

**A
TECH BRAND**

≡ THAT NEVER ≡

STANDS STILL

Lenovo™



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Chinese tech firms have gone up the industrial value chain in the past 20 years and the most prominent global expansion in the recent decade was that of Lenovo. Lenovo first created a stronghold in China and then expressed their desire to go global and tackle various hurdles along the way to success. This desire has materialized at unprecedented pace, and as a result today, Lenovo, is a reputable IT company with a vast international presence.

Lenovo's achievements today are grounded in its determination to grow into an international tech giant. It was noticed internationally when it acquired the non-profitable PC division of IBM in 2005. After a decade, the company has grown to become China's first true multinational, ranking before Dell and Hewlett-Packard. The top management of the company comprises of nine people from six different countries with a diverse experience of international markets. Apart from that Lenovo has evolved its brand image as well as its decision making process.

They have given up the autocratic approach in favor of the long-term Chinese focused strategy whereas, the western managers maintained focus on meeting quarterly targets. However, the merger of two diverse cultures in one organization brought some unprecedented challenges along with it.



The Cultural enigma

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The biggest challenge on the way to global expansion had been the cultural and managerial chaos. Initially, Lenovo was just an off-shoot of Chinese government research institute and their leadership had never operated beyond the Chinese soil. Despite all differences, they acquired the personal computer division of IBM in 2005 when they had only one member who spoke English. That was the beginning of Lenovo's self-discovery.



Beyond vocab

Despite making English the official language of the company, the two sides had real problems in understanding each other. Vocabulary or translation was not the real test, it was the underlying assumptions that the two sides could not simply comprehend. One of the most prominent problems arose from their inability to understand basic gestures. Both the US executives and Chinese officials did not know how to disagree with each other.

Whenever in a meeting the US executives needed approval from the Chinese officials, the response was “Shi, shi, shi” which means “yes, yes, yes”. However, the use of ‘shi’ was not always an agreement. In most instances, it meant “We hear you; please continue.” As it turns out, disagreement in public is not a part of Chinese culture, so they always did it in private. Although they were just trying to be polite, it infuriated the US executives because they were not familiar with this type of corporate culture.

The great ‘BIG BOSS’

At Lenovo managers cannot challenge a superior’s decision which was something incomprehensible for western managers. They were not expecting an autocratic leadership where everyone is on the panel just to execute the ideas of the great boss. However, all that changed when the company decided to hire a western executive as the CEO for which Yang Yuanqing, the former CEO became a non-executive Chairman.

