COMD 1112 Digital Foundations

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<p style="text-align:center">Logo History of Microsoft</p>

Microsoft Corporation is one of the largest leading technology companies today and it has one of the most recognizable brands. Most people in today's modern world can identify the current Microsoft logo instantly. However, Microsoft wasn't always a giant corporation, just as it did not always have the logo it does today. Let's explore the evolution of the Microsoft logo through its modifications over the years, and how they've successfully portrayed themselves in their logo today.

Microsoft was founded in 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen, childhood friends from Seattle. First introduced as Micro-Soft, the name originated from the words microprocessors and software ("Microsoft Is Born") and signified the partnership between Gates and Allen (Vlugt). The company started its beginnings with a computer software that converted BASIC (a popular early computer programming language) for use in personal computers (Hall and Zachary). The company quickly grew as a major corporation producing many various lines of reputable products including Microsoft Office, Windows, Xbox, and Bing.

The first logo was designed by Simon Daniels and created using BASIC programming language (Mankoo). "Micro-Soft" was portrayed in two separate words and lines. Stacks of lines forming san-serif uppercase-letters spelled out the two words. Although made with a computer programming language, the subtleties of the lines' varying thickness added movement and dimension. Even though the disco inspired look did not stand through time, it "Symboli[zed]

Microsoft's innovative ideas and advanced computer technology" (Vlugt 200) in a fashionable way that was fitting with the era.
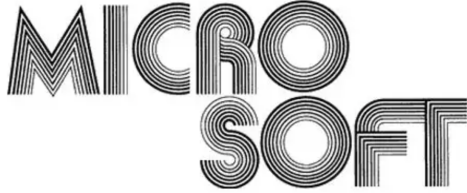

Fig.1. Image of 1975 First Microsoft Logo.
First logo was created using BASIC(computer programming language).

The first modification of the logo came in 1980 with the same designer Simon Daniels (Mankoo) and was used for consumer products (Vlugt). Micro-Soft became one word Microsoft, which gave more strength and confidence to its identity. The playful disco resemblance was replaced with a rock-and-roll theme with a bold, black, and sharp-edged font. The new edgy font combined with the formation of microsoft as one-word exuded a stronger, more aggressive presence–a direction that fit the growing corporation.
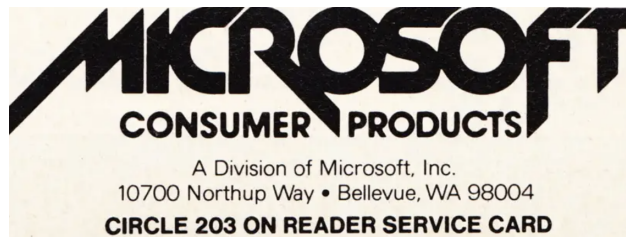

Fig. 2. Image of Microsoft's Second Logo

Fig. 3. State of Technology, 1980 Microsoft Advertisement

Daniel's third modification came two years later in 1982. The new all-caps san serif font looked simple, readable, and refined. Green and yellow were used for lettering or background depending on the medium. The "O" between letters "R" and "S" was stylized with horizontal lines to reference the bold-to-light zooming effect (Vlugt) and was given the nickname "Blibbet". This new logo portrayed a professional and unified persona that the previous logos lacked. The "Blibbet" became one of the first distinguishable icons of Microsoft that quickly gained a large fan-base–especially amongst its employees. When it was announced that the "Blibbet" would be discontinued, David Norris–a Microsoft employee, launched a campaign called "Save the Blibbet."
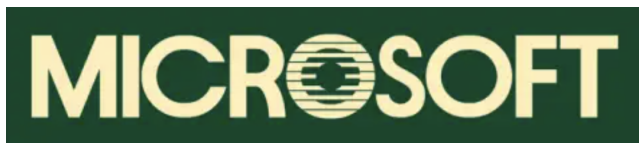
Fig. 4. Image of Blibbet Logo in Green
The stylized O became a fan-favorite and was given the nickname "Blibbet."

Fig. 5. Image of Save the Blibbet Campaign
Campaign was launched by employees in efforts to save the icon from being removed.

Fig. 6. "Microsoft Multiplan Allows Me To Explore More Alternatives In Less Time"
1982 Advertisement for Microsoft's first spreadsheet "Multiplan"

In 1987, the fourth logo was born and lasted twenty-five years before the next

modification in 2012 (Stampler). By this time, Microsoft had become a global brand with the

company's stocks going public in 1986 (Hall and Zachary). The new logo had to reflect the

growing trajectory of the company's position and presence in the technology space. Designed

by Scott-Baker, the new logo featured Helvetica Italic font (Vlugt) and lower-cased letters were

introduced. Computer Reseller News Magazine commented in their 1987 edition, "The new

logo, in Helvetica italic typeface, has a slash between the o and s to emphasize the 'soft' part of

the name and convey motion and speed" (qtd. in Stampler). Slight changes were made such as

decreasing the slant and increasing font weight (See Fig 9) with different tagline variations over

time.

Fig. 7. Image of Microsoft logo with Tagline:
Where do you want to go today?

Fig 8. Image of Microsoft logo with Tagline: Your
potential. Our Passion.

Fig. 9. Image of Microsoft logo with Tagline: Be what's next.
Notice the logotype has less slant and heavier weight.

The current Microsoft logo was designed by Jason Wells in 2012 and is still used to this

day (Miller). The new logo consists of an updated windows icon and logotype in Segoe font, the

same font used throughout their products. This was a large rebranding effort to unify the many

different lines of products and business acquisitions Microsoft had over the years. Previously

referenced in an old Microsoft commercial for Windows 95, the familiar four colored panels

made a comeback with minor color corrections (see Fig. 11). Each color represents one of

Microsoft's major products: Microsoft Office (red), Xbox (green), Windows (blue), and Bing

(yellow). Microsoft explains, "the new Microsoft logo takes its inspiration from our product

design principles while drawing upon the heritage of our brand values, fonts and colors"

(Meisner). The 4-colored panel is also an homage to Microsoft Windows which largely

contributed to Microsoft's global success.

Fig. 10. Image of Current Microsoft Logo.
The Segoe font is expressed in soft gray instead of black,
which adds to the "soft" look.

Fig. 11. Old Windows 95 commercial had similar four colored panels. The current symbol
has modified colors to match the color palette of each product line.

Microsoft's evolution over time is reflected in its logo designs. A level of maturity and

elevation can be noted with each update. Today, Microsoft has successfully established itself

into a reputable brand and their strong identity can be credited to the company's successes. No

matter where Microsoft is going in the future, Microsoft has left a permanent mark in history

for its innovative contributions in technology and personal computing.

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