



curious *by design*

Design is everywhere. In big ideas and tiny details.
It converses without language. It connects across mediums.

Design is riveting, fascinating, and it makes me curious.
Makes me question. Questions that make observe, discover,
rip elements apart, fail. Questions that make me seek more
questions. And while I backpack from one question to another,
I connect, collaborate, learn, unlearn... But mostly learn.

Design is everywhere and I am simply curious by design.

I am a graphic designer from India. Born and brought up in Bombay, I've served in the Indian Army for seven years, before changing battlefields for the world of advertising. There I found my calling for design.

I often find myself in the space that overlaps brand, design and communications—striving to design human solutions to business problems. And these days I am learning a lot about it from my three-year old son.

I am now the design director at Wasabi Rabbit, New York. And I am excited to see where design takes me next. I am Pramod Maharana.



Projects are how we practice design. We grow a little with every project, and projects tend to get better as we grow. Here are four of my recent projects.

The *what, how & why*. Design decisions that shaped both, the project *and* my thinking.

THE VIBE GROUP

Hello! This is not *who we are*.

ELLMAN FAMILY VINEYARDS

A winding journey *from wine to vine*.

WASABI RABBIT

Aren't we all a *work in progress*?

SYSOMOS INC

You win some, *you learn some*.



Project #1

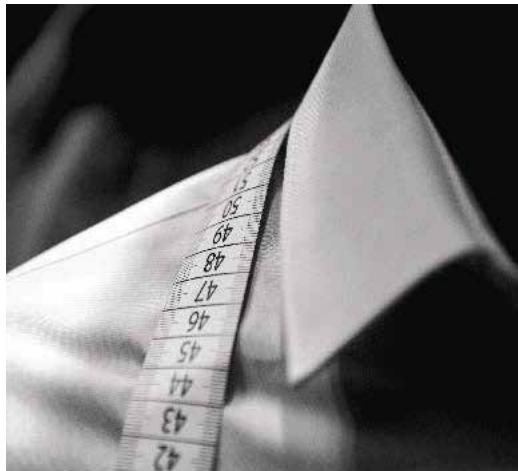
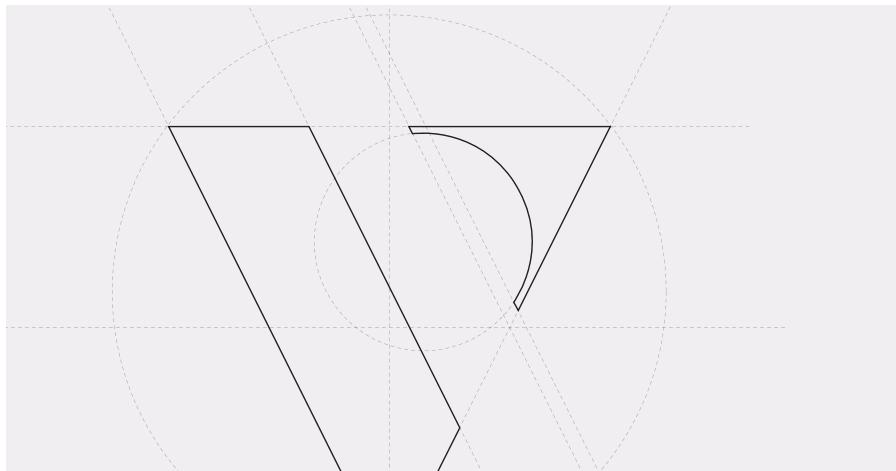
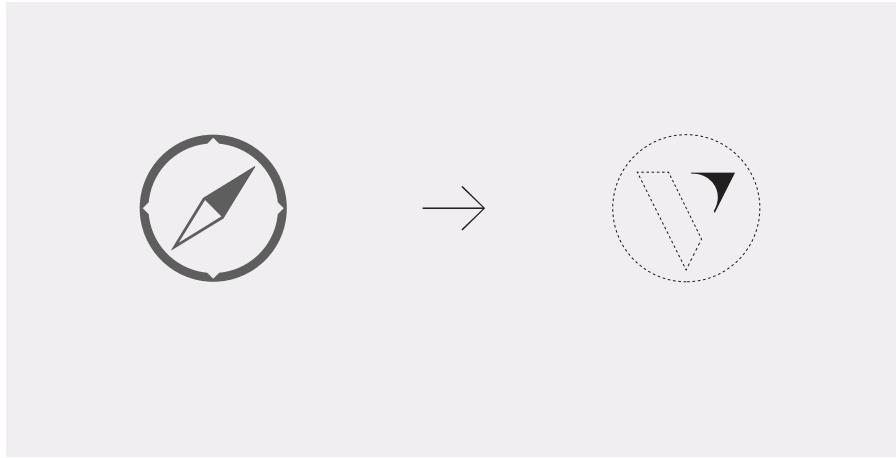
The Vibe Group

Brand Identity

Hello! This is not who we are.

Imagine having to introduce yourself with explaining who you're not, rather than with *who you are*.