The Set Back

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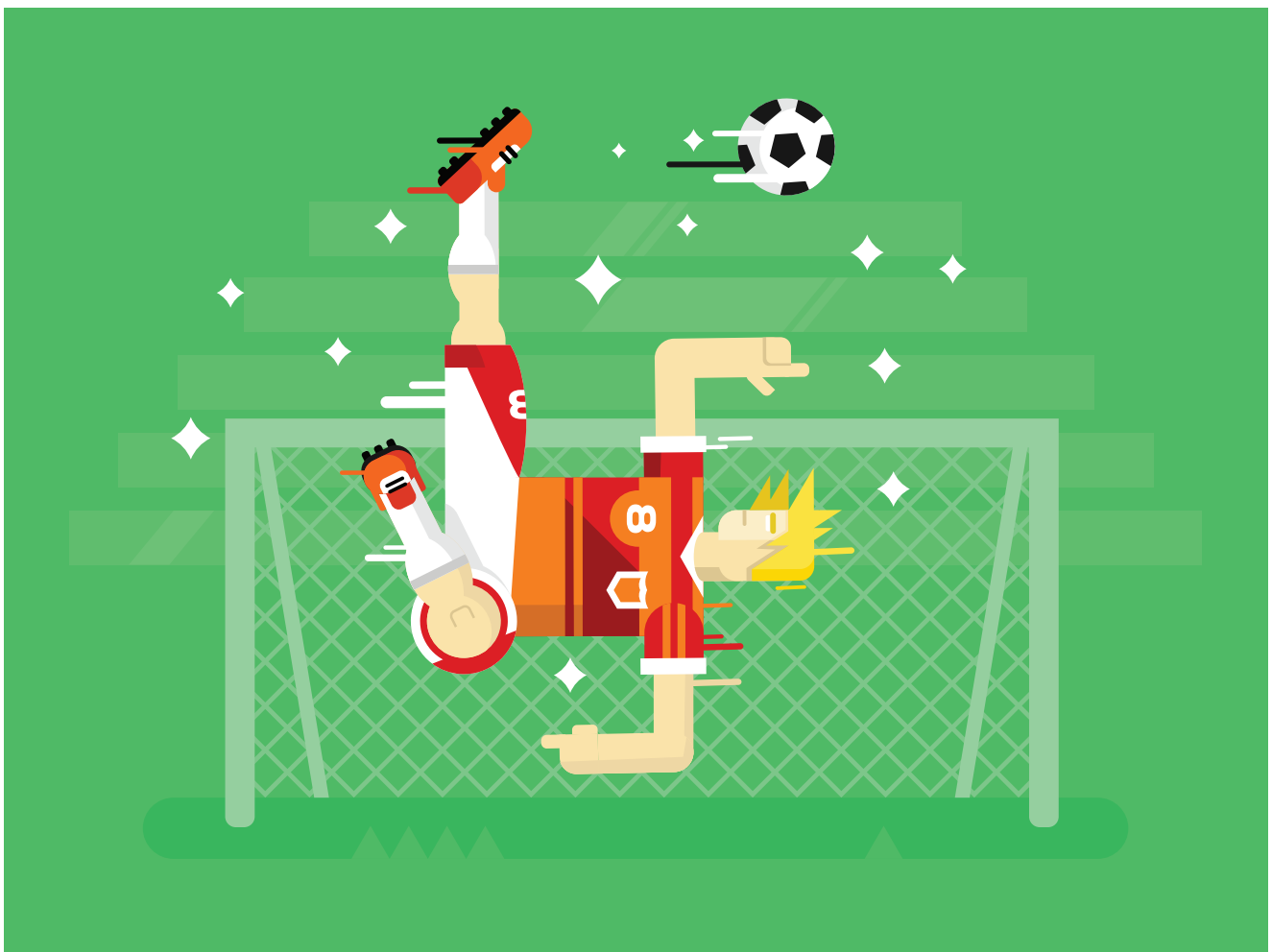
As it turned out, they were wrong to think any western manager would be an apt choice. The first appointed western CEO was Steve Ward, an IBM veteran whose days in the organization were numbered. Then came William J. Amelio who was desperate to implement Dell's way of running the organization. Though he was able to raise the annual sales, he couldn't contribute much to organization's culture. After the global shocks pushed the company in a profit losing quarter, he had to step down. This was the last stage of set-backs that the company faced. After this came a surge that changed the organization from inside out.

