

Discover the logo in your name

Inside your name is a real logo—and finding it is as basic as one-two-three! Here's how:

BEFORE



Boca Technology Group, Inc., is an engineering consulting firm in Boca Raton, Fla., whose products include esoteric computer peripherals such as PCMCIA diagnostic cards. Although its clients include many Fortune 500 businesses, Boca is clearly a company of engineers whose first priority is not logo design.

Arriving on a press release full of +RDY!-BSY, WP (*Write Protect*) terminology that would have been typewritten except this is the computer age, Boca's logo does not convey the look of a space-age company nor its resident, high-octane engineering brains. Why? It's simple: because no one knew how.

Visual image is part and parcel of a company's name. Who would fail to recognize IBM or AT&T? Who couldn't identify Coca-Cola's swish or Nike's swoosh? Such imagery is important even on a local scale, among engineers and their clients; it can bestow upon a reader the sense that a company is stable, brainy, to be trusted.

So how *do* you design a logo—especially when you have other work to do? How do you create an image that conveys a sense of discipline, excitement, vision? What follows is the best way we know, using nothing but type and a simple shape. Turn on your computer, select an ordinary typeface (we're illustrating with Helvetica), and follow along:

1 Set and kern your word

The goal in logo design is to change an ordinary word into a visual *object*. There are many ways to do this, but in every case you must pay attention to *kerning*. To kern means to adjust the space between pairs of letters for better fit. As a rule, you'll tighten a setting overall, then adjust the space between odd-fitting pairs.

Each of the styles on the right has characteristics that will be affected by the meaning of your word and the shape of its letters. Set as many as you can, then have a look—your unique name will acquire a character all its own!

CASE As a rule, words set in lowercase tend to appear casual, friendly, warm. Uppercase is commanding, authoritative; it's the case of inscriptions on buildings.

WEIGHT Light type—especially superlight as shown here—tends to feel airy and clean, informal and decorative. Heavy type is steady, solid, muscular and can easily dominate a space.

WIDTH With their tight focus, narrow styles suggest a no-nonsense operation. Wide styles are expansive, modern, airy. They convey motion, too, because in large sizes your eye must actually move across the word.

SPACING Closely related to width, tight or overlapping type creates a sense of focus and urgency. Loosely spaced type feels panoramic—like the powerful, horizon-spanning vistas of the movies.

Boca
Boca

Lowercase
boca
BOCA

Light
BOCA
Heavy
BOCA

Narrow
BOCA
Wide
BOCA

Tight
BOCA
Loose
B O C A

2 Define its space

A word's *voice* comes first from its style but then from its relationship to the space around it. The next step, therefore, is to draw a space—a simple shape—against which your word can interact. As you move it around, what you'll see is a whole new range of expressive characteristics. Below are eight common positions:

BOCA

Up Modern, buoyant, light; type at or near the top suggests growth.

BOCA

Left Conservative, moored, stable but not dull—left says dependable.

BOCA

Front Powerful, dominant, forward-thinking; this logo wants to be first.

BOCA

Vertical Radical—makes you work to read it; decorative, rebellious.

Background color: C5 M5 Y5

BEFORE & After
How to design cool stuff



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By reversing the type, the eye perceives the two elements as one object rather than a word in a box. A shape the same proportion as the word (above) reinforces the word.



Down Grounded, stable; type near the bottom is traditional, elemental.



Right A logo on the move, a name on the right suggests progressive.



Back The background greets you first. Understated, very authoritative.



Angled Unstable but energetic, decorative; background shape is critical.

3 Add the detail

If your name has another part or a descriptive subhead, its position relative to the main word will affect the rhythm and balance of your logo, as well as how the name is perceived. As a rule, this second part should be set much smaller; try one-sixth the size of the larger word. Where should it go? Watch primarily for *edges* and *points of alignment*. Some examples:



THINK IN COLUMNS

Think of your logo as having columns—one aligned with each letter—and place your subhead on any one:



As the subhead moves from the conservative leftmost position (above left) to the more energetic and unconventional right, it also shifts the balance rightward. As you work, keep an eye on both expressiveness and visual aesthetics.



Left, these columns exist no matter what the shape.

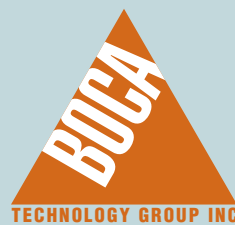


Every word has unique and often unexpected angles that can be used for alignment, from a horizon (left) to the angled A (right).

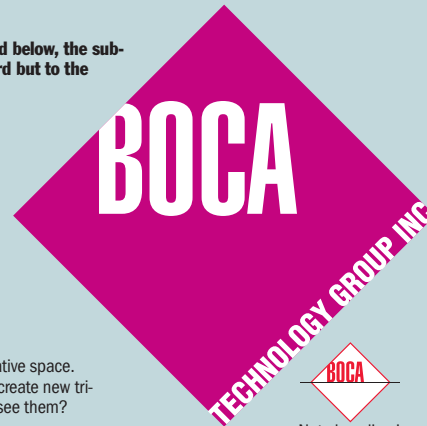
Because it draws the eye to its center, the circle is the most focused of all natural shapes.



In the triangle and diamond below, the subhead relates not to the word but to the shape that contains it.



Be aware of negative space. Triangles always create new triangles. Can you see them?



Note baseline is the horizontal axis that runs through the center of the diamond.



BOCA
TECHNOLOGY
GROUP INC

Try your name inside an oversize initial letter! Some combinations are extremely effective; others less so. We'd give high-tech Boca in its soft, puffy B a grade of only C-.



SPREAD IT OUT

If the subhead is a short word (above), it's better to EXPAND it than to make it bigger.

Background color: C1E1F5 K10



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