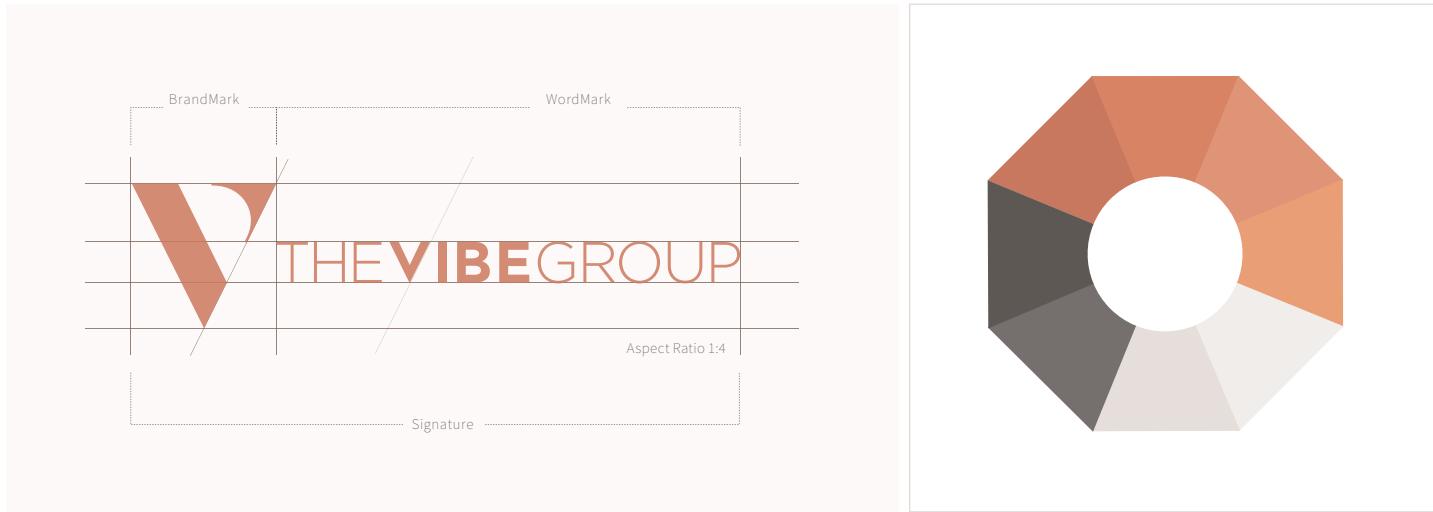
This was the real issue with THE VIBE GROUP. They were often misunderstood as designers due to their fashion specialization, and not as back-office operators. Ironically, they needed a bunch of designers to solve this issue.



Though accidentally perceived as designers, THE VIBE GROUP had a very peculiar sense (read: no sense) of design. Challenge accepted.

We designed a way to explain *design* the way *they* would understand. For that we first understood the category. We drowned ourselves in the jargon. And then cut right through it. Moved from 'what they did' to 'how they did it' and defined the core purpose - *Navigating local brands to a global marketplace.*

◀ **From Top Left:** The Vibe Group-BrandMark Concept. Moodboard and Identity inspiration. Primary Logo Lock-up. BrandMark Construction.



In design terms we found our triggers. Triggers that led us to a sense of movement. This translated into the letter 'V' being interpreted as a pointer. We combined a modern sans type with a traditional serif, to form a simple yet distinct 'V'.

A mark that adeptly doubled as a pointer. A symbol that suggested a definitive direction. That's the 'V' in Vibe. The Vibe Group had found its new identity.



Primary Type: Neutraface

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
 abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
 1234567890@\$%

◀ From Top Left: Logo Construct (Scale & Proportions), Brand Colors, Brand Mark Pattern, Brand Typography and Responsive Website Mock Up.



**The project was good.
The learning was even better.**

For the vibe group, I was asked to do the implausible. I was asked to recycle, reuse an old design that I had created for another purpose. I was livid, disinterested, and then I learnt about a fascinating concept by Maria Papova that helped me put things back in perspective.

I learnt, rather experienced first hand, the concept of *Combinatorial Creativity*. Inspired by this new found philosophy, I went about reworking the old design to solve anew problem. And in the process created a completely new and relevant design solution.

◀ Proposed Stationery Design and Office Signage.

Designing a brand's most defining expression is not easy. It demands strategic imagination and the courage to trust your gut. But what's really tough is finding a brand's truth. Brand identity begins with brand honesty.



Project #2

Ellman Family Vineyards

Brand Refresh

First things first. A little sniff. A swirl.
A sip. Repeat. We tasted the wine. And
went looking for the vine. *The truth.*

And then translated that into a new
identity for ELLMAN FAMILY VINEYARDS
Let's call this winding journey - *from
wine to vine.*