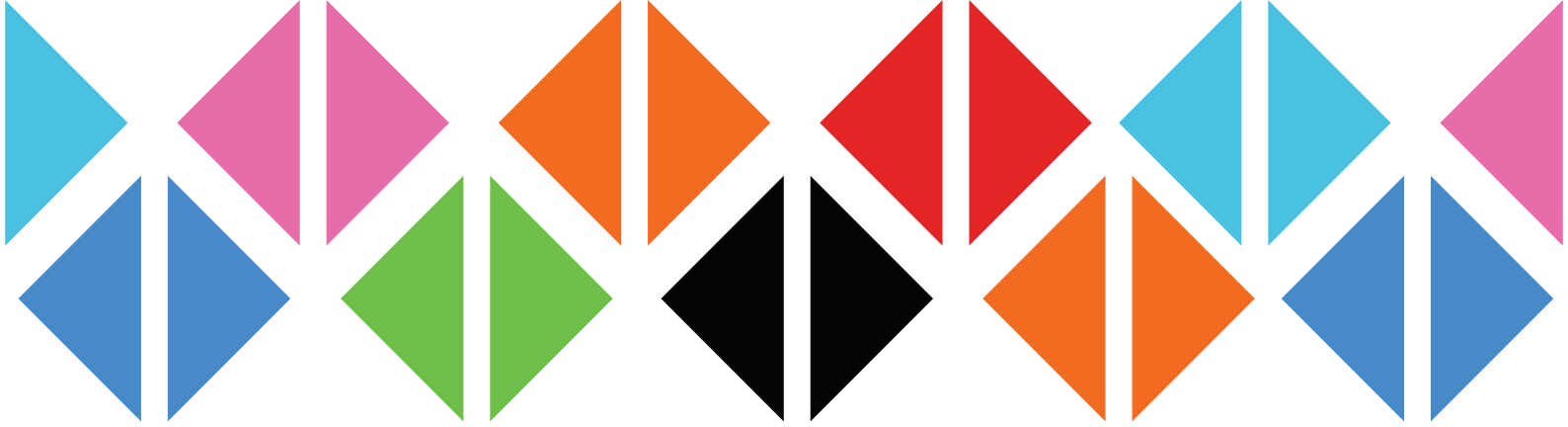


The Surge

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Team Lenovo never lacked talent or technical expertise. All they needed was a little push in the right direction. They finally got their spark back and the action words this time were adopted and inculcated by the CEO, Yang Yuanqing in 2011. He gave the 'protect and attack strategy' that seemed to blend nicely with the corporate culture and resonated with their immediate as well as long term objectives. The idea was to continue to expand and maintain Lenovo's lead in the PC market share in China while exploring new geographies and product divisions abroad.





This was a turning point for the organization because it enabled them to create and execute a consistent standard operating procedure across the board at different destinations. What really took the company off the ground was the introduction of innovative technologies starting 2010. It was the time when the felt need for mobile devices and smart phones was identified by Yang, the CEO.

The advancement and growth opportunities in consumer markets were also noticed by the senior management of the organization. The mobile devices, tablets and smart phones were named the “PC Plus” sector by Yang and following the ‘protect and attack’ strategy, the company intended to protect the PC sector and attack the PC plus sector. Lenovo is one of the first tech companies to recognize the importance of convertible products which of course explains the popularity of Yoga Ultrabook that can act as a Laptop and a Tablet.

