

Project Profile:

NERA Economic Consulting Corporate Rebrand

Date: April 2009 - March 2010

NERA Creative Director: Arthur Schening

For most of NERA's early years the firm did not have a professional marketing staff. The lack of a dedicated marketing staff resulted in the firm's brand not being a high priority. In 2009 a group of 3 marketing managers and 2 designers was tasked with completing a rebrand of the firm. I was the creative director, and main designer assigned to the rebrand. The first step in the project was to hire a firm to conduct market research of NERA's industry sector – economic consulting. The findings were that NERA generally had a strong reputation, but so did most of the main competitors. There was little to differentiate NERA from the top-tier consulting companies. NERA, like many of the firms in the sector, did not have a strong visual brand. The existing look did little to convey the firm's capabilities, was unmemorable, and appeared dated. A new look would help differentiate NERA, and better communicate the company's attributes. *See samples of pre-rebrand designs left.*

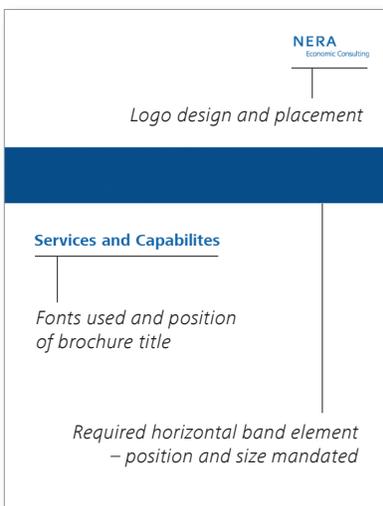
Goals for the New Look

The main goal of the visual portion of the rebrand was to create a clean, and compelling visual identity that stands out from the competition. The new look needed to help convey the firm's ability to make complex economic analysis understandable, and should communicate that NERA is different – the focus on economics, NERA's stable of internal testifying experts, the quality of its work, etc. The redesign also needed to comply with NERA's parent company design guidelines and visual constraints, which were substantial.

Design Constraints

NERA's parent, Marsh & McLennan companies (MMC), requires all of their operating companies to follow a set of visual standards. The fonts used, the design of company logos, color palettes, and some layout guidelines, are mandated by the parent company. The sample, *left*, outlines the various constraints for a typical brochure cover. The design options for the new look had to comply with these guidelines and still be compelling and visually distinctive.

MMC Design Constraints





NERA's New Look: "Illumination"

Several design options for the Rebrand were created, refined, and presented to the company's management committee. The look that was selected was intended to portray NERA as a "bright light" that stands out in a field of seemingly similar firms. The illumination concept conveys that while firms in NERA's business sector may seem similar at first glance, NERA is different. NERA "illuminates" complex issues, and "outshines" its competitors. The different patterns of cubes represent data, statistical formulas, and the complexity of the subject matter NERA works with. The look is also visually compelling, it is highly distinctive in NERA's industry sector, and it supports their goal of being a recognized leader. Any collateral piece with this look would be immediately recognized as NERA. *See samples of the new NERA brand left.*

Creating the Look

After the "illumination" option was selected, the look was refined based on comments from the management committee. The Illumination concept included numerous cube patterns, about 20, which needed to be designed and rendered. A found image was used as a basis for the cubes concept, but with numerous refinements to the original. An illustrator was hired to render the various cube patterns based on sketches created by NERA. When the look was given a final OK, templates for a large number of print and online materials produced by NERA, including brochures, fact sheets, seminar invitations, white papers, etc., were designed and created. The NERA Web site was also a large part of the rebrand. The Web site was recreated with new content, site architecture, navigation, page layouts and graphics. *See left.*

Responsibilities

As NERA's creative director my responsibilities during the rebrand project were:

- NERA Rebrand team member – brainstorming and refining the overall rebrand concept
- Creation and refinement of design options
- Ensuring compliance with the parent company visual guidelines
- Supervision of the junior design staff
- Hiring and art direction of the illustrator tasked with rendering 3D versions of cube sketches
- Creation of templates for all rebranded print and online materials
- Web site rebrand team – redesign and rethink of firm's Web site, how it worked, the navigation, content, etc.
- Consulted with Web site programming staff throughout build

