

Creating an Image or Brand

Why is your team image important?

What makes a strong team image?

How to maintain your team image?

The image of your team includes (but is not limited to) your team name, logo, colors, shirts and mascot. While this is a robotics competition, team image is very important for several reasons.

1) It's how you'll be presenting yourself to your community and your sponsors

A good team brand makes it easier for people in the community to remember who you are.

2) It's how judges and other FIRST teams will remember you

With thousands of teams in FIRST it's hard to differentiate yourself and easy to get lost in the crowd. Your team image is the easiest way to make yourself stand out. If you are a new(er) team, creating a strong team image from the beginning is a great way to build a reputation.

For example, at competitions, judges deliberate over 30-90 teams and after a while, the robots start to look the same and numbers start to blend together. Having a unique and memorable image helps set yourself apart for the judges.

Team Name

Here are some guidelines to think about when picking a team name:

1) Uniqueness

Make sure your team name is unique or catchy so people will remember you.

2) Keep It Appropriate

Having a funny team name is fine, but keep in mind that people will refer to you either by your team number or your name. Keep asking yourself "Do I want people calling me/us this?". You also don't want to incorporate something that can be viewed as offensive.

3) It's okay to incorporate school mascot(s) into your name

Some of the best names in FIRST have incorporated a school mascot ("Simbotics" from Governor Simcoe Secondary School or "Wildstang" from the Wheeling High School Wildcats and the Rolling Meadows High School Mustangs). However, if your school's mascot is a common mascot, it's probably not the best idea. For example, there are many teams who use "Eagle" in their name.

Logo Design

1) Keep your logo 100% vector art

There are two different types of electronic art: Raster and Vector. Raster is an array of

pixels that are colored to make shapes. Vector is a collection of vectors or lines that are used to create shapes. The difference is that Raster artwork cannot be scaled without losing image quality since you're stretching the pixels that make up the artwork. Vector art can be scaled since you're scaling vectors.

Vector art can be cut into vinyl for decals and banners, transfers to shirts easily and can be scaled to whatever size you desire without distorting the logo.

2) Think about colors

Keep in mind how many colors you're using. Often times when making shirts, printed items, etc. you're being charged by the number of colors. For example, when printing shirts each color is usually charged as a different setup. So having a four color shirt, increases your shirt cost quickly. Unless you're planning on ordering a lot of shirts at one time, this is probably not very cost effective.

The Birth Of The Holy Cows

Team 1538 formed in the Fall of 2004. At first we didn't know the importance of marketing our team. So when it came time to pick a team name, the students on Team 1538 went to BandNameMaker.com and picked the first thing that popped up, which was "A Fistful of Motors". We created logos, banners, giveaways and went through our first and only event that year using the name. After the competition, and seeing teams like Team 64 (The Gila Monsters) and Team 60 (The Bionic Bulldogs) and Team 987 (The High Rollers) we realized that "A Fistful of Motors" wasn't going to cut it as a permanent team name.

There were several marketing mistakes we made our first year:

1. What do you do for a logo for "A Fistful of Motors"?
2. Besides buttons, what do you give away that's relevant to "A Fistful of Motors"?
3. The "A Fistful of Motors" logo was part vector/part raster. This made using the logo in some areas very difficult.
4. Because of #1 when the logo was printed on our shirts the vector part looked good, but the raster part came out a little fuzzy looking
5. Because of #1 when we made our banner, the vinyl cutter could only read the vectors. This left us making a simple banner with black text on a white background that read "A Fistful of Motors / Team 1538 / High Tech High". Not very catchy.

Coming into the next season it was decided that we wanted to re-brand ourselves. This meant a new team name, a new logo - the whole nine yards. It was like being a rookie all over again. We started off brainstorming names on a white board. By the end of the class we had a whiteboard full of about 40 names. Some of the names were good, some not so good:

- "Rasta Robotics" - Too much left up to the imagination here.
- "Brass Monkeys" - Naming your team after an alcoholic beverage is not a good idea.
- "The Funky Monkeys" - Not bad, it would have worked.
- "Free and Reduced Lunch" - Sort of an inside joke. Not entirely appropriate and worse to market than "A Fistful of Motors"

Just before we started cutting down the list, someone came into the room, looked at the board and said “Holy Cow! That’s a lot of names!” just for the fun of it we added “The Holy Cows” to the list. Our final three ended up being:

- “The Funky Monkeys”
- “Free and Reduced Lunch”
- “The Holy Cows”

In a final vote, “The Holy Cows” won out and the name stuck. The next step was to pick our team colors, create a logo, a new website, a new banner, etc.

The key is that we’ve made an effort to keep our brand consistent throughout the years. People began to know us by our name, our logo or some other visual identifiers. Keeping these consistent year after year helps people remember who we are.