

GAP INC.

CASE STUDY



LOGO REBRANDING 2010

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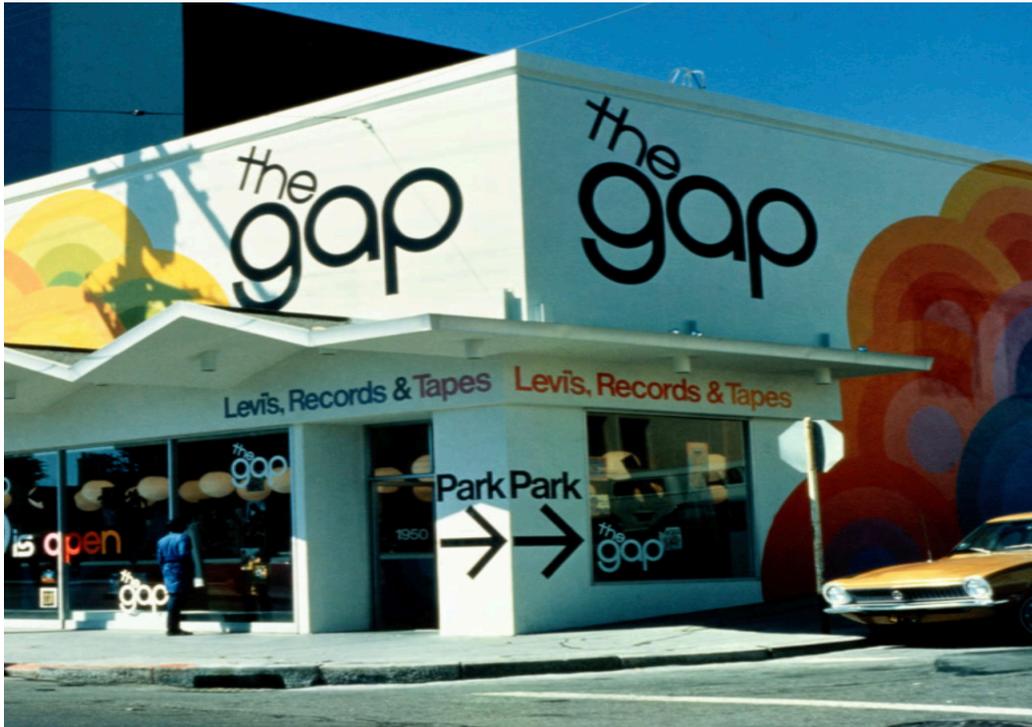


Image 1. The Gap first store. Store Front. Source: [Gap](#).

Before the 2014 Samsung's #gagate, there was the original #gagate in 2010. On October 6, 2010, Gap unveiled its new logo to promote a modern brand. [Bill Chandler](#), VP of Corporate Communications, stated, "We believe this is a more contemporary, modern expression." And so, an example of how not to rebrand your logo case study began.

[Gap Inc.](#) started as "the gap" store in 1969 with the promise to do more. The store sold jeans (Levi's), records, and tapes. Now, owns seven brands: Gap, Old Navy, Banana Republic, Athleta, Intermix, Janie and Jack, and Hill City. Their commitment has grown as well; they want to champion global equality, inclusivity, and sustainability. Additionally, their first logo, the gap— in rounded lower case letters— was replaced in 1988 by their iconic blue square Gap logo. See Images 1 and 2.

The company has evolved and learned from mistakes, not only from rebranding but in their business practices. In 2007, Gap Inc was involved in a [child labor scandal](#). Allegedly, the contractor they employed subcontract the work to a New Delhi "sweatshop" using children to embroider the garments. In her book No Logo, Naomi Klein explained how Gap seems genuinely embarrassed about their mistakes —even if they were indirect— unlike Nike (368). The latter continue to use marketing campaigns to move forward. Gap's rebranding decision may have started because of this incident.



Image 2. Gap iconic blue square logo. Source: [Gap](#).



“Under no circumstance is it acceptable for child, forced or trafficked labor to be employed within our operations or used in the production of any Gap Inc. product.”