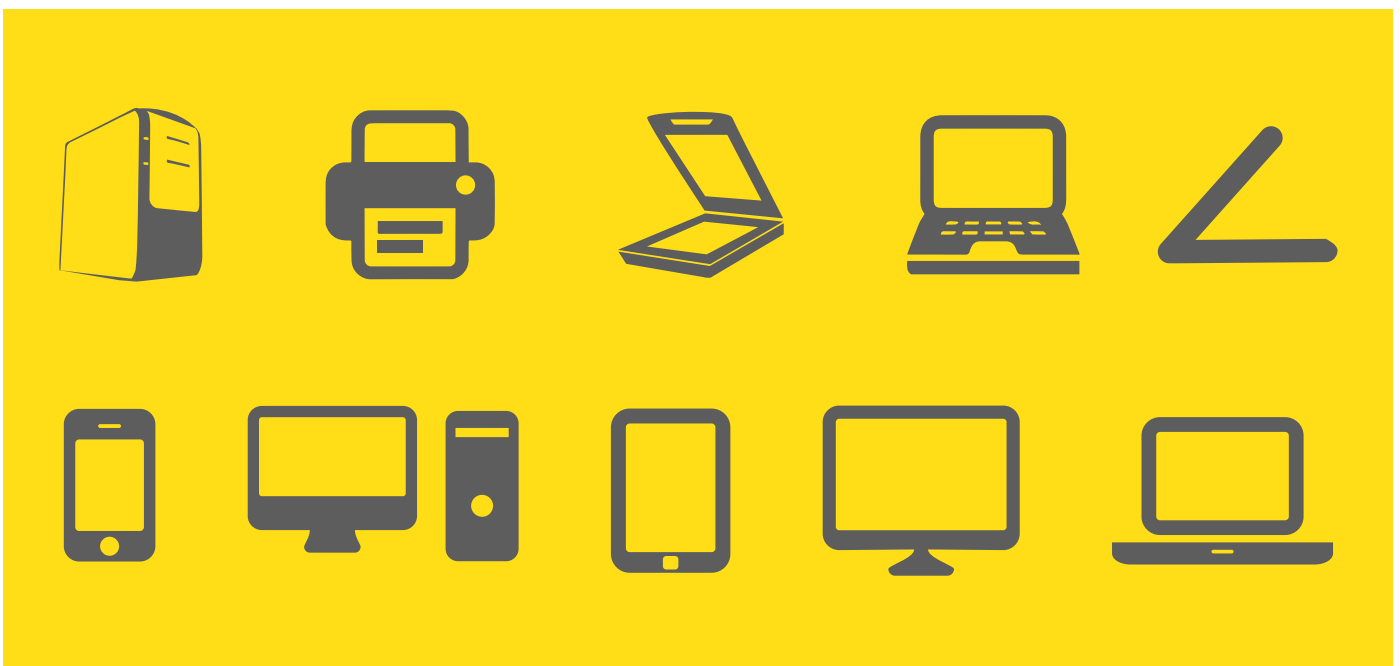


From Silicon Valley to the Classrooms

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Lenovo is not just a brand that serves the technologically advanced corporate sector, but caters to a diverse segment of audience – a clear distinction that the brand makes from its product lines. With physical presence in 3 major countries, Lenovo strives to cater to varying customer segments. It operates in both B-B and B-C sectors. Of particular interest here is its journey from the Silicon Valley to the classrooms which require exceptional quality standards and grading criterions.

