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A LESSON IN BRAND IDENTITY

BY CRAIG ANDERSON

**A stale image
can be the
death-knell for
any business,
but a little
creative design
goes a long way.
Here's how one
company found
a much-needed
brand makeover.**

What happens when a company outgrows its image?

THAT WAS THE QUESTION FACED BY ISEC Inc. (isecinc.com), an Englewood, CO.-based prime contractor and subcontractor specializing in building interiors and equipment for commercial, hotel, healthcare, education, research laboratories and government facilities.

ISEC's answer was to conduct a full-scale re-branding campaign. More than just a minor facelift, the campaign knocked the company's existing image down to its foundation and rebuilt a new identity from the ground up.

When ISEC was founded in 1967, the company focused solely on equipping science labs for schools. Over the years it has evolved into a single-source contractor that can put the finishing touches—such as fixtures, windows, doors and paneling—on just about any construction project.

ISEC senior vice president Joan Norblom wanted, among other things, for the new identity to brand individual divisions so they would follow a similar theme but with slight variations.

"We were trying to be 'all things to all people' and attempting to market one day for laboratory projects, and the next day ballparks or five-star hotels. We identified that we had project people who were lab experts, but may not have the hotel experience, so we divided the organization," Norblom says.

ISEC sought out a team of Phoenix-based branding experts, Esser Design (esserdesign.com) and Stacey Pilcher Et Al (marketingwithimagination.com) to assist

them in the company's makeover. The "re-identification" campaign began in mid-1999 with a research project to determine how ISEC's customers and employees viewed the company.

Stacey Pilcher, principal of Stacey Pilcher Et Al, explained that just like people, companies have an outward character and personality. The main focus for her company and Esser Design was to capture that personality and reflect it in new images and language.

The team evaluated questionnaires completed by customers and employees with their thoughts on ISEC, its personality and mission. Based on the feedback they received, a new slogan was developed: "Integrity and Innovation. Right Down to the Finish."

The team of artists at Esser Design then had an even more difficult task—developing visual imagery that would convey those words and ideas. Marketing director Pamela Esser started initially with as many as 30 designs, each of which attempted to incorporate the company's key characteristics of innovation, integrity, reliability and quality.

After a great deal of work and significant collaboration with ISEC executives, they arrived at a new logo—a silhouette of a person leaning forward, holding the "I" from ISEC—that was aesthetically pleasing while meeting the company's business objectives as well.

"One key element of the logo is that the people of ISEC are forward-thinking," Esser says. "They are innovators." She adds that every element of the logo, through to the font and colors, was carefully chosen to reflect an image of reliability, innovation and integrity.

Isec
INCORPORATED

The logo before.



New Logo:
The figure leaning forward is meant to express forward thinking and innovation.



ISEC's new brand is displayed on all company uniforms, hats and giveaways.

ISEC Senior VP Joan Norblom: “We were trying to be ‘all things to all people.’”

The logo was merely the basis for ISEC's new identity. Esser Design created many additional images, such as those of workers in wood and metal finishes, to complement ISEC's new logo. The new graphics were incorporated into everything that touches customers and employees—brochures, advertisements, the ISEC Web

site, signs at job sites, the sides of trucks, T-shirts, hardhats and much more.

Norblom says the new brand has effectively changed the way ISEC's core audience sees the company.

“It has brought a new visibility to ISEC as a more contemporary, forward thinking company,” she says. “Our new identity coin-

cided with our business change and brought focus in our market strategy externally and, as importantly, internally with our employees. Our logo now has a story to tell.”

Mission accomplished. 

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PHOTOS COURTESY ESSER DESIGN

LEFT: Each ISEC division uses the same logo with a slightly different color scheme. MIDDLE: Every ISEC employee received a manual explaining the concept behind the new brand. RIGHT: Images of metal and wood finishes complement the new ISEC logo.