

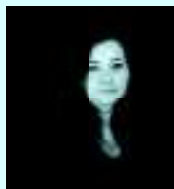
Creative workshop

Logo design masterclass

Greg Quinton and **Jessica Philpott** from renowned identity design firm The Partners reveal the design processes behind two of their most recognisable logos

Whether you're creating a new brand or bringing an old one up to date, designing a stunning logo requires a mixture of instinct, inspiration and trial and error. You'll need to pinpoint just what it is about your client's product that makes it unique and attractive to ensure it speaks to the right market in the right way.

There isn't one set way to tackle a logo design brief, but there are some basic rules that should inform your process: know the client, know the brand and know exactly what you're trying to achieve. This workshop shows how clear, focused objectives can help you through the design process, using case studies from our logo design portfolio. We explain how the BBC iPlayer's play button logo came into being, and why rejuvenating Jaguar's company branding involved a master of arms and a sculptor.



Jessica Philpott

Senior designer
Philpott joined The Partners in 2003 after graduating from Kingston, where she studied design. She moved to the US in 2008 to establish the company's New York studio, and led on our first project: the BBC's iPlayer logo. www.thepartners.co.uk



Greg Quinton

The Partners' overall creative director has over 100 awards to his name. An executive member of D&AD, he has worked with clients including Saks Fifth Avenue and The National Gallery. Quinton headed up Jaguar's total rebrand. www.thepartners.co.uk

Skills

- Understand the logo creation process
- Approach logo design briefs with more focus
- Mix established ideas with new concepts



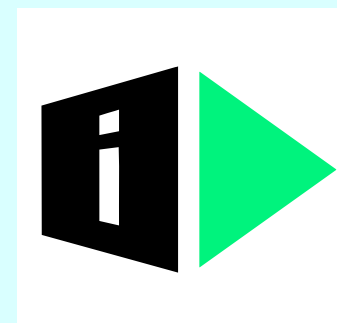
Case study one: Designing a new brand from scratch

The Partners were approached by the BBC to work on the logo and brand for its new iPlayer – arguably the biggest broadcasting revolution since the launch of colour television



01 Brand values

The iPlayer was previously known as the IMP, short for 'integrated media player'. That name was on the table until we got quite a long way through the development process. The new name was signed-off before we did anything creative, but the technology was being developed at the same time. We worked with the BBC to define the brand attitude: the iPlayer is discreet and magical. It makes great things happen simply, intuitively and easily.



03 A simple symbol

A key part of the brief was to come up with something that could be used on a symbolic level, so you didn't necessarily need to use the word 'iPlayer'. You needed to be able to just see and recognise the logo. So, why not have an ownable play button? The play button symbol is the universal language for pressing play to start. It's simple, and everyone knows what it means. That's very appropriate for the BBC, because accessibility for all is extremely important.

Future-proof your designs

You don't know what the future's going to present, so you need to make sure that your design is versatile and not too complex. For example, the BBC iPlayer logo is now being used on devices like the Apple iPhone, which didn't exist when we first created it.

02 Initial ideas

We initially presented three design ideas to the BBC. The first was called 'Cornucopia' – a symbol of abundance dating back to the 5th century BC – based on the idea of a horn of plenty. These whimsical logos were based around explosions, with everything on the inside coming out. The second idea was centred on the concept of expanding assets. The letters had angles to them, so it looked as if they were expanding. But the idea we took forward was 'press play'. The other two routes we presented were much too complex, and wouldn't have worked at the smallest sizes.

It can be harder to come up with simple concepts, because whatever they're made up of has to be absolutely perfect. Remember: ideas must come before aesthetics. If something isn't adding to the communication, why is it there?

Client collaboration

Be strict about having a really tight brief before you do anything. Make sure you know that what you're trying to achieve is what your client is trying to achieve, right from the beginning. It's really important to distill everything down before you actually get started on the creative stage of a job: you need to have all the selling points and concepts straight in your mind. What does it need to say? What needs to be communicated here that makes this product different?



04 Space solves

The 'press play' idea started out as the letter 'i', the play button symbol, and then the word 'Player'. We really cracked it when we integrated the 'i' into the symbol and it all became one unit. Junior designer Dave Thompson and I were doodling in the studio, looking at different ideas, and we wondered what would happen if we pushed 'i' and 'Player' together and made the play button out of the negative space. That was a lightbulb moment. It was so much smarter.



05 Think about typography

Once we decided we liked our integrated iPlayer button, we expanded the concept out with lots of different typefaces – we tried about 25 different fonts. The final logo is based on Frutiga: it's a bespoke version of Frutiga Bold. It was Helvetica for quite a while, but we settled on Frutiga because it felt very bold and confident, and it's friendly and empathetic as well. We then stylised the type and changed some angles. All the letters touch each other to give it the feeling of being one unit. Having spacing made it feel a bit gappy and disjointed.