**ELLMAN
FAMILY VINEYARDS**
Napa Valley | California



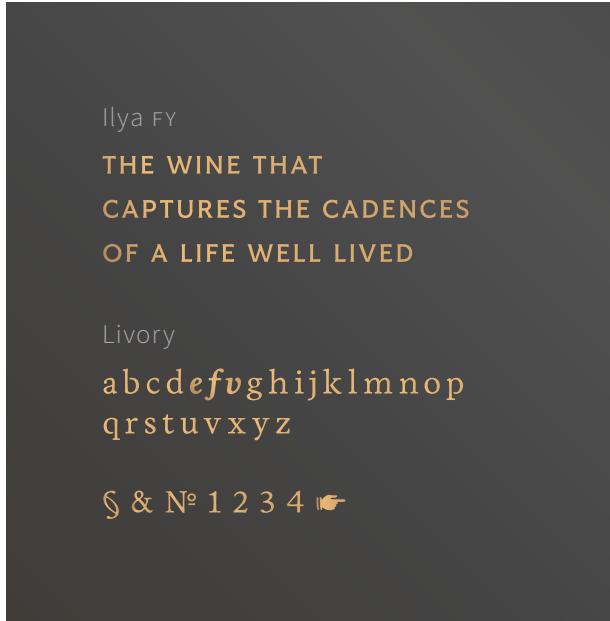
Know who you are, not what others want you to be.

Most wine brands bank on heritage and legacy to design their identity. We didn't. To be honest, we didn't have one. But what we had was authenticity.

We realized we didn't need an ornate crest or a royal emblem, what we needed was an identity that spoke about what the brand is than what it could have been.

If we had to literally translate the design into words it would read - *'Authentic and true wines that transports you right to the vine'*.

◀ **From Top Left:** EFV Script Mark Before & After. Moodboard Images & Inspiration for Script Typography. Primary Logotype.



From roots to vines to the bottle on the shelf, we had helped translate the purest form of the brands character into an identity. Just the way we like it.

The deadline, the late hours had brought us to a simple script mark for EFV. It seemed good. But then we realized even though it's simple, it's not simply distinctive.

We began adding. Added a little character. A little 'unlike others' factor. And there we were, the new EFV. We were satisfied. For now at least.

◀ From Top Left: Logo Analysis and Construct. Typography. Proposed Monotone Packaging Paper. Brand Colors. New EFV Seal Construct



**Subtract the obvious.
And add the meaningful.**

That's the hard journey towards achieving simplicity. That's also the simple answer to one of the toughest question a designer is often asked; *how do you know when to stop?*

Not at a deadline. Not after you have put in enough days, nights and what's in between. You stop only when there's nothing left to takeaway. Only when there's nothing left to add.

◀ **From Top Left:** Proposed Stationery Design and Packaging Concept.

Craft is not execution. The carefully kerned type, the neatly tilted layout, are all just means. For me, the real craft lies in identifying the problem. Articulating the true need. And putting in blood, sweat and a limb into solving it by the best means possible. *Craft is responsibility.*



Project #3

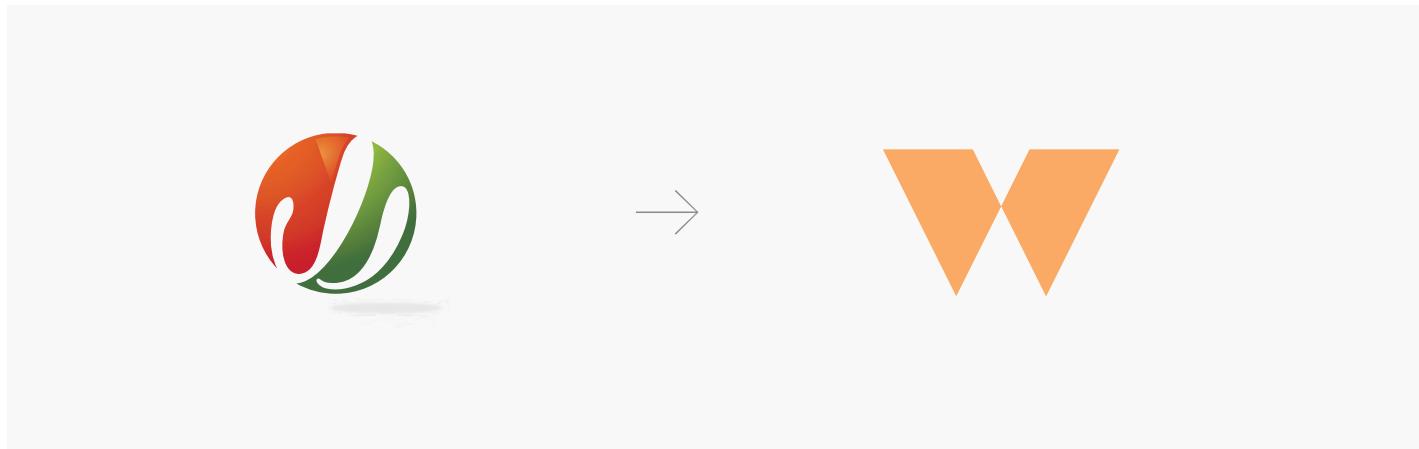
Wasabi Rabbit

Rebrand

Wasabi Rabbit is not a client.