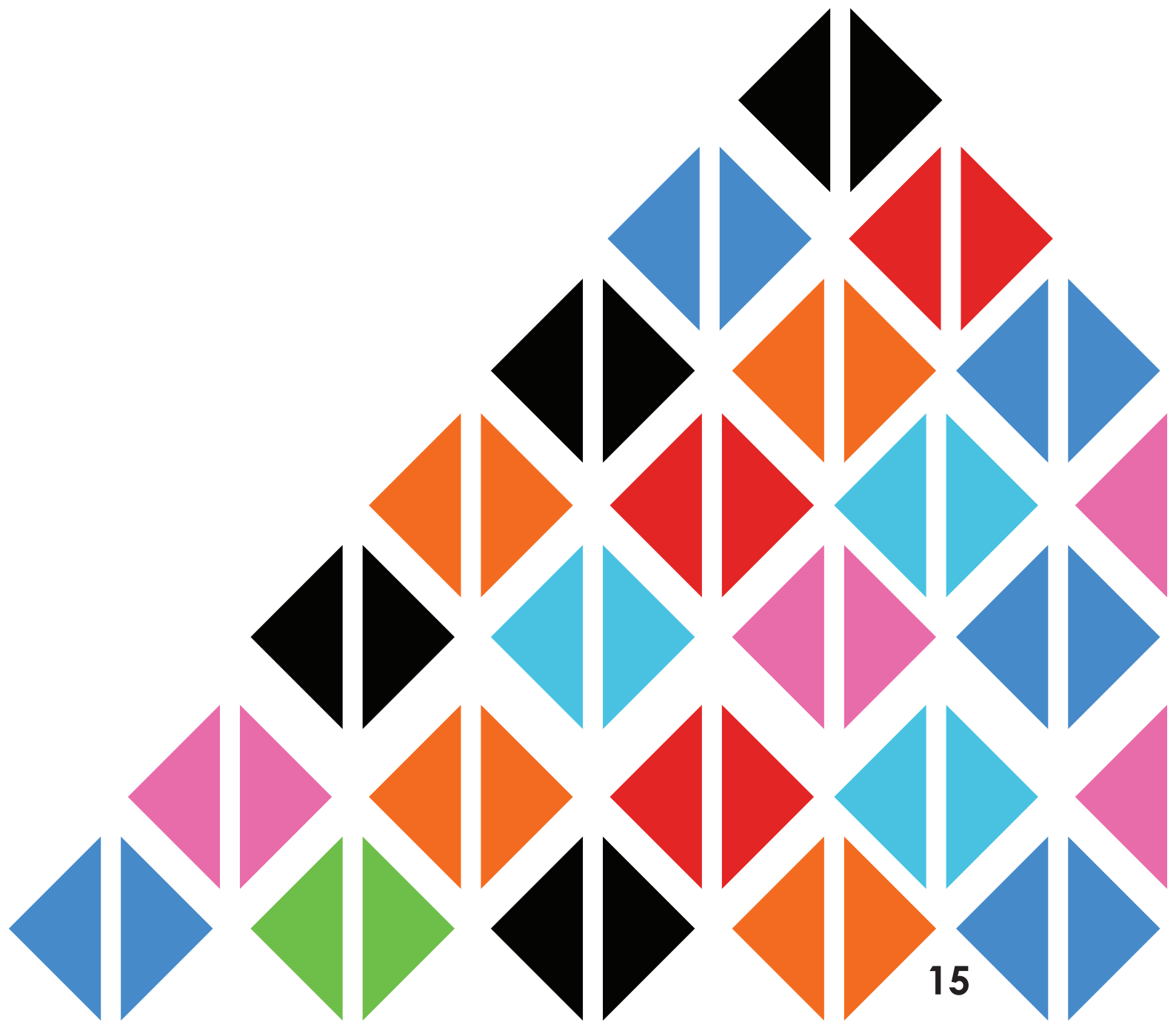
By the mid of this century, experts predict that all schools and educational institutions will become paper-free and education would go virtual. The question is how many tech companies will be able to cope up with this special demand to meet the requirements of school notebooks? Interestingly, Lenovo seems to be the undisputed brand which offers the technology for the touch-screen generation. In the coming years, all educational institutions including schools will adapt technology-based learning. Lenovo's forward thinking attitude and product diversity will certainly enrich the future of intuitive learning. Only time would reveal Lenovo's contribution in shaping the future of the coming generation.



The felt need to rebrand

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With the emergence of smartphones, the brand started to keep its design function in-house with minimum or no outsourcing. This goes on to show that Lenovo was not only innovating its technology but also had a keen interest on evolving the brand identity.