~ Gap Inc [public commitment against child labor.](#)

In 2010, Gap unveiled its new logo, a “modern” version of its old logo. People reacted quickly through [social media](#), and the verdict was final: people were displeased by the new logo. See Image 3.



Image 3. Gap infamous 2010 logo. Source: [The Big Picture](#).

A logo is something people invest in, just like the brand does. People identify with brands through their logo and the emotions it evokes in them. [Steven Heller](#) explained that “A logo really is supposed to have a timeless quality to it, and the ones that don’t work very well are those that are just linked to a particular moment in place in time.” In this regard, the blue square Gap logo has that timeless quality, and people identify with it.

Gap, at the time of the rebranding, was trying to come out of recession. A change in their image might have been what they thought they needed. However, their customers had disagreed. A [research study](#) by VistaPrint showed that 74% (out of 2,000 Americans) think “look and feel” can make or break a brand. This data would explain why the uproar with Gap’s rebranding. Furthermore, “42% say that it tells the brand’s personality, as well as the type of product provided (40%) and the quality (39%).”

Marketing expert [Craig Smith](#) explains that marketers often recommend changing a brand’s visual identity to make a move in their customer base. However, that change does not represent the brand but a marketing move that eventually does not translate well with the customers. A move as the one Gap Inc did.

[Gerard Huerta](#) explains that for a logo to represent a brand properly, it needs to have a consistent style to communicate the tone and values. After the logo-fail and the sweatshop scandal, Gap Inc changed or restructured its values and business practices. Its business model now includes equality and belonging, gender equality and empowerment, and sustainability. Further, they have developed a [proprietary customer data platform](#) (CDP) that helps them power data-driven personalized marketing initiatives, in line with their promise of being “[inclusive, by design.](#)”

In a sans serif font with a small blue square behind the p portraying a “move forward,” the infamous logo got discarded in six days. Indeed, it was a risky move. In addition, during that week, the company did a crowdsourcing design campaign, asking the public for help to design their logo. The public responded by submitting their design to Gap and [third parties](#) who hold contests on their own.

None of those designed represented the spirit of the company, nor what it means to their customers.

Of course, the result was as expected, and the company returned to its iconic blue square logo.

Granted, the change in the logo was significant, but the visual design didn’t evoke the emotions and feelings of a brand that represented (then) almost forty years of trust. The logo itself was not scalable, nor the colors showed the sophistication of a clothing brand. The font was okay, considering that it was bolder and had more legibility. However, without the small overlapped blue square, a version of that logo is used as a tag in some of their clothing. See Image 4.



Image 4. Gap clothing tag. Source: [Business Insider](#).



Image 5. Gap iconic blue square logo with smoother edges. Source: [Gap Twitter..](#)

The logo was not memorable, or it was for the wrong reasons. As stated earlier, it didn't represent the spirit of the brand or company. The colors, while the black, show sophistication, the blue square cancels it. The blue color in the square is not solid but a gradient of a toned-down "Gap Blue." The logo as a whole was not bad, but the square did not have a place there. Perhaps if they had just used the new fonts and instead of black, they used a "Gap blue," their customers could have embraced the logo.

The problem with the iconic blue logo is that the letters were made for print and not for the digital era, so it needs to have the adaptability to small square spaces for picture profiles in social media or favicons on websites. The fonts on the infamous logo had that adaptability.

It is worth noting that the iconic blue logo changed slightly, something not noticeable, but it did. The logo, adapted to the digital era, now sports bolder and smooth edges font —almost imperceptible to the eye. See Image 5. The letters are rounder and fuller, more adaptable, and scalable for digital spaces.

This case of a failed rebranding provides insights into what a brand should do and do not do when attempting to modernize its brand. The change of a logo, especially one recognizable by their customer base, should be thought about thoroughly. Moreover, the brand should consider rebranding from the inside out. For example, Gap modernized its values and updated its vision, making it a more inclusive brand and has proven a better marketing device than changing the logo. Further, catering [personalized content](#) for their customers has a better response from the public.

