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Design Makeover

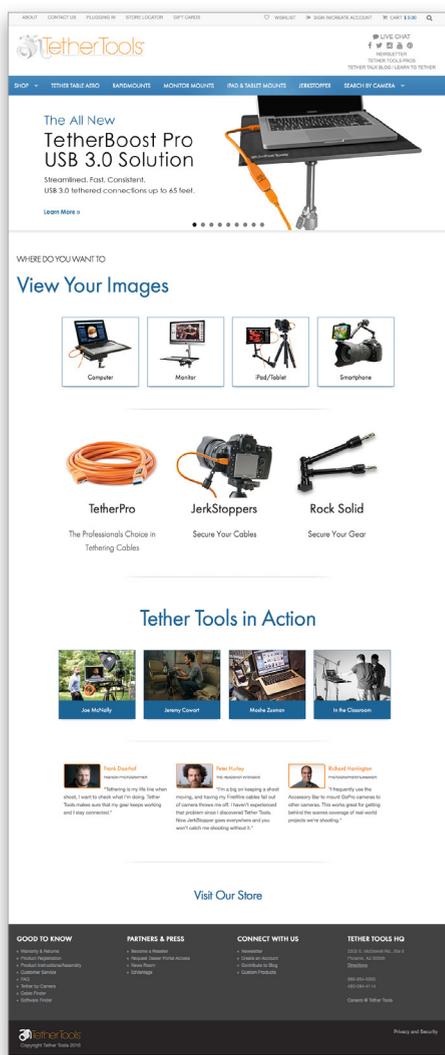
JAKE WIDMAN

CLIENT

Tether Tools
www.tethertools.com

tool time

[before]



Before

Tether Tools was founded by Josh Simons to address problems with which he saw photographers struggling. “I was working with some photographers in the local market, and I saw a lot of needs that weren’t being met when it came to tethering,” he recalls. “People were bringing large homemade tables out on location, and I thought there had to be a better way.” So Simons developed the Tether Table, which attached to standard tripods and light stands to provide a stable laptop platform.

From there, Simons saw the need for cables and extensions, and the company “kind of grew from there,” Simons says. Originally, the company designed and developed all of its own products. Eventually, Tether Tools also started offering arms and clamps made by other companies. “A lot of the infrastructure stuff is not original products,” he says, “but the end products—the cables, monitor mounts, and so on—are all original designs.”

Until this year, Tether Tools used a logo that was created early on, within the first two or three months. It incorporated the image of a digital SLR camera attached to a cable, which helped establish the company in the field. The company also had a website that Simons built himself. “It was makeshift at best,” he says. “Over time I got better at it.”

The site has gone through a few incarnations, but the company stuck with the same logo until Brian Trummel came on as Art Director in January 2016. Says Josh Kenzer, Director of Online Marketing, “Before Brian started, we didn’t have an in-house designer—we did everything outsourced. We’d never really thought about doing a rebrand using an outsourced designer.” But with Trummel on board, the company decided it was time to update the logo and the website.

makeover submissions

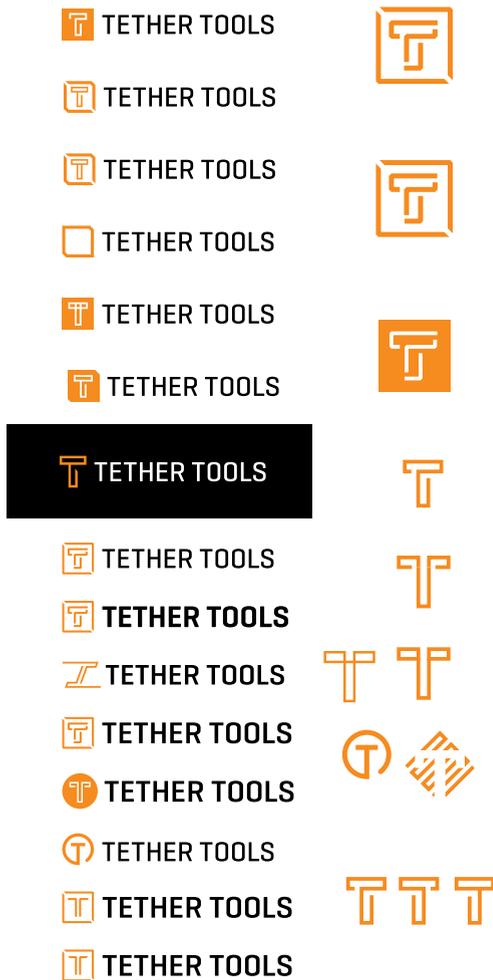
We’re looking for product packaging or labels, print advertisements, websites, and magazine covers that are currently in the marketplace for future “design makeovers.” So if you or someone you know has a design that you’d like us to consider making over, or if you’re a designer and you’d like to be considered for a future “Design Makeover,” send us an email at letters@photoshopper.com. (Note: This is purely a design exercise and the designers do not work directly with the client, create functioning websites, etc.)

