

# Corporate Fonts Design Solutions

Type is one of the most important aspects of corporate branding—much more important than the mere surface-level naming of a company. Type can serve as a far-reaching and unifying communications tool for a corporation. Standardized corporate fonts present a strong, consistent image to the marketplace and bond together the thousands—and sometimes millions—of diverse pieces of graphic communication a corporation produces.

## Importance of Type to Branding

Corporate branding is a marketing communications process—one that should be planned, strategically focused and integrated throughout the organization. At the heart of a brand is type. A well-planned corporate identity includes a strategy for consistent use of type. Although an elementary philosophy to the professional designer, many companies pay little attention to the importance of type management. (One large firm recently did a corporate identity audit and discovered that it was using the company name in 23 different type styles.)

When effectively managed, a corporate font has exceptional unifying power. Type is the one communications tool used by everyone within a company that is also primary to external communication. Whether intended to create a mundane internal document or a far-reaching strategic marketing statement, type is at the heart of the communication process. If the same typeface is used for all internal and external graphic communication, a corporation can be assured that a consistent visual message is being delivered, and that corporate culture is strengthened with every document produced.

## Corporate Solutions

Three kinds of fonts can be used to create consistent typographic branding:

- 1 System fonts
- 2 Standard retail fonts
- 3 Proprietary fonts

### System Fonts

The use of system-level fonts is a common solution to the problem of establishing consistent corporate branding fonts. System-level fonts are those included as part of operating systems. Because operating system providers understand the importance of high quality fonts to good graphic communication, system fonts are well-designed and technologically optimized for both print and screen usage. Because system providers also realize the need for cross-platform communication, system fonts are virtually the same from all suppliers. Finally, there are a relatively wide variety of system fonts to choose from.

The downside to using a ubiquitous system-level font is that it forces the brand to share its space with thousands of other brands and the countless documents set with these fonts. System fonts provide little possibility of unique recognition. Therefore, even though they provide good technological answers, system fonts are poor branding solutions.

### Standard Retail Fonts

Standard retail fonts are readily available and can make powerful typographic statements. Apple® Computer has been using ITC Garamond for its identity since the mid-1980s. Paul Rand chose Bodoni for IBM's branding over 40 years ago, and Marlboro, the world's best selling cigarette, has been riding successfully on Neo Contact for over twenty years.

*Many standard retail fonts are exceptional corporate branding options.*

Ehrhardt  
Bliss  
Arepo  
Alinea  
Bembo  
Ocean Sans

Prominent type foundries have large libraries of typefaces that can be excellent sources for corporate fonts. Normally, a substantial portion of these libraries' fonts consists of classic designs that have proven over time to be superior communications tools. These distinctive, yet versatile, designs are ideal for corporate branding. Many are large type families with extended character sets and most are also available in the important font formats.

In addition to the proven classics, there are more new typefaces being released today than ever before. Conservative estimates put the number of new font releases at over 1500 per year. While most of these faces are display designs only suitable for setting ephemeral typography, many are well thought-out, finely rendered families, capable of producing exceptional text and display typography.

Standard retail fonts can be ideal choices for corporate branding. There are hundreds to choose from. Many are distinctive and versatile tools ideally suited to the diverse needs of corporate communication.

### **Proprietary Fonts**

In some instances, the best solution to a corporation's branding needs is a proprietary typeface design. Whether a new and unique design or a modification of an existing typeface, an exclusive corporate font guarantees distinction in corporate communication.

Modifications to existing typeface designs can be an excellent solution to the corporate font problem. Traditional typefaces have basic shapes and proportions that ensure high levels of legibility and make it easier to produce good typographic arrangements. Careful modeling of this design foundation can then produce a new typeface that is distinctive and unique to the corporation as well as a strong, reliable communications tool.

Often proprietary fonts grow out of a corporation's logo design. While these fonts provide a typographically unique corporate message, an added virtue is that the corporate logo and fonts can be in perfect harmony. Such was the case with the design of Mylius for British Airways. The goal was to create a typeface that complemented the company's logo and could be used to set everything from corporate correspondence to advertising copy, brochures, menus—even flight tickets.

### **Extra Characters and Symbols**

Virtually all large corporations operate in a global arena that requires an extensive character set for successful communication.

The 256 glyphs in a standard font allow the setting of English and several Western European languages. In the wake of the increased globalization of markets, however, many corporations have discovered that a standard font's character set does not meet their needs. These corporations require letters and glyphs for

setting Eastern European languages and, in some cases, also complete non-Latin alphabets to meet their multi-national communications needs.

In addition, many corporate clients require that their logo or other important symbols be accessible from the keyboard as font images. Often, they want to enable their employees to include the corporate logo in documents. Making the logo accessible in the corporate font makes this easy and efficient.



*A corporate logo that is embedded into a typeface is only a keystroke away. Here a designer has inserted the Agfa logo into a standard face.*

## Conclusion

Standardized fonts are vital to successful corporate branding. System-level fonts do little to distinguish or differentiate an entity's personality, goals or motivations. Proprietary fonts and standard, off-the-shelf fonts are the best solutions to corporate branding needs. Type alone cannot sustain a successful brand name or corporate identity, but a brand without a strong typeface will flounder trying to define itself.

Corporate font solutions are not limited to the design, or look, of the typeface. It is also essential to provide corporate clients with the characters and glyphs necessary for conducting global business.

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