How a Logo Affects Brand Power

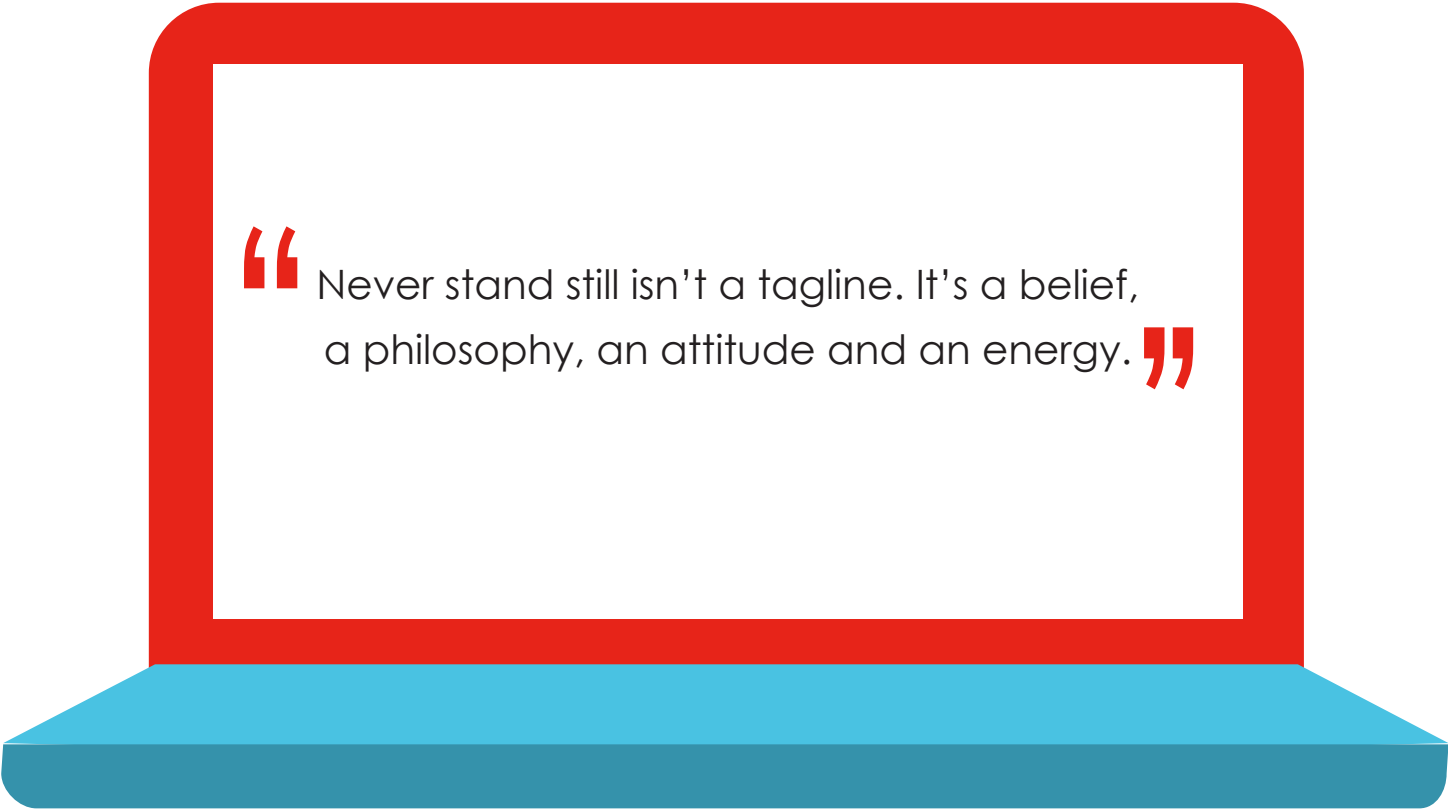
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The old Lenovo logo was among the most instantly recognizable logos in the tech marketplace. The logotype comprised of a plain and bold wordmark that highlights the company's name in italics. Plus the rounded typeface gave it a memorable corporate identity which was both legible and logical. However, it was not at par with the trends that are followed by tech giants that are tough competitors for Lenovo. The company wanted a logo that can represent excellence at innovation and the strength to constantly evolve according to the dynamic environment.