07 Digital demands

This was never going to be a brand that didn't live in a digital world, so we had a whole host of constrictions. Size played a very important part in the design, because it has to be used really small, much like a favicon. The minimum size for applying it online is 13 pixels high. The logo had to be very light digitally for downloads, and it needed to be versatile and future-proof, so we had to make sure it wasn't too complex.

06 Colour selection

The colour scheme is very graphic and very simple: pink, black and white. We looked at the branding of all the different BBC radio and TV channels at the time, because all the stations have their own colours. We then suggested two colours: pink, or a more conservative teal-blue. I didn't think they'd pick the pink, but I'm glad they did. It's really confident and it stands out radically. It's good to try unconventional ideas: people think that pink is a feminine colour, but the way it's used with the black means it doesn't look that way. It was potentially a more controversial choice, but it's also more striking and eye-catching.

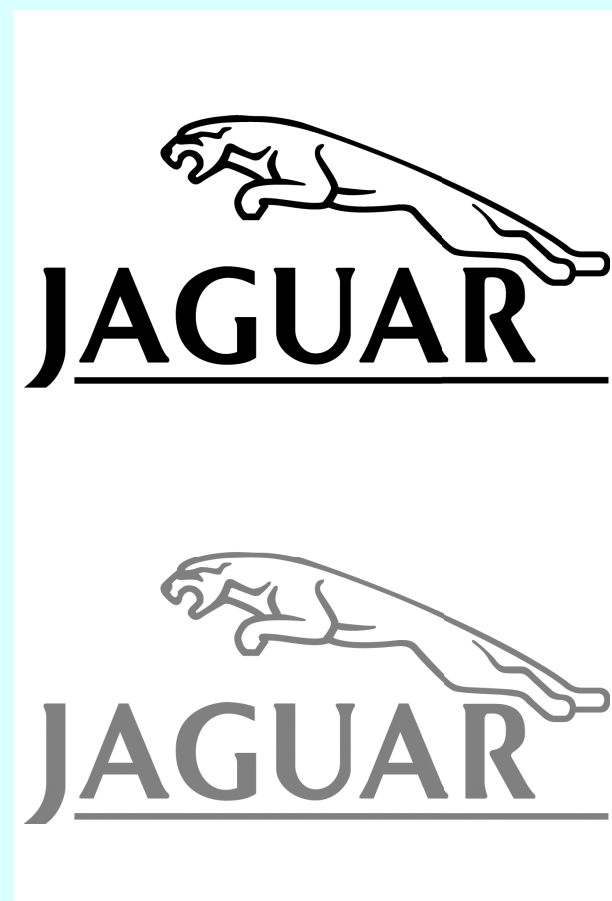


08 The approval process

Because of the way the BBC works, everything has to have regulatory approval. Each of our presentations had to contain wording saying they were statements of intent, and subject to approval. As a result, we needed to consider factors you don't have to take into consideration with other companies, but the regulatory process didn't hold up the design process too much, luckily – it was more of a formality.

Case study two: Redesigning an iconic global brand

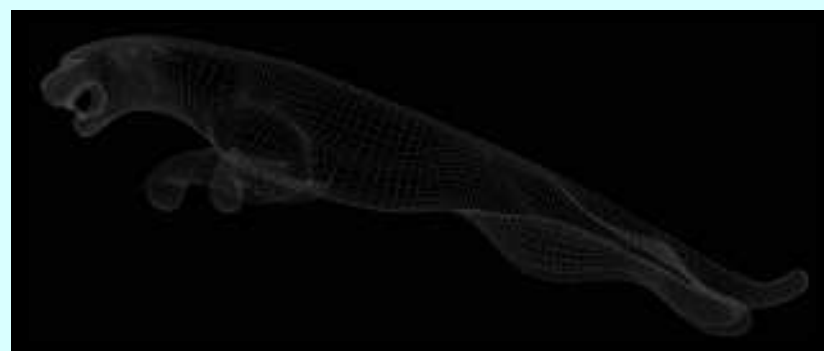
Setting its sights on a whole new audience, Jaguar called in The Partners to give its classic leaping cat motif a much-needed makeover



01_____ The brief

Jaguar wanted to appeal to what the company described as 'Generation X' – a younger, more lifestyle-aware audience. Traditionally, the Jaguar was seen as the 'gin and golf' car, so this was very much a deliberate move to attract a more contemporary audience. If you observe the visual identity at that point, it just seemed dusty and everything was flat. We looked at it and said, 'Well, that's not really how a lifestyle brand should look and feel.' Nothing about it was emotional at all.

