . . Firepond. Criteria for renaming CWC were established (the new name should be memorable, flexible, crisp, cool but serious,



should involve no clichés and definitely no initials); many candidates were generated and screened. But Besier loved *FirePond*, kept it on the short-

list, and ultimately persuaded Kelly to let it go—for a price, of course. She changed her company’s name to Meaning Maker.

For the logo, Besier turned to his own interactive design group, and at trade shows is particularly happy to answer the frequent question, “Who designed your logo?”

I was surprised to see this new logo last September. I had thought the Perkin-Elmer Inc. name had been retired a year earlier, when CEO Tony White changed the corporate name to PE Corp., split Perkin-Elmer’s stock into PE Celera and PE Biosystems tracking stocks, and put the Analytical Instruments Division up for auction—all part of refocusing “PE” as a life-sciences company.

Turns out that White had included rights to the Perkin-Elmer brand in the Analytic Instruments Division auction. One man’s discard, another man’s gold. Successful bidder Gregory L. Summe, chairman and CEO of EG&G Inc., seized the opportunity not merely

to market Perkin-Elmer-branded instruments but to replace the EG&G corporate brand (and ticker symbol EGG) with Perkin-Elmer’s stronger global awareness and image.

“The introduction of our new corporate name and logo is another important step in transforming the corporation,” Summe says. “Our PerkinElmer brand is known worldwide, and it has an excellent reputation for service, quality, and trust that we intend to build on. The new name is part of an overall effort to build product and service strategy under one strong brand.” Ninety-seven percent of the company’s shareholders, including members of the founding Edgarton, Grier, and Germe-shausen families, backed this name-change decision. Working from Summe’s design brief, designer Michael Benes shortened Perkin-Elmer to PerkinElmer (a good idea) and added a pointy *P* symbol, to stamp products with a simple visual landmark.



Another part of EG&G’s transformation would be the sale of its government-services business, where the EG&G name was perhaps of continuing value. So Summe negotiated its sale too, pegged at the estimated cost of a corporate name change.

There are at least two lessons here. Lesson one: The CEO alone owns the identity process. “These corporate brand issues were far too subtle, as well as too important, to delegate,” Summe says. Lesson two: Brands are gold; Summe saw the huge economic value of name recognition, which is the foundation of reputation.

If a Canadian-flagged airline is to survive, I’m rooting for this goose. (And if American Airlines ultimately absorbs Canadian, why not swap its eagle for a goose? Perfectly appropriate; in my New York neighborhood I see a lot more Canadas than eagles.)

Canadian launched its new livery in a January 1999 “fly-in” from Beijing to Vancouver. Painted on the tail section and fuselage, the bird really looks like it’s pushing the plane. And in a sense it is; dubbed “Proud Wings,” the new symbol is a key part of CEO Kevin Benson’s effort to rebuild employee pride and confidence.



Also note the chevron within the Canadian wordmark, a link to its earlier logo. As well as evoking the company’s heritage, by standing in for either an *a* or an *e*, it is gracefully bicultural.

Both *Mutual* and *Canada* were limitations for Mutual Life of Canada CEO Robert M. Astley, who was planning to de-mutualize the company and, incidentally, to expand its U.S. marketing. But his larger goal was to re-energize his organization with the warmth and passion of an idea—to become the master



CLARICA™

in listening, understanding, and responding. With this brief, Landor Associates provided the distinctive Clarica name, an expression of clarity and directness, and used conventional punctuation symbols to create the “Dialogue Faces” landmark. It is an interesting way to convey that the agents of Clarica Life Insurance Co. are “good listeners, yet businesslike and professional.”

Almost two years have passed since the *A* great Travelers-Citibank merger, and I’d have to say the conglomerate’s identity is still a work in progress. Its two leaders, Sanford Weill and John Reed, continue to co-manage branding decisions; and in an unusual creative consortium, two international identity firms (Pentagram and Lippincott & Margulies) are collaborating on strategic counsel, design, and implementation.

The corporate parent still sees itself as a holding company and, as such, is quite happy with the friendly, umbrella-sheltered Citigroup wordmark that Pentagram’s Michael Beirut assembled in 1998. But the Citibank component has evidently chosen to diverge. Enthroning *Citi* as its new global brand, it has crowned it with the red arc of an abstracted Travelers’ umbrella (complete with *t* handle) also designed by Pentagram.

CITIBANK+

citigroup

citi

This new brand is not presently intended to migrate upward to the Citigroup level, thus somewhat insulating Travelers and Salomon Smith Barney from future Citi-messages. Perhaps that’s best. To my eye, this particular *Citi* lacks both the institutional stature and the retail impact of the 1973 identity, with its authoritative compass rose symbol. It’s hard to see Weill and Reed jointly asserting, “We’re tired of greatness; let’s go for cuteness”—it’s easier to visualize this decision dropping between their stools. (Will the addition of Robert Rubin to the board clarify management ownership of the identity decision? Doubtful.) As I said, a work in progress. Stay tuned.

Except for *tobacco*, what word calls to mind a blacker image than *HMO*? In large part to fix this image problem, United HealthCare Corp. CEO William W. McGuire took two bold actions. The more dramatic of these, putting doctors back in charge of managed-care deci-

sions, stunned the industry and has dampened a bit the fire under government health-care reform.

Less famously, McGuire made an identity fix. He created a Group, a new parent entity whose layered *U* symbol would represent a diversified “health and well-being” family of companies. The United Healthcare managed-care component then became one of the units to be endorsed (although timidly) by the new symbol. It is a significant identity improvement.