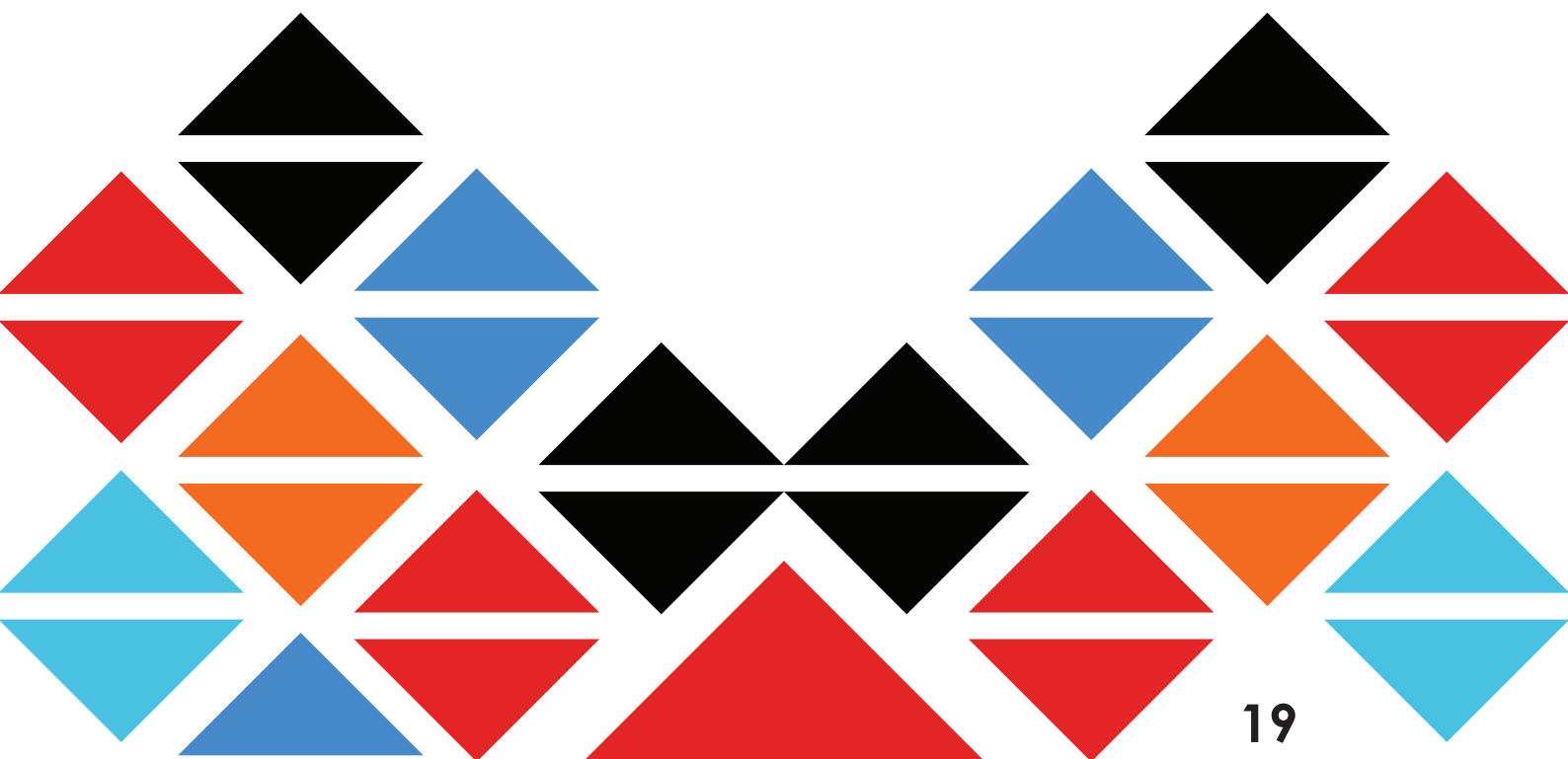
The world around us has changed significantly and so has Lenovo. It holds a record of fastest acquisitions of emerging technologies. Without any doubt, Lenovo is on its way to become a global leader in tech. To thrive and create a mark in the existing world, Lenovo has got a much needed identity change. They truly believe that life holds rewards for those who never stand still.

A stylized graphic of a laptop. The screen is a white rectangle with a thick red border. The base of the laptop is a light blue trapezoid with a darker blue shadow underneath. The quote is centered on the screen.