We’ll also be covering real-world makeovers in this column, so let us know if you recently had a branding makeover or if you did a branding makeover for a client that you’d like us to consider.

CLIENT

Tether Tools
www.tethertools.com

[the problem]



Early logo concepts

► By 2015, Tether Tools knew that the brand could use a refresh. “We’d been talking about it for a year before we actually started the process,” says Simons. The website was not as user-friendly as it could be, and the logo was starting to be limiting. For one, the thin font meant it didn’t hold up very well for marketing—in banner ads on websites, on trade show booths, and so on. For another, the company had moved beyond its original tethered photography niche. “Over time, we found that our solutions have been accepted by the film community, the medical industry, the arts community, and even sports analytics,” says Simons. “So we felt that the camera image was limiting.”

The hiring of Trummel enabled the company to consider moving forward. “That was when we really started the process,” says Simons, “when we could do it in-house and really spend the time creating exactly what we wanted.”

“I started here in January,” says Trummel, “and I saw the opportunity to create a new look and feel for the company—to try to take it to the next level visually.” He saw the opportunity to build an identity that would be stronger and work well in different formats, as well as translate to different business arenas.

Specifically, says Simons, the company wanted the new logo to convey versatility and strength. “All our products are kind of like Tinkertoys in a way,” he says. “They all interchange with one another.” And a bolder font and logo would convey the strength of the products and the stability of the company. Finally, the new logo should have an element that could stand alone as an icon and be recognizable on the products and in different environments.

about the client

Tether Tools got started with the introduction of the Tether Table Premier. The table filled a need for photographers by providing a secure, stable platform to secure their laptop computer when shooting tethered. That was followed by the Tether Table Aero System, which is constructed completely of T6 Aerospace aluminum and designed to be a lightweight, versatile piece of photography equipment.

Today, Tether Tools designs and manufactures innovative workstations, mounting options for lighting and accessories, and power solutions for photographers and filmmakers shooting tethered both in studio and on-location. With tablet, laptop, monitor, phone, camera, and lighting mounts that integrate directly with your existing photography gear, Tether Tools continues to help photographers (and other imaging professionals) set their gear where they want it when they need it. Tether Tools produces the majority of its products in the U.S.A.

DESIGNER

Brian Trummel
www.tethertools.com

[the process]



Narrowing down the logo concepts

▶ Trummel started by putting together a concept board to show everyone at the company. The board included logo concepts (see previous page), as well as mockups for print ads, the website, packaging, and trade show displays. “I went through everything to give the team an idea where we could take the brand,” says Trummel.

