

Look And Sound Different Because You Are.

Common Mistake Number 3.

Not deciding what your company should look and sound like until it is too late or too expensive to change. We like the analogy of a company's image being its clothing, and its tonality being its voice. Decide how you want your company to look and sound and budget for it from the start. This can require professional guidance from a branding or image consultant or an advertising agency. Only you may know how you wish to appear, but experts are needed to tailor the clothes. They needn't be expensive, but mistakes made early are costly to fix in money, wasted energy and customer or investor confidence. Included in the company's clothing are its name, overall image, graphics, website, stationery and logo. It can extend to the forums the CEO speaks at, his tonality and style and that of the company's press statements. Tonality stems from the attitude the company adopts. Is it confidence, dynamism, technological superiority, assured, understanding, energetic or exciting? Whatever you decide can be projected, but remember the tonality needs a legitimate basis, it should reflect the reality of what you are and your aspirations. The company's 'look and feel' should be integrated into everything you do. Message integration is particularly important for both communication and economic efficiency; start-ups with limited marketing funds can optimize them through smart message integration, others suffer from not connecting the product with its presentation. **Example:** A company we reviewed with a unique, high-end technology application targeted for top 500 companies had a poorly designed logo and website, the latter including amateurish diagrams of the product's functions. The website was littered with 'techspeak' unintelligible to potential company senior management who, presumably, would have to sign off on the services' eventual purchase. The product's principal competitive benefit, the real news, was buried.

Your market environment will be too competitive for you not to be distinctive and accurately and succinctly positioned. Have this done professionally. Tempting though it might be, it is not an area to economize, unless you want to risk going to market in a cheap suit. It is not work for your wife, your talented high school son or an uncle filling in time, any more than your product design is.