Bryan Ramirez
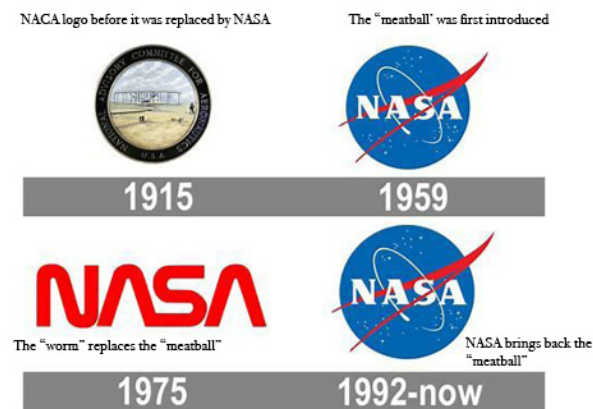
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<u>The NASA Logo</u>

Have you ever thought about the story behind the NASA logo? Surprisingly, a number of historians do not know the story behind National Aeronautics and Space Administration. When it comes to a logo, people often ask who it was created by, the reason it was created, the type of font used, reason for specific colors, among other questions. With every logo, the designer starts from scratch, brainstorming and sketching ideas. There's a story behind every logo out there, with the NASA not being one of the most known by many.

The official NASA logo, often called the "meatball", was developed in 1959 by the agency's employee James Modarelli. The introduction of the meatball emblem happened two years after the National Aeronautics and Space Administration was created. In fact, an organization with very similar functions – National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) – existed since 1915, and NASA was its legal successor. NASA's leaders were sure they needed to create a new emblem from scratch. According to sources, Modarelli just simplified the more formal "seal" version of the emblem created by a Lewis Research Center illustrator earlier for the official seal of NASA.
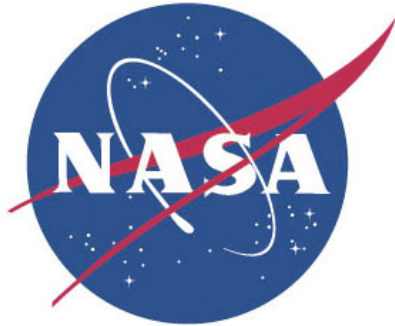
Seal created by a Lewis Research Center illustrator

In 1975, designers Richard Danne and Bruce Blackburn were hired to replace the complex meatball with a stripped-down, modernist interpretation where even the cross stroke of the A's were removed. This logo was simple, with the four letters in NASA looking like a worm. All four letters read NASA in red. At first, this new idea was not convincing to many people like NASA's administrator, Dr. James Fletcher. According to a conversation he exchanged with Danne, he stated "I'm simply not comfortable with those letters, something is missing. I just don't feel we are getting our money's worth!" However, this new concept was approved and implemented.
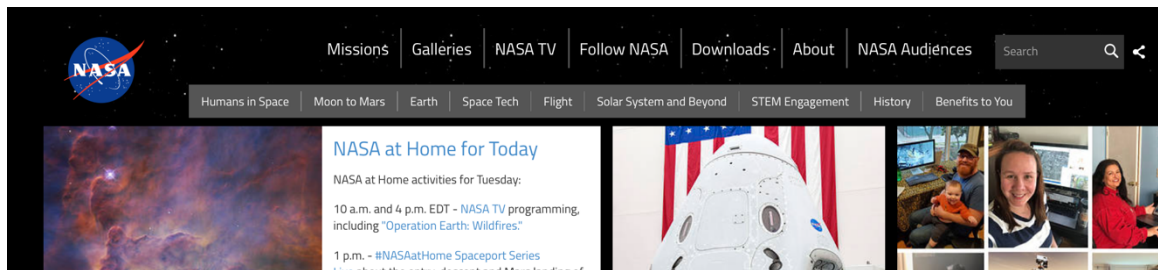

The "worm" after being approved with some resistance in 1975

Even though the "worm" was thought to be simple for many, it led to winning the prestigious "Award of Design Excellence" by The President Design Awards. However, NASA decided to bring back the "meatball" 17 years later. In 1992, the "meatball was brought back "to invoke memories of the one-giant-leap-for-mankind glory days of Apollo and to show that the magic is back at NASA". The "meatball" which included the round shape, is supposed to symbolize a planet, while the stars symbolize space. Aeronautics and space travel are symbolized by the red chevron and the orbiting spacecraft respectively.

NASA's meatball re-instated in 1992

The "meatball" features a sphere with a red chevron and the NASA lettering over it. This NASA logo has a bold serif type. Every character in "NASA" is capitalized. In regard to color, the "meatball" uses three colors such as bright hue of red (Pantone 185), dark blue (Pantone 286) and white.

NASA's "meatball" logo is still currently being used on their official website

As we can see, the number of times NASA's logo has changed is minimal. It's quite interesting to learn about the story behind this amazing and unique logo. Without a doubt, a logo represents a company so the connection should be strong. Personally, I liked the concept of the "worm" logo but feel that the "meatball" portrays the image of NASA strongly. The "meatball" features such creative details of what NASA is all about.

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