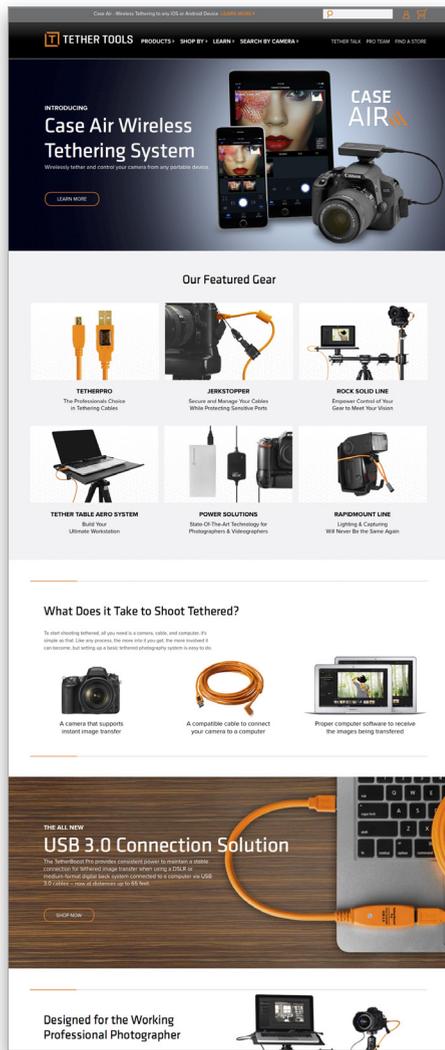
The company is known for its high-visibility cables, so Trummel knew from the start that orange and black were going to be his “heavy hitters” for color schemes. He also wanted to find a strong font that would look good from a distance.

Basing the icon on the *T* was an easy choice. “Tether Tools obviously has two *T*s in the name, so I wanted to make that the main centerpiece rather than a visual of a camera,” he says. He explored various treatments of the letter that made it look like a tool or a bracket, which called to mind the company’s signature product. Ultimately, though, “I had a desire to move forward with the solid *T* and the outer connecting brackets. I used the two brackets to show how the products could lock together.” The brackets also call to mind the process of focusing a digital camera. After trying a few different typefaces, he settled on Eduardo Manso’s Geogrotesque, softening the edges of the letter to offset its harshness a little bit.

For the website (see next page), Trummel used Adobe Photoshop to develop most of the main navigation pages and then turned them over to Kenzer to build. “I code all my stuff by hand,” says Kenzer. “Brian put everything in nice layers, and the layers were in folders, so I could just go in and pull out the graphical elements as I needed them.” Kenzer also used Adobe Typekit to help with the font rendering, rather than specifying all the type in pixel-based units.

DESIGNER
Brian Trummel
www.tethertools.com

[**the result**]



After

CLICK TO RATE ★★★★★

about the designer

Prior to joining Tether Tools, Brian Trummel spent four-and-a-half years as the art director for the Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau in Arizona, where he was responsible for directing, conceiving, developing, and producing print and online marketing materials. Prior to that, he was a founding partner at The Black Rhinos creative design studio in Phoenix, where he provided services for logo design, branding, collateral, and Web design.

Trummel says, "I've been built with a passion to create and see things come to life. This manifested itself into art school, sign shop labor, a junior designer, designing record covers and posters for friends' bands, becoming an art director for an indie record label, designing for a large lifestyle brand, hustling free-lance for years, creating my own product lines, and eventually leading me to work as in-house Art Director for Tether Tools. I'm constantly humbled and blown away by what others create and design—that's what inspires me to push myself every day." ■

▶ The final logo consists of an icon that can be paired with the company name in a range of versatile logo lockups—horizontal or stacked—while also having the strength to stand alone. The redesigned website launched in August, which is also when the new logo made its debut. "It all launched at the same time, though we had the logo planned months before," says Simons.

It's too early to get anything but anecdotal feedback on the results yet—it'll take a while to see if the more navigable website actually results in increased numbers of visits or conversions. Nevertheless, the anecdotal response has been good: "We've done one trade show recently in Germany and designed a full trade show booth," says Trummel. "That involved a lot of our dealers and distributors at the show. We got really positive feedback from them, and got some comments on social media."

"People are surprised we did it in-house," says Kenzer. Distributors impressed with the result have called the company to find out what agency they worked with. "They think it took a lot more people than it did."

As with any redesign, not everyone has taken to it right away. A few of the company's long-time dealers—especially ones in the photography field—have said they were sad at the loss of the old logo with the camera. But, says Kenzer, "To stay modern and stay relevant, you have to make changes."