“ Never stand still isn't a tagline. It's a belief,
a philosophy, an attitude and an energy. ”

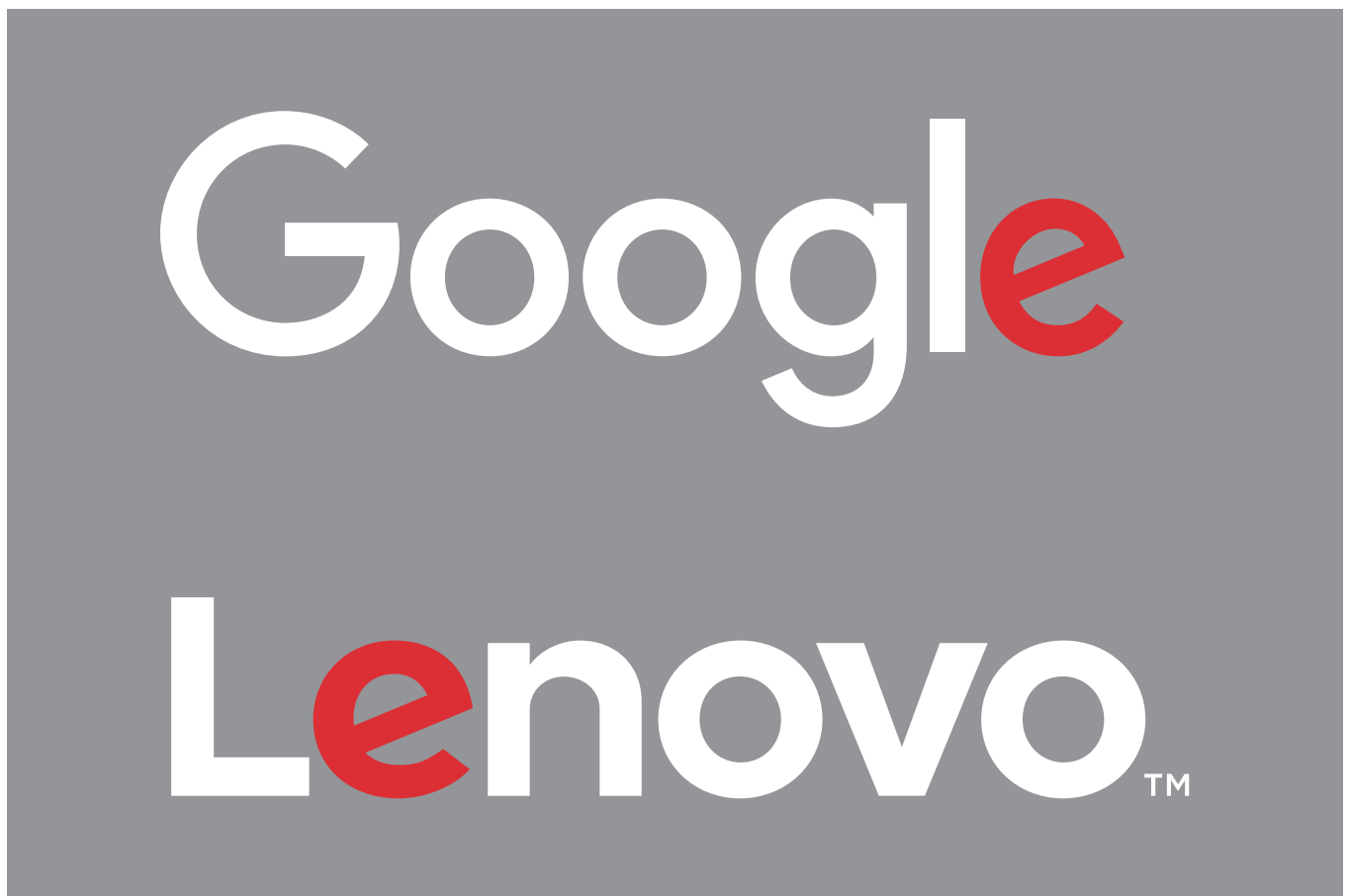