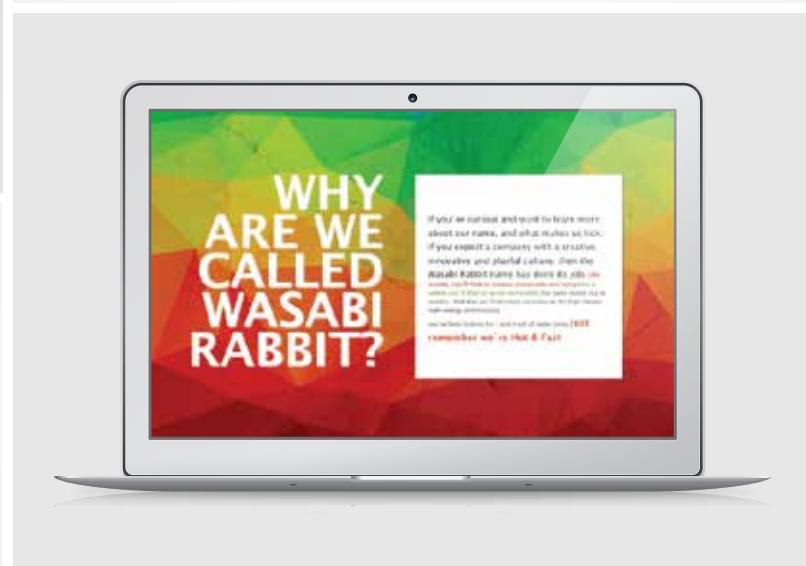
It's where I work. Wasabi Rabbit merged with my former company Barnum Design.

A new entity was born. A new identity was required. So began the process of *designing distinctiveness*.



▲ Wasabi Rabbit BrandMark: Before & After

▼ Old Wasabi Rabbit Look (Pre-Merger)



Wasabi Rabbit literally meant ‘hot & fast’. It was unique, but that’s where the fun ended. Add to that a vague tagline; Daring. Driven. Delicious. - and we didn’t have much.

The old logo was a floating ball of red and green leaves where the negative space made a lazy attempt to look like rabbit ears, three ears to be precise, just so it could double up as ‘w’. The logotype tried too hard to say nothing. So it all added up to a big nothing.

But then there’s got to be something to a brand that underwent a merger and grew almost 200%. We were insistent on finding that something. Things were beginning to ‘wasabi’ up.

◀ From Top Left: Wasabi Rabbit BrandMark Before / After, Old Business Cards, Old Logo, & Power-Point Presentation Slides

WASABI RABBIT HELPS YOU

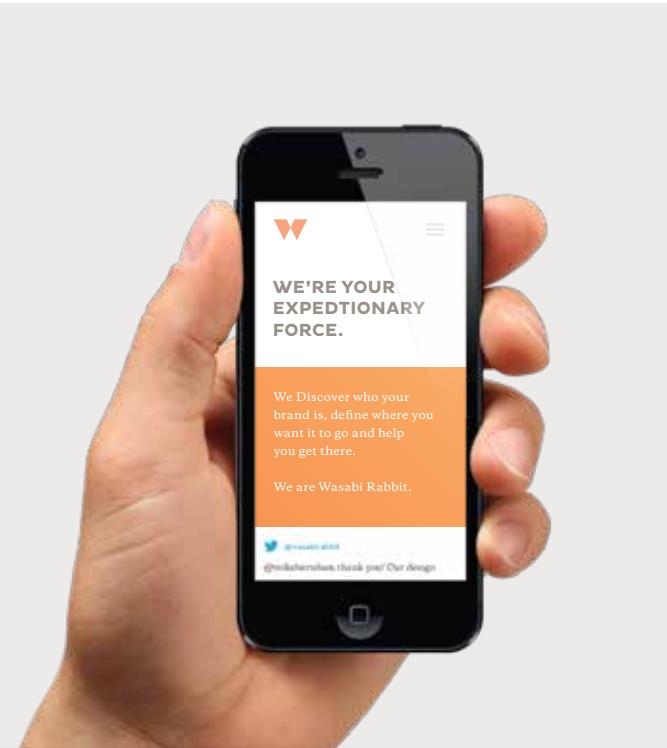


DISCOVER OPPORTUNITIES



ATTEN-SHUN!

We are proud
to be a *veteran-owned*
company



Wasabi Rabbit was more than a funky name. In fact that became one of our first objectives for designing the identity. Downplay the name, project the purpose.

Strategic ambiguity is a concept I had learned about, and we applied that concept to create an abstract mark that represented more than the name. An identity system that enabled the mark to be used independent of the name. A mark that helped us discard the old and instill a new vibe to the Wasabi Rabbit identity



WASABI RABBIT 



◀ **New Wasabi Rabbit Look:** Top Line Messaging. Brand Mark Tone of Voice. Responsive Web Design. New Presentation Slide. Primarily Logo Lock-up and Business Cards.

