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## Phil's Forum 9/7/05 What's in a Logo?

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I just got back from a long weekend in Tennessee visiting my sister, Laura. She's an artist that loves to draw fun, fanciful cartoon art (www.maxonthesquare.com).

She's also the artist who created our standard logo with the balloons and our baby logo with the stork. Those who are familiar with her art recognize it immediately in our logos.

As I was making the long drive home from Tennessee I got to thinking about our logo with all the balloons on it. Believe me when I tell you that I must get 5 or 6 emails every week from companies who want to redesign my logo for me with all of their new scientific studies on how to make a logo that *"will drive customers into your store."*

Gosh, who wouldn't want that?

But can a logo really do all that? Are we really so easily persuaded by a simple piece of art?

That got me thinking about other logos. (You get a lot of time to think when you make a nine-hour drive by yourself.)

The first one that came to mind was the Nike symbol. Probably the first one that came to your mind, too. We all know the "swoosh". We recognize it immediately when we see it. But without all of the Michael Jordan, Bo Jackson, and other sport star ads, would we really be swayed by that ink mark to make any purchases?

Without the ads, what does that little swoosh tell us about the company? Not much. And if Nike ever started using a different logo, would people be so quick to recognize it? By itself, the logo has little real meaning. Only by associating the logo with what we know about Nike does that little swoosh become something big.

So back to the Toy House logo.

If you had never been in Toy House what would our logo tell you? You would immediately guess that we sell toys and that we like balloons, and the most observant of you will guess that we sell baby stuff, too. And that is part of what we do.

On the other hand, some say it is misleading because of the word "House". In a day where stores are called super centers, warehouses, mega-lands, and worlds, the word "house" conveys an image of a small store, something we most certainly are not.

In fact, I've had more than a few people ask me if I ever considered changing our name. Sure, I've considered it. Who knows? Maybe someday we will.

But more importantly, I've considered that what I really have to do is to give better meaning to our logo and name. Just as Nike has created an image in your mind of who they are and what they do, an image recalled just by seeing their logo, we need to do the same here at Toy House.

No, that doesn't mean that I'm going to sign up some athletes to hawk our name. And, no, you won't see our logo plastered all over everything that moves and a few things that don't.

My goal is to make sure, though, that when you see our logo, when you hear our name, you will immediately have a clear picture of who we are – the best darn toy and baby product store with the best selection, the best staff that know how to guide you through the selection process, give you the knowledge to make smart choices, help you find what you need, and make it your shopping easy, and the best shopping experience.

And when someone sees our logo and says, "What's the Toy House?" you'll answer, "My favorite store!"

That's a lot to say in one little logo. And I doubt any "scientifically designed" logo created by someone who has never entered our store could ever say all that.

And anyway, I like my sister's art. I think we'll keep it.

Happy Shopping!

-Phil Wrzesinski