

Good to Great

Insight Venture Partners



Tips on designing a family of logos for multiple products in a series

Insight Venture Partners called us with a challenge. One of the companies in their portfolio needed logos stat.

The company was about to launch SharePointAnswers.org and ExchangeAnswers.org, the first two in a series of Web communities for users of specific Microsoft products. On these sites, users can get answers to all of their questions, as well as the latest product news and reviews.

Our challenge was to create a family of logos that look closely related, but allow for a little individuality.

Here's one way to do that:

1. Design one icon, typeface and tagline style, then vary the icon color.
2. In thinking about icon concepts, consider the thematic link between the different products in the family, i.e. what they have in common. (In this case, the websites all reference Microsoft products, so we decided to develop a logo that references Microsoft logos in that it has four pieces of a consistent shape and style. The colors we chose are similar to those in the Microsoft palette.)
3. Your visual reference should be an allusion, not a replication. (While Microsoft's pieces are essentially squares arranged like windowpanes, our four pieces are pie wedges.)
4. Think about your icon as an expression of the products, their purpose or outstanding characteristics. (For example, the Answers websites collect all the information pieces users might need and gather them in one place. Our pie wedges were separated, rotated, then brought back together to create a new whole. The Answers websites move quickly to display the latest information about a Microsoft product. Our pie wedges were recombined in a way that gives the icon the appearance of forward motion, with a square (à la Windows) in the center.)