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HOW TO BRAND A NONPROFIT

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**Original Champions
of Design**



Updating a classic for modern times

You recently redesigned the Girl Scouts logo. What were the organization's goals for the identity refresh?

JENNIFER: The Girl Scouts had made a lot of internal changes and they were ready to communicate them. They wanted to convey that the Girl Scouts is as appropriate to today's girls as it was to their moms.

BOBBY: They wanted to figure out ways to keep girls involved and excited about being a part of Girl Scouts even as they get older, when Girl Scouts is no longer seen as the cool thing to do.

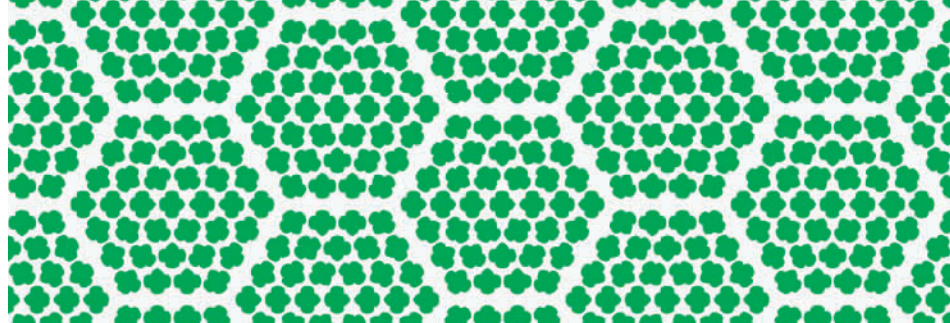
How did the goals translate into design objectives for OCD?

JENNIFER: The Girl Scouts have 108 councils, recently consolidated from over 300. All these individual councils are contractually allowed to do whatever they want to do with their identity. The usual approach for the organization was to take the Saul Bass stamp—a beautiful, iconic mark—and stamp everything with it. They were hanging their whole brand on a single mark, but the brand is more expansive than that. The brand needed to be able to sit on the desk of Michelle Obama or on a banner out on a soccer field. The brand needed to be fashionable.

We were determined to give them some flexibility and “ownability” so that the brand could extend through all possible touchpoints. Our goal was to take the Saul Bass mark and base an entire system on it. We wanted to empower the Girl Scouts with a broad enough spectrum of graphic language so that they could make any flier they wanted and still be “on brand.”

BOBBY: We used a handful of elements to challenge the way that girls and women are typically thought of—we moved away from pinks and childish graphic devices, and worked to engage girls and inspire them in a new way.

Girl Scouts also had a massive brand book, filled with guidelines dating all the way back to 1978 when Saul Bass created the mark. Every time a company had come in to do minor modifications, new guidelines were added. We created a short brand guide—a cheat sheet of sorts—that anybody could pin up or keep in a drawer. This short guide provided simplicity and flexibility.



What did the research process for this project involve?

JENNIFER: The first step was to learn as much as possible about the visual history of the Girl Scouts. We went through the archives, looked through each and every bag and tag on every outfit and every pin and badge. Then we interviewed key internal players. We also talked with the girls, and we made art collages with them. We hung out with them and listened to them talk about the brand.

BOBBY: We were also given prior research material, and we surrounded ourselves with all of the quantitative research that had been done. We looked at things that were currently happening in the world of girls’ pop culture. We wanted to be archaeologists of design and find the things in the brand that were there in the beginning.

How had the trefoil mark evolved over time?

JENNIFER: Before Saul Bass, the trefoil had a point on the i. Bass took the point away when he made his beautiful mark. Our goal was to create a system where

The iconic trefoil mark, designed by Saul Bass, updated for the Girl Scouts and grouped into patterns



the point and the Saul Bass mark live together. That iconic trefoil mark signified the Girl Scouts. When Girl Scouts started, there was an eagle in it—then the eagle went away. Later, they put a *GS* in it. At another time, they made it into an outline. Our challenge was to consolidate these iconic marks into one icon.

How do you handle the challenge of refreshing an iconic brand that was designed by such a legend?

BOBBY: From people like Paul Rand, Saul Bass, and Massimo Vignelli, we learned the things that got us excited about being designers. We wanted to keep the integrity of the design as much as possible, while, at the same time, making subtle tweaks that helped it to stand out as a design and organization that is alive and well. Once we actually understood where the Girl Scouts wanted to be and discovered why they refreshed the brand in 1978, we knew what tweaks had to be made.

The result was to take the trefoil back to its more distinct shape; one that was less symmetrical, to a more distinct trefoil shape, with a bit more of a point at the bottom. Going back to the true trefoil shape required some additional, subtle changes. As we made those changes, we asked ourselves, “WWSBD?”—What Would Saul Bass Do? We did that with every decision we made.

Decisions about the bangs, noses, and lips were made based upon our observations of the Girl Scouts and our conversations with them. When we started to look at the silhouettes, we noticed that there was a very specific kind of girl that was in the illustration. We started to make some tweaks to see if we could make her a little less specific, while still keeping a lot of the same elements.



JENNIFER: We wanted to age the girls down and we wanted to make them iconic. We wanted to make them “everygirl” through simplification and the use of shape. Simplifying and stretching out the mark made it a symbol of a strong, young woman, in all of her many colors, shapes, and sizes.

BOBBY: Beyond the benefit of returning the trefoil to its distinct shape, the process then gave us the opportunity to build a visual system. The trefoil shape can now be used for patterns, for punctuation, for other visual elements—it can be used in many exciting and creative ways.

ABOVE:

The trefoil, used here on business cards and letterhead, can be used for patterns, for punctuation, and for other visual elements.

RIGHT:

The Girl Scouts brand guide “cheat sheet”



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