

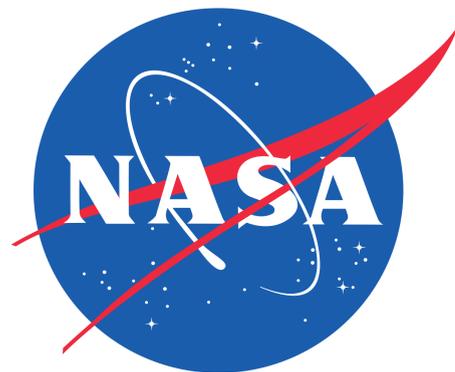
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NASA Logo Essay

A successful company needs a successful logo. A logo is the image of the company itself and its job is to showcase what the company is and stands for. There are different kinds of logos: symbolic, logotype and combination marks. A symbolic logo consists of some sort of illustration or icon that is emblematic to the company. Logotype logos on the other hand consist of the name of the company itself written out, it is basically considered a typographic logo. Finally, a combination mark consists of combining type along with illustration and creating something unique. There is not really a rule onto who is allowed to use any of these categories, every company is free to decide what they believe would work best to portray their vision. Whether it be symbolic, logo type or a combination mark a logo should be able to instantly deliver a message in a concise manner in order for it to be considered successful. A company that has successfully met all these requirements for it's brand is The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) with its three different logos.

The NASA is a government entity dedicated to aeronautics and aerospace research. It was founded in 1958 under the administration of President Eisenhower. NASA's logo was created after the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (NACA) changed into an agency that would advance both space and aeronautics: the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Back in the day there were not so many designers or illustrators that could take the job of creating the company's insignia, so the NASA took the job to itself and decided to create a competition among its employees to determine the logo that would represent them. The winning entry came from James Modarelli who came up with the classic "meatball" logo.

Modarelli created a logo that included a planet, stars, a chevron wing (a revolutionary concept at the time), and an orbiting spacecraft. Each one of the elements represented an aspect of the NASA and the goals ahead. For instance, the big round shape represents a planet, the stars within symbolize the space and the red chevron across represents aeronautics and space traveling. The logo features a bold sans-serif type where every character is capitalized and uses three colors: a bright hue of red (Pantone 185), dark blue somewhat reminiscent of the evening sky (Pantone 286), white and yellow.. The color palette was similar to the one for the American flag because the company wanted to symbolize their stand as a government entity who stands with the American people. The logo was well designed, but the problem was that it was difficult to reproduce it given the limitations of printing technology at the time. The NASA kept the logo for 15 years but then decided that they wanted something more modern. Modarelli took upon himself the task to “fix” the logo and that



is how he came up with the renewed meatball logo. The concept was pretty similar to the first one. Modarelli kept the most outstanding attributes of the first one and recreated them in a more minimal way for the second one. This new meatball logo included the planet, stars and the red chevron in the middle. Unlike the first one it didn't include a band around the planet for the name but instead Modarelli placed “NASA” in bold letters in the middle of the planet.

Although it was a great design it didn't last very long and 5 years later the NASA decided to redesign their logo once again but this time they didn't rely in Moradelli.

In the 1980s, during the rise of modern architecture in San Francisco and New York the NASA decided to call Richard Danne and Bruce Blackburn to replace the complex



meatball with a even more stripped-down, modern interpretation.

In the new logo the letters N-A-S-A were

reduced to their most simplified form, using a thick red stroked san-serif font. This is an example of what is considered a logotype. Danne and Blackburn eliminated the cross strokes in each of the two A's suggesting a space shuttle launch and the future-oriented character of the NASA. They purposely kept the design as minimal as possible because with the clarity of their logo they wanted to suggest that wherever the NASA was, their history would speak for their achievements and modernism. The redesign was kept secret until it was fully implemented because they feared that people would reject the idea of it being simply typographic when they had had illustrations. Their fear became a reality when during the first design presentation the proposed system was met with some resistance. Engineers who constantly daydreamed about the moonwalking and being out in space found "the worm" to be extremely disappointing and to them, it fail to convey the organization's goals. Among designers the story was completely different. Designers loved the concept and thought of it so brilliantly. In the end the logo was approved and stayed up until 1992.

In the early 90's the NASA was looking for change that would please and motivate their employees. They went nostalgic and decided to go back to its roots and use the

“meatball” logo once again. Everyone went crazy over the idea and in 1992 the NASA had once again transitioned. To this day the meatball is still used and has been the most common agency symbol. Nevertheless, the previous logos were not completely discarded. The first meatball logo is now known as the NASA insignia. It is usually given to outstanding employees and it is placed as a badge on the astronauts’ suit. The worm is also used within the company for uniform purposes. The last renewed meatball is known worldwide and may even be considered a brand due to its popularity. Many retail stores take advantage of that popularity to release products with its logo.

The NASA’s logo is iconic, unique and of course, successful. Wherever you go in the world and you see the symbol you WILL know what it is and what it stands for. The items used are pretty easy for everyone to understand and they directly represent everything the NASA’s mission is.

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