Brand Type



“Chaos often breeds life, while order breeds habit.” – Henry Adams

Brand Personality Attributes

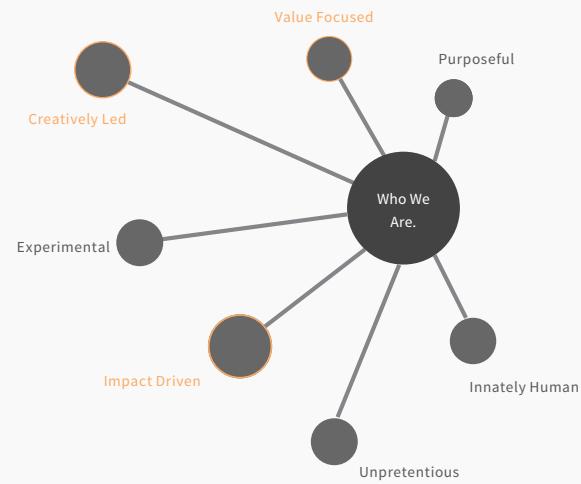


Curious	Authentic	Effective	Agile
Entrepreneurial	Friendly	Invested	Lean / Flat
Ambitious	Ethical	Collaborative	Fast Moving
Audacious	Responsible	Responsive	Refreshing
Optimistic	Professional	Energetic	Cool
Creative	Confident	Fun / Playful	Bright
Tactful	Empathetic	Inspiring	Lust-Worthy
Inventive	Reliable	Aspirational	Hot & Fast
Smart	Rational	Delightful	

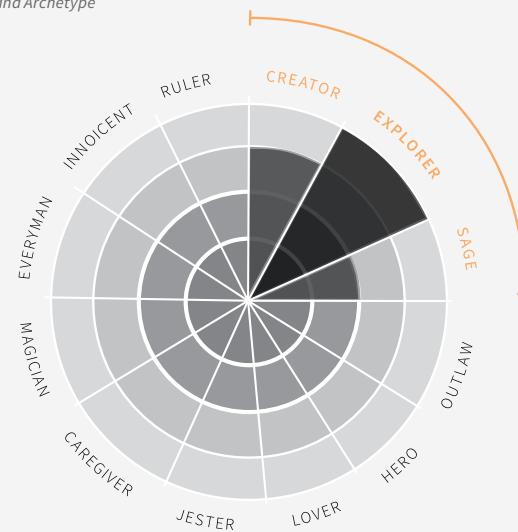
We were thorough. From re-crafting our offering to arriving at the brand brief through our brand opener methodology. From defining the brand personality to applying ideas of brand archetypes. Phew! We were getting somewhere.

We had found words to our purpose. We had found the new Wasabi Rabbit - *Impact Driven, Value Focused, Purposeful, Creatively Led, Experimental and Innately Human.*

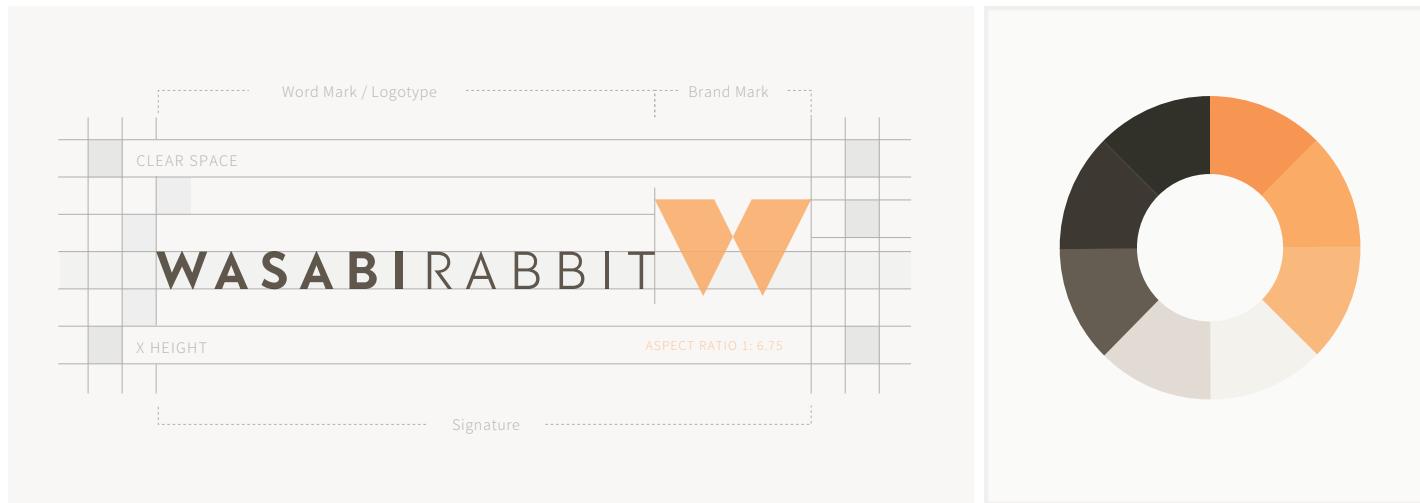
Brand Attributes



Brand Archetype



◀ Brand Discovery Process: Excerpts from the Wasabi Rabbit brand discovery process.

