



THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE RESOURCES

THE TOUCHY SUBJECT OF BRANDING

By Noel Hayashi

Having worked in realm of the non-profit arts world my entire career, I am used to the reaction I invariably get whenever I bring up the subject of branding. To most artistic directors, the whole concept of branding is a turn-off. And I have come to understand that, and consequently approach the subject very carefully. It's difficult for a creative visionary to speak of his or her life-long passion using terminology like "marketability" and "artistic product". I accept that fact.

However, as an arts marketing professional, it's my job to get them past it. Artists equate branding with commercialism which, in turn, they equate with "selling out". But not as in "the auditorium was sold out tonight." It's more like "how could you stoop so low". Once I convince them that I'm not talking about flashing neon lights and sidewalk hucksters, I can usually persuade them to at least listen.

If you read my paper on image and identity (also posted on this site) you will understand the importance of establishing your own look, or logo, or brand. It is what people come to identify with your name, or the name of your company or organization. For that reason, creating a strong and distinctive logo is one of the most important first steps in marketing.

Your logo might include a symbol or graphic image (often referred to as a 'bug'), or it may simply be a distinctive type treatment of your name. Whichever direction you decide to go, you need to take your time in developing your logo and make sure it reflects everything that you want/need it to. Because once you introduce your logo on all of your marketing materials, it should ideally stay the same forever. You want the public to associate your logo with your name, so that it becomes instantly recognizable.

Individual artists often think that branding doesn't apply to them – only to companies and large organizations. I feel very strongly that even single artists need to keep a consistency in look and feel throughout all of their promotional materials. Press kits, CD covers, websites, business cards, show

flyers, programs, whatever goes out – reinforces your message and reinforces your 'brand'. So if it's all over the map - style-wise and design-wise - you are defeating the purpose.

Whatever you establish as your image or brand, stay consistent. There is nothing more confusing and self-destructive than to keep changing your name, or your logo, or your message. That's why it is so important to get it right the first time. Take your time, live with it awhile, run it by a few people if you must, but then move ahead with confidence, knowing that it will represent you for the remainder of your career.