Computer Arts Projects _April 2010



05_____ Freeze frames

We wanted to establish consistency across all communications: the car itself, advertising and branding. We wanted one logo we could apply to everything. We got that by taking the sculpture, having a resin mould made of it, then scanning it in 3D into a virtual black room and white room. As a result, we could light it however we wanted and freeze it at any point in a 360-degree sequence to take high-resolution images.

02_____ The turning point

The brief asked: should we turn the logo around so it's facing forward? The other agencies had the same brief, so everybody was examining this question. We knew that some aspects of heraldry might be useful, so we spoke to a master of arms. We discovered that if your castle or house fell into disrepute with the king, he would exact retribution by ordering the symbol on your coat of arms to be turned around. So, not only would a logo facing the other way be off historically, the first thing the eye would see would be the tail or back feet of an animal running away in cowardice, which is the last thing you want from a powerful brand.

03_____ The hero image

At that point, the logo itself was a very straight-lined leaper. It was usually a white keyline, and it looked like a ghost. However, if you closed your eyes and thought of Jaguar, what did you see? You didn't see that – you saw the chrome leaper on the front of the car. So we said, 'That's your hero, so why aren't you using that and making it into something that you're proud of?' The whole brand was embodied in that wonderful leaper. We knew that Jaguar needed to use it, capitalise on it and make it come alive again.

04_____ Remodelling

We couldn't use what they had already – the jaguar was quite ugly, with sharp teeth, a horrible mouth and a clubbed paw. It had been tweaked endlessly over the years and lost all its strength. So we went back to the beginning and remodelled the leaper with sculptor Steve Mansfield, who makes waxworks for Madame Tussauds, after photographing the existing leaper and annotating it all over with everything we wanted to change, cross-referencing that with images of real jaguars.

Steve used classic plaster and clay rendering to get the shape and form we wanted. We made the jaguar's neck stronger, gave him a far more aggressive stance, added power to his shoulders and gave him more potential to work face-on.

Inspiring guidelines

We worked on the branding guidelines as we went along. A lot of people added to them, but we were at the top of the triangle so we dealt with the core elements of the new identity and put quite a lot of the basics in, which other people added to. The important thing was that the guidelines weren't just about aesthetics and they weren't just instructions. They were also meant to inspire people, rather than simply saying, 'You must not do this or this.' After all, a brand is only as good as its execution, and we needed everybody to be excited and inspired by it.

www.computerarts.co.uk



06 Text appeal

The old logotype was very clunky, but we wanted it to look as sexy as possible. We knew the leaper couldn't be used in some situations, so we wanted the type to have its own presence. We re-cut the typeface in a bespoke design; changed the font, weight and spacing. We put a lot of work into getting the character spacing just right. We also made it full caps to convey the confidence of the brand, and centred the leaper over the top. Typographer Mike Pratley helped to tweak the typography: he's brilliant at knowing what happens when you reduce something down very small, and how your eye moves around.

Colour by racing heritage



07 Choosing a colour scheme

The previous identity had lots of flat green, which was stuffy. When you see a British racing green car it's exciting, it's moving and you get light reflecting off it. We needed to bring the use of colour alive. To do this, we made a board showing the different racing colours assigned to different countries. The colour palette was taken from the British racing green Jaguar: green, chrome, black and white. Those were the core colours, and then we added red and orange – the colours of brake lights and indicators.

Respect the brand

Look at the existing branding. Examine why it is the way it is; evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. You don't need to reinvent the wheel: use the strongest idea that you already have. Jaguar had a wonderful mark everyone had loved for decades, but its logo was a weak rendition of that. Other designs are always going to be an influence, but you should know the brand inside out so you can concentrate on capturing its personality.

Test your ideas in print

Even if you like an image on screen, always print it out and examine it. How does it work from a distance? Look at all the sizes: reduce it to the smallest size, and blow it up to the largest size at which it'll work. Do you need to create another version? Think about everything that makes you recognise the mark, and see if it works on a practical level.



08 Design instinct

We worked on everything at the same time. Everything needed to work together aesthetically: the line weights needed to work with the cat, and we needed to consider how they would look in three-dimensional metal. It was hard work to get the chrome to feel right, and not cheap or old. There was a lot of trial and error – we had boards and boards of development. A lot of instinct was involved, too. We knew we wanted the leaper and the logotype to work well both together and separately. And we knew it had to work for luxury products, so we thought about it in the world of Gucci, Armani, and so on, but knew it also had to look simple and bold on television.



09 Client approval

With a brand this complex, you've got multiple stakeholders all over the world and you've also got dealer franchises, so we went to the key countries and visited key people to involve them in the process. We did a presentation, which we shared with a lot of different people at Jaguar to explain the process. We had total buy-in on that. Because what we were doing felt absolutely right, we never had a problem – everybody was very supportive. We were going back to the heart of why people love Jaguar.