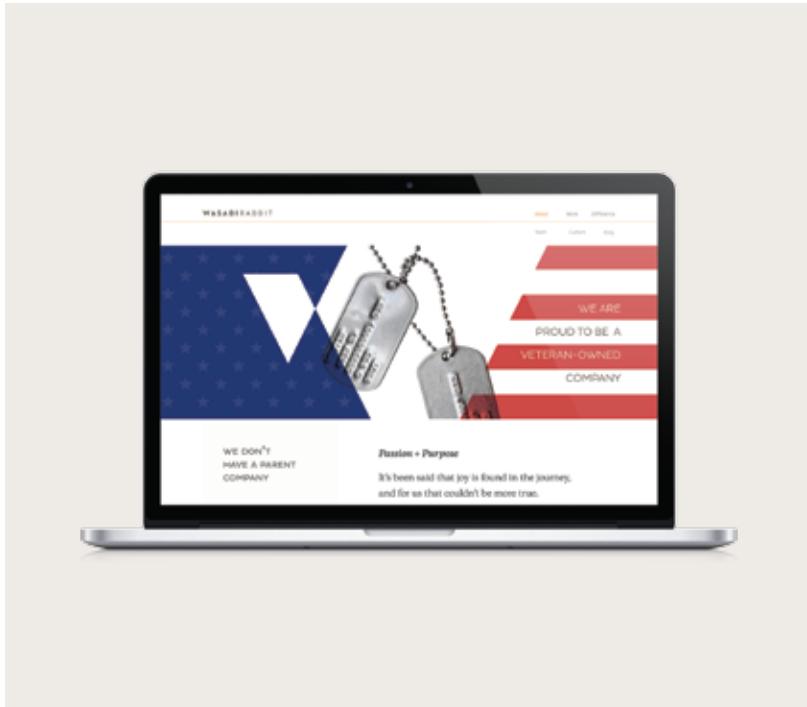


The Logo: A solid 'W'. Sharp edges, defined angles and calculated proportions. But it wasn't rocket science. It was a solid 'W'. Simple, rather clear. Just like the new Wasabi Rabbit; Diligent, Focused, and Committed.

Once we had the solid 'W' in place we began to play with it. No puns No gimmicks. No nonsense. Just a fresh coat of paint. A logotype that aptly complimented the brandmark. We were set.

We crafted a basic lockup for formal applications. But kept the door slightly ajar for individual expressions

◀ **From Top Left:** Primary Logo Lock up, Brand Colors Typography & Letterhead Design Construct.



Rebranding is uniquely challenging.

More so when you are your own client. And this was one of the most important lessons learned—*Culture is the brand equivalent to an internal audience.*

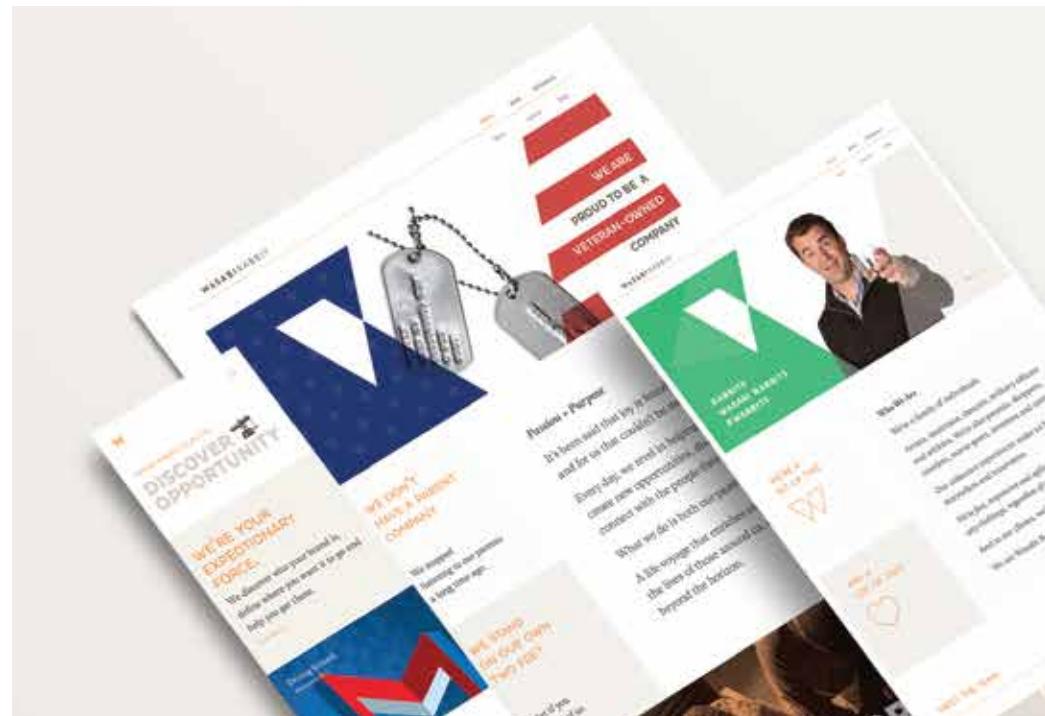
We redesigned how Wasabi Rabbit looked and revamped what we said. We set the tone for how we want the world to see us. But we are yet to translate it into our true identity. We are yet to live our brand—create a culture that aligns with our vision of the brand. Hopefully we'll get there. but for now, just like the branding process, *we're all a work in progress.*

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

*Dynamic Content
Explorative Experience
& Editorial Approach*

SIMPLE NAVIGATION

*About-the who
Work-the what & how
Difference-the why*



◀ **Responsive Website Design:** Responsive Web Showcase, Website Design Principles and Primary Navigation, Responsive Web Screens.

