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## The Apple Core vs. Linear Logic

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Humans have often been called the symbolizing animal. We use words, number, shape, and other deduced imagery to give context to the intangible. This is how we transport and anchor the imagination: Symbols can be both the exponential leap-point and the connection between the dots. They literally allow us to make sense with our senses—by enhancing visual communication with immediate archetypes that inform our cognitive process. How we sense tells us how to respond or, in the current flood of information, if indeed there is reason to respond at all.

I've explored and implemented what I call the philosophy of visual communication for almost 25 years, and have presented it to design students and at conferences for the last eight. In my work as an identity designer I've rediscovered the obvious: It has to land in the gut before it has any chance of making it to the head. If you want your logo to be remembered and recognized, you've got to provide a pay-off to the viewer. The more immediate story you can tell, the more likely you are to create a relationship with the viewer. And when I say story I don't mean fable. I mean the more appropriate visual content you use to represent your client's message, the much higher the likelihood you have of creating a direct line from invitation to connection. This is information value, as opposed to information junk, which is in abundance today.

Humans love myth and symbol, as we should. There's a lot of knowledge in this synaptic bit, distilled through the experiences of millions of predecessors. A symbol is certainly a collapsed piece of information, but symbols also expand to fit any human in any culture in any time by linking to universal principles. These cues in turn inform choice: Is it good? What is in it for me? Do I trust? Taking the wrong turn into the jaws of a famished predator is as relevant a concern today in the concrete jungle as it was in the Savannah millennia ago. A composite that immediately tells the story without excessive processing is invaluable. It enhances our edge of appropriate response by giving us access to response-ability.

To get an idea of how symbols unfold information in a logo, let's look at two major contenders in the computer technology market, IBM and Apple. IBM is oriented to left-brain, structural tidiness, while Apple is all about right-brain aesthetic. We intuitively recognize the appropriateness of symbolic representation because we are human. Symbols are just like breathing. We rarely consciously register them, but they are essential to our being. We are ignorant of the essence of our existence, a very human trait.

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### ***A Direct Line to Success.***

IBM's logo is linear-extreme—a letterform that requires a secondary thought process to understand. It is a highly structured and edgy logo, originally designed by Paul Rand in 1956, based on a font called City. The Beat Generation was in full swing and headed toward a mutation known as the Love Generation. There was an undercurrent of dissent and irreverence beginning to touch the surface of culture, and advertising followed suit.

The current and historical versions of the IBM® logo can be viewed at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Business\\_Machines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Business_Machines) and <http://ibmcollectables.com/ibmlogo.html>

During this time, Rand modified his design to incorporate lines, further enhancing the linear aspect of the identity, but also integrating white and black (positive/negative), which in essential terms represent the duality of the human experience. It originally existed in a 13- and 8-line version (the latter is the current version). Let's look at the significance of these numbers.

In 1202, an Italian nicknamed Fibonacci penned what has come to be known as the Fibonacci sequence. In this very simple sequence, each number is the sum of the preceding two: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, and so on. This is a pi relationship. In and of itself, it is not remarkable until you consider that this sequence recurs with regularity in everything from the lengths of the finger bones (which curl into a spiral exactly like a nautilus), to the correlation of the distance between planets and their moons (when they have more than one moon), to the proportionate division of human facial and bodily structure, to the spirals in the head of a sunflower. This sequence actually speaks to the reproductive process of most life forms: It produces patterns that are appealing in our eyes because it speaks to the continuity of our experience. It is precisely about the regeneration of us.

Back to IBM. As you can see, Rand used two numbers from this sequence—probably more intuitively than intentionally. I believe that to balance the weighty, machine-structured aspect of this design, Rand embedded nature information. The division of lines are proportionately appropriate and aesthetic, in exactly the same way we find an appropriately proportioned face attractive.

Time and again, when we see what we recognize as beauty, its proportion corresponds to this sequence. It has the quality of its own sort of linear beauty, appealing to both the left brain compartmentalizing-nature but also addressing right-brained expansive beauty-nature. This acknowledgment of the archetype—inclusive opposites unified—helped to establish the long life of this logotype and is a prerequisite to a true symbol.

### ***The Apple of Our Eye.***

Historical and current versions of the Apple™ logo can be viewed at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple\\_Computer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple_Computer).

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In the creation myth in the Book of Genesis, God instructs Adam and Eve not to eat from the apple tree in the garden. A serpent taunts Eve when she shies away from the fruit for fear of death. He says that the real reason God forbids the apple is because once she takes a bite of it, her eyes will be opened and she will be "...as the gods, knowing good and evil..."

From the roots of our civilization, the apple has been symbolic of knowledge. As we know, Adam and Eve eat the apple, are expelled from the garden, and life, as we know it, begins—a life of evolution through knowledge and the expanding consciousness. So the apple with the bite out of it symbolizes the acquisition of awareness.

The Christian story implies that knowledge is corruptive in itself. But there is another side to the story. If Eve didn't eat the apple, life as we know it would not exist. There would be no evolution of humanity. It might be argued that with the advent of user-friendly computers, knowledge was brought to the masses. The Apple brand suggests it is nothing short of the beginning of creation itself.

In shape terms, the apple is essentially round. The circle is the symbol of unity in every culture throughout time. We are separated out from the wholeness of the universe, literally at the cellular level as we transform into humanness, and then during birth. We strive in love and life to recreate that unity. Marriage is an example of the return to unity: two opposites reunited to create the archetypal whole. The Apple logo also connects with the concept of this return with the active participation of eating the apple or ingesting knowledge by taking a bite out of the all-knowing. The reinforcement of myth with shape symbology creates a very powerful logo indeed. The story and the visual match the intent of transforming the world through the evolution of knowledge, encapsulated in a momentary glance.

### *Using Intuitive Connections in Logo Design*

In our information-laden world, it is absolutely crucial that a designer employ critical thinking through understanding intuitive connection when making use of visual imagery. Access informs response: What we intuit lays the groundwork of our actions. If you don't make the connection, that relationship is lost. Conscious study of the symbology of number, shape, and myth tells our minds what our intuition already knows. It completes the synaptic cycle by producing work that is at once effective, aesthetic and ethical. It is effective because an intuitive match leads to greater understanding through initial recognition of a larger concept and is the shortest route between two points; aesthetic because appropriateness leads to elegance; and ethical because when unnecessary or inappropriate content is eliminated, the truth is revealed and something in the larger scope is to be learned.

One of the greatest services we can provide as a designers is to employ these simple principles to further human response-ability. What if everyday advertising was a venue of education? How novel it would be to actually receive value from a company's advertising and identity message that benefits the overall quality of our lives, just through the simple action of making sense.

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*Maggie Macnab is interested in better design for better communication, and to that end teaches, writes and designs to the best of her ability.*