CASE STUDY: Holderness

Holderness School

Holderness is a New Hampshire-based independent boarding school. Like many colleges and private schools, Holderness over the years had spawned a variety of marks, logos, color variations and fonts. The school retained CN and its branding unit to work with its leadership to enhance the school’s graphic identity and bring formality and order to its visual vocabulary. We organized the program into three phases:

Phase I
Research
Phase I consisted of in-depth interviews with administrators, faculty, students and alumni to benchmark perceptions of Holderness’s core attributes, values, and position in relation to other schools of its kind. It also involved measuring responses to the logos, graphics, typefaces and various shades of blue being used by the school.

Phase II
Core Institutional Identity Design
Based on research findings, we recommended the retooling of the school’s core institutional mark and color palette.

Phase III
School Pride/School Spirit Design
Phase III saw the development and application of a series of secondary graphics. These fell into two categories: first, sports and student life activities; and second, alumni communications.

This new visual communication and graphic standards system was developed and implemented over the course of a two-year period.
Inspired by the tiny image of a bull that stands atop the armor in the Holderness School seal, the bull has long been the school’s mascot — this is the first “formal visualization” of it in decades.

The Schoolhouse at the center of Holderness is the oldest building on campus, and its straightforward New England style reinforces the qualities and values at the heart of the Holderness experience and educational mission. The schoolhouse bell tower pictured within a compass symbolizes Holderness’s role in helping establish a “moral, intellectual and spiritual direction” for its students.

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The Holderness SKYLINE image was developed as a graphic for alumni communications and events, including banners for reunions as well as invitations and newsletters.

RESEARCH SHOWED THAT ALUMNI AND FRIENDS STRONGLY IDENTIFY WITH AND PICTURE IN THEIR MIND’S EYE THE SCHOOL’S PHYSICAL CAMPUS. THESE FINDINGS DROVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SKYLINE AND SCHOOLHOUSE/COMPASS IMAGERY.

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The Holderness BLOCK H derives its form from the Bauer Bodoni “H” in the school’s official logotype. The form of the Bauer Bodoni “H” has been altered — made bolder, shorter and chunkier — to transform it into an “H” appropriate for promotional applications. Examples: embroidered on caps, silkscreened on shirts, appliqued on banners, or applied to other kinds of gear like helmets or drums (marching band).

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The visual style of the TEAM NAME is based on classic typography long associated with scholastic and collegiate institutions. It’s also a style used over the years by Holderness on some team uniforms and apparel. This two-word type unit is often used in tandem with the Mascot.

THE SYMBOLS ABOVE WERE DESIGNED TO BRAND HOLDNESS SPORTS AND STUDENT-GROUP ACTIVITIES — AND TO EXPRESS HOLDNESS SCHOOL SPIRIT AND PRIDE. THEY APPEAR ON ITEMS LIKE UNIFORMS, BANNERS, APPAREL, CAMPUS STORE MERCHANDISE, ETC.