Branding is a perpetual process of change.

An on going effort to connect and reconnect with your audience. And there's no absolute formula.

It's like working on a dream, a hunch. A belief in a better product. A belief in a better future. And its easier to design the future if you can visualize it.

If you believe it, you can see it.



Project #4

Sysomos Inc

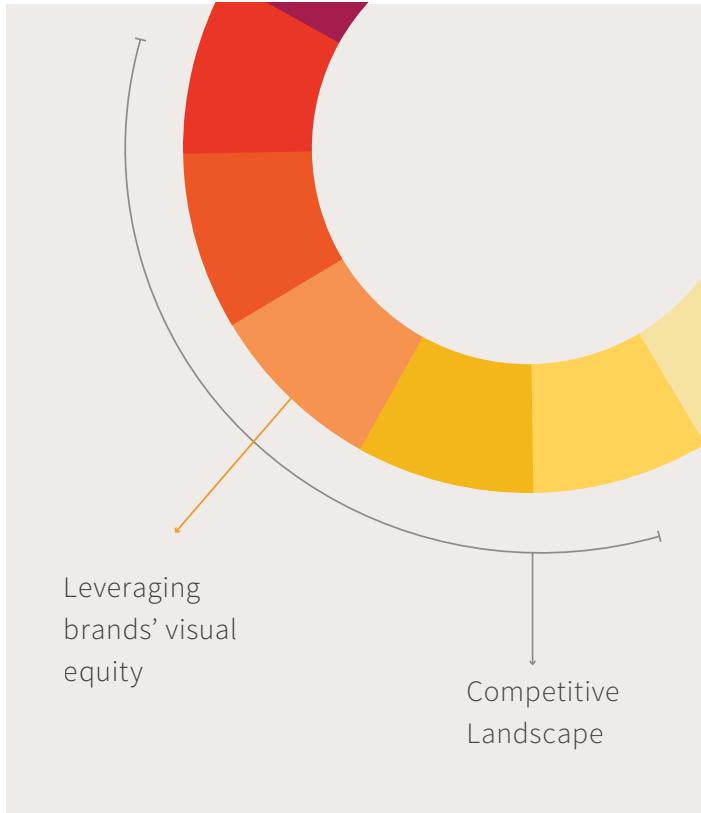
Rebrand?

Once there was a media analytics company. Toronto-based. I must add. Then they were acquired. And Sysomos lost its identity.

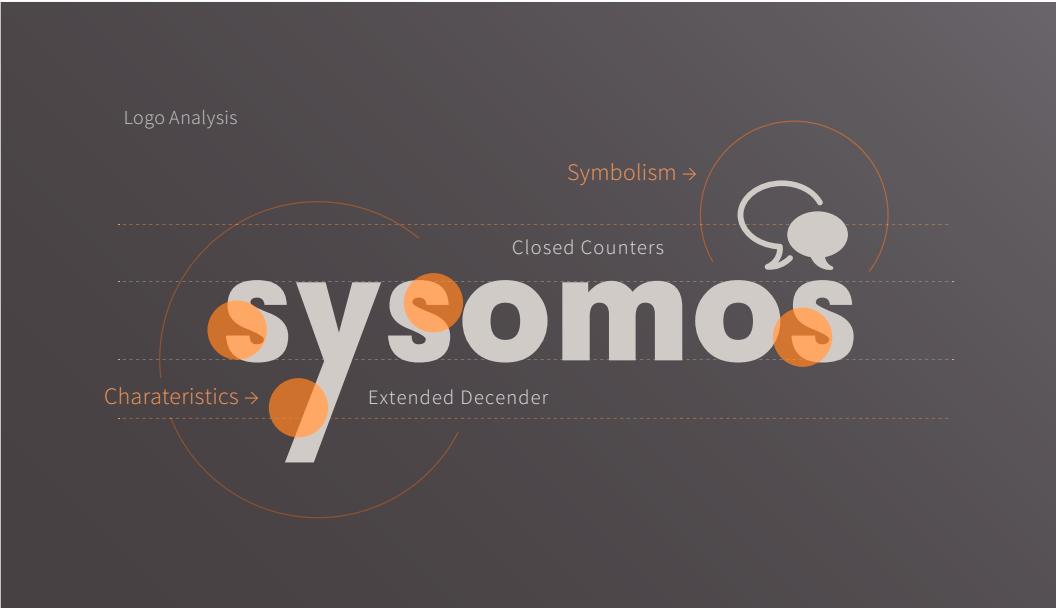
This is the story of how we helped Sysomos rediscover itself. And like a good story it ends with a twist.



BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA



Sysomos offers innovative social media monitoring tools that deliver actionable data and help you make better decisions.