UNITEDhealthcare®

UnitedHealthcare®

A UnitedHealth Group Company



UnitedHealth Group™

When I first saw this acutely angled letter, I knew a great hand was behind it. Sure enough, it came from Siegel & Gale’s Gene Grossman, probably the world’s reigning grand master in identity design, also responsible for the Citibank compass-rose logo we will soon miss.

With the possible exception of Virgin, there is no better example than Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide of an identity that evokes a CEO’s personal vision (and taste). In 1991, when Barry Sternlicht used the name for a private real-estate investment firm, it was just a nice thought, both more fanciful and substantive than *starlight* (the literal translation of Sternlicht, but no doubt unavailable). The nice thought occurred to him, he has said, in a hot tub in Starwood, Calif.

The logo design, too, should be credited to Sternlicht. He chose a “tornado” symbol from Green Lizard Design—the rough edges of which, incidentally, are not a pixilation error but intentional, thought to add liveliness. And he chose a wordmark designed by Craven Co. (though at this writing he is said to be looking at alternatives). The brand is personal. It evolves.



STARWOOD

*Starwood* is appealing and not limiting—good raw material for branding. But when Sternlicht bought ITT and its Sheraton brands (and then Westin), there was at first no expressed intention to use Starwood in the marketplace. Then in October 1998, David Van Kalsbeek, the company’s senior VP of marketing, was quoted in *Brandweek*: “We’re grappling with what Starwood is going to be like. Will we be like General Motors where no one says they drive a GM, they drive a Chevy or Oldsmobile? Or will we be like Ford where the core company is Ford and the umbrella is Ford but they also have Jaguar and part of Mazda all under the core name?”

The tilt was already away from the General Motors model. Two forces were in play:

cross-business synergy and the true management identity. Starwood was first used synergistically, as a brand, in February 1999 for the Preferred Guest program, which meant it would “own” both the customer relationship and the service-quality promise. But the ultimate branding question is “Who is making the promise?” In fact, it is not Mr. Sheraton or Mr. Westin—it is Barry Sternlicht and his team, executing his creative and managerial vision. I think we will see more of Starwood; brand vests where vision rests.

Look out, steelmakers. Europe is on a roll. That’s the message trumpeted by Corus Group—the result of the merger of British Steel and Koninklijke Hoogovens of the Netherlands—which is now the largest metals producer in Europe and the world’s third-largest.



Co-CEOs John Bryant and Fokko van Duyn and their entire executive committee worked closely together in creating this new brand, starting with a half-day workshop to plan the identity brief. Highlights: It must be truly international (certainly neither British nor Dutch), not limited to steel or even metals, sharp and definitive, and distinctive from the rest of the industry. The consultants at Enterprise IG nicely implemented this brief.

Global clearance of *Corus* cannot have been easy; it is so short, so simple, so strong as to make namers turn green with envy. And it’s appropriate, inspiring thoughts of centered strength as well as unison (yes, the corporate announcement actually says “Combined, our voice is stronger”—what press agent could resist?). The trumpet-C mark is equally bold.

Nineteen ninety-nine was a great year for European mergers like AstraZenica, Corus, and Invensys PLC, the \$19 billion global leader in automation and control engineering that resulted from the combination of U.K.-based BTR and Germany’s Siebe. Interbrand generated 3,000 candidate names in order to present chairman Lord Marshall and CEO



Allen Yurko with a choice of five “probably available” finalists; yes, 600-for-one is about what it takes these days, and even so the name had to be bought from a Texas company. The new-moon (or earth) design elegantly frames the Invensys name.

We can be forgiven for thinking the Invensys logo looks familiar. There are a lot of world-marks out there, with more coming every day. The 1997 Teligent design shown above just happens to be closer than most.

Lesson: Logos can seldom be truly original. Sometimes it’s more important to establish the desired thought, like “global,” even if a graphic cliché is required. But when you aren’t original, you’d better be really good. Invensys illustrates this point; its logo is executed with a fresh design that lifts it qualitatively above the crowd.

The full-page advertisement announcing the name change of Britain’s General Electric Co. PLC was headlined, “It’s all yours now, Mr. Welch.” In the identity business, GEC has always been a standout “sleeping beauty,” one of the clearly dysfunctional brands that would one day have to change; their every message had to be tagged with the disclosure “not affiliated with the similarly named company based in the United States.” How could a great company so long tolerate an identity in the shadow of another great company?

CEO George Simpson finally resolved this in an unusual way. He sold Marconi Electric Systems, GEC’s defense component, to British Aerospace, to focus on core information and communications technologies; but he did not sell the Marconi identity. “Today this deal may seem to be all about spinning off a defense business,” said Lord Simpson. “In the future, people will look back and remember this as the moment a major communications systems group was born.” Its name, of course, would honor Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the radio and a founder of General Electric Co.—not affiliated with a similarly named company based in the United States.



Credit Lord Simpson for the name decision, but the logo looks rather like the work of a committee, neither authentically Marconi’s signature nor coherent in message or aesthetic impact. (Indeed, I found no one willing to accept design credit.) There is more work to be done, Your Grace.

In closing this article, it is fitting to take note of The Conference Board’s new torch, the symbol of this publication’s parent institution. It began with CEO Richard Cavanagh’s directive for a more lively yet weightier look and feel for the Board’s many publications, and his underlying wish to signal both change and the ongoing presence of sound management. With great care, Enterprise IG redesigned the classic modern torch (pretty good as it was) for a greater sense of motion and dynamic balance. The result is clearly a reaffirmation of The Conference Board’s commitment to unchanging values in the freshening winds of the new millennium. I wish as fresh a thought for all of us. ■



THE CONFERENCE BOARD