

The NER Marketing Committee has begun work on developing or updating new products and services for our members. Jeff Paston has already done a fantastic job updating the Coupler. David Abrames is beginning to lead the efforts to redesign the NER website. Barbara Hoblit is introducing social media by creating an NER Facebook presence. Every year offers a new NER convention, a new experience, hosted by a different division. The NER board is following a new governance model. Plus, there is a new strategic plan for the NER. With all of this change occurring, now is an opportune time to change the NER logo. And, now is the time to establish the NER brand in parallel with all the change that is occurring. The old NER logo is not flexible enough to accomplish this goal, as you will see in this document. Changing the logo is one of the most controversial things any organization or company can do. People do not like change. But, there are reasons that a logo should change. The text that follows discusses the current design complexity, the organization's brand, the design of the new proposed logo, and the flexibility and power it provides when used.



The old NMRA logo, embedded in the current NER logo, reflects the organization's early history in establishing standards in the hobby. Wheel profiles, coupler height, and track gauges are just some of those standards. But, you will notice that when NMRA National rebranded itself in 2010, they didn't update the old logo. Instead, they discarded it. The new logo focuses on the future with the website name and encompasses all model railroaders, regardless of era, by using something common with everyone: a profile of the wheel. The new logo also follows one of the fundamental design concepts a good logo needs: to keep it simple. Think about the Nike "swoosh", the McDonald's "M", or Apple's "apple". All are very simple. The old NMRA National logo was complex in design. It had a coupler and a wheel, forcing the viewers to see both. Many times, people did not see both. They often mistook the coupler for a wrench, for example. And, "NMRA" was buried inside of the logo and often overlooked. It was a collage. The current NER logo is also a collage, with the old NMRA logo, compass, and text. The new NER logo should not be an update of the old. Instead, the new logo should be simpler in design, versatile, and reflect an organization that is moving forward.

What should the new logo include in its design? The old logo has a compass. Should the new logo focus on "northeast?" Are we trying to attract anyone and everyone from the northeast? No. We are trying to attract model railroaders. The new logo should focus on railroading. The compass does not accomplish that and it is time to leave it behind. Instead, let's borrow the wheel profile from the new NMRA National logo.



What is our organization's brand? Believe it or not, our membership and board already have branded it. We refer to the NER Convention, NER Website, NER Coupler, and soon, we will refer to the NER Facebook page. We even refer to the NER logo. NER is our brand.



With the focus on railroading and the brand decided, a new logo can be created. You will notice in the new logo proposal, the wheel profile is flipped from NMRA National's. Showing it in the lead position reflects the organization as moving forward. The same City font, in bold, from the old NER logo is used, here. Unlike the old logo, the font is shown in italics. The italics also convey the forward movement of the organization. Plus, the font is very strong and reflects an organization that is strong. The rail from the NMRA National logo was extended to underscore the entire logo. The track helps solidify that the two partial circles are a railroad wheel. And, with the rail in place, the axle and hub are no longer needed, eliminating any controversy. The logo is in red, following the tradition of the old NER logo.

A second version of the logo, with text, will also be provided as part of a package. In some cases, only the logo may be needed. While in others, the logo needs to be augmented with text.



The beginning of this document mentions the need for a logo with flexibility. This is important for branding the communications, products, and services the NER provides. Every time the logo is used, it helps grow brand recognition for the NER.



As part of the branding effort, "The Coupler" should be renamed to "NER Coupler". The new name retains the historical tradition of the newsletter's name and simultaneously establishing it as a product of the NER. The design of the masthead appearing on the cover will need to be redesigned, however. Here is an example of how the new masthead could look. The coupler artwork is gone, since it is redundant with the coupler text and competes with the NER logo. However, with the NER logo, it immediately establishes the newsletter as a product under the NER brand.

Notice the flexibility the new logo design provides for the branding effort. This can be done for all other communications, products, and services the NER provides. The convention and Constant Contact emails are two other examples where NER branding is possible, today.

A convention may have a color scheme for its logo, banners, publications and other items. As part of the branding, the NER logo can be used with the word "convention", in one of the convention's primary colors. For example, the Empire Junction convention for 2019 has a maroon and yellow color scheme. The original banner produced has "NER Convention" at the top, in yellow. If the new logo and branding effort was already in place, the



banner would look like the example shown here, with the NER logo and “convention” in the same original convention yellow color.



This practice should also be extended to the Constant Contact masthead used in emails promoting the convention. Continuing with the 2019 convention, here is an example

of how it might look, with the convention logo and convention dates accompanying the “NER Convention” brand in the masthead.

For Constant Contact emails that keep the membership informed of other NER activity, a masthead should be created that also follows the branding effort. A suggested masthead is shown here, with the NER logo followed by “News”, using white text against a red background, traditional NER colors.



Like the old NER logo, the new NER logo incorporates the NMRA National Logo. It borrows the font and colors from the old NER logo. But, most of all, the new logo is exciting, forward moving, and versatile. Just like the NER.