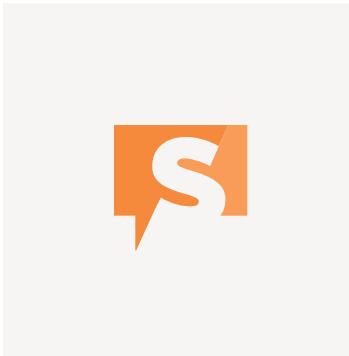
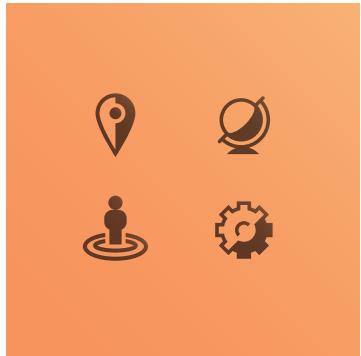


There are problems. Then there are wrong problems.

A wrong problem begins when there's more focus on illogical corporate ego flattering than logical problem solving. Which in this case led to people ignoring the existing equity of the brand and trying to overhaul just for the sake of rebranding.

Rebranding was the wrong problem. Designing a complete new logo was unwarranted. What Sysomos really needed was a refresh. A nudge towards the new-age, a tweak to align it with its new found voice - the newer, bolder Sysomos.

From Top Left: Old Sysomos Logo. Deconstructing logo colors. Brand Symbol. Primary Brand Message and Logo Analysis.



Sysomos
envisions a world
in which the
voice of customers
is not only heard
by brands, but
becomes a
driving force



As bad as the old logo was, it still had a strong equity.

We shred the old logo one element at a time- the color, the shape - until we found its individualit'y'. The long extended descender of the 'y' in Sysomos.

Crafting each character, opening the counters, simplifying the strokes, we realized, the word-mark would not cut it on its own, we needed more.

We re-crafted the speech bubble converting it to a holding shape. And turned the weakest element in the old identity to the strongest element in the new one. The new extended 'y' snapped just perfectly to align to its tail while aptly popping up the word mark.

◀ **From Top Left:** New Sysomos Look. Web Mockups and Updated Iconography. Revived Brand Purpose & New Sysomos Logo.



You win some. You learn some.

Here comes the twist. The project never got released.

So why do I still consider this project worthy enough? Cause I didn't win, but I learnt. I saw what others didn't. I backed my instincts and was pretty happy with the results.

What did I learn?

That it's not okay to assume that rebranding routinely demands a new logo. I am glad Sysomos didn't end up using any of our logos. Because Sysomos never really needed a new logo. What it really needed was new thinking.

So that's the Sysomos story. And in the end we all lived happily ever after.



◀ From Top Left: Visual Graphics Style.

Employee ID Mockup & Product Dashboard Mockup.

Graphic design speaks for your eyes to hear. It's all about communicating big ideas with delightful simplicity. The quest for a distinct, imaginative message chiselled to its purest form. Designed for that ultimate rush. *From your eyes to your mind.*

Brand Identity, Graphic Design & Art Direction.

Not-so-New *yet* Noteworthy

A curious selection of graphics designed while working on varied projects. Some were designed to serve as landmarks, some are typographic experiments and some I created just for the love of graphic design. All share the same intent—to communicate ideas and ethos through visual narratives utilising brand identity, graphic design and art direction.



Wasabi Rabbit + Barnum: Merger Announcement

This is all about communicating a big idea with delightful simplicity. The graphic was inspired by a question that we asked during our re-brand discovery process—How do we communicate 1+1=4?. And we found the answer in the question itself. The graphic aptly supported the communication hinting at the merger of equals.





Brand Identity Concept *for* ONE WE STAND

Born of the passion to empower people, *One We Stand* aspires to create a culture that unites the creators of a generation through fashion. The brandmark simply embodies this bold and audacious idea to create a sense of belonging. A sense of camaraderie and citizenship.





Brand Identity *for* BITE SIZE KITCHEN

Bite Size Kitchen is a belly-driven community where all lovers of food—from highly trained chefs to toast burners and aspiring caterers, are encouraged to gather, learn, share and grow, together. The logo simply brings together the letters of its name to suggest a collective united by the love of food.





Graphic Concept *for* Photo-Retouching Artist - ROHIT

Some pictures are worth a thousand words. Yet when my long time friend asked me to help him design his portfolio, I set out to create a picture that said just one word- ROHIT. From conceptualizing a graphic concept to art directing his portfolio we created a visual language that ultimately needed very little words.





Resolute Racing | Website / iPad App Graphics

Resolute is driven by the mission to create the best racing shells, combining the experience of seasoned athletes with superior engineering expertise. The recrafted Z4 helped align more than the graphic forms. It defined a point of clarity and that paved the path for a complete brand alignment.



GRAPHICS

Brand Mark Design *for* INTERNATIONAL GRAPHICS INC

International Graphics Inc. manufactures and distributes adhesive based products for sign, screen and digital printing. Inspired by their very products, the brand mark mimics its cylindrical shape. The negative space subtly illustrates a pencil point/cutting blade creating a distinct connection to craft of sign making.





Identity & Graphic Concepts *for* IRFU - RUGBY INDIA

This is a rather recent pro bono work wherein I have been helping the Indian Rugby Football Union to updated its visual identity and rework their existing graphics. The concepts are still work-in-progress. And it has been a great learning and rewarding experience to see design make a difference.



I believe there is a little
designer in each one of us.
As curious beings we all seek
to solve interesting problems.
*The questions we ask, shape
the things we make.* We explore,
wonder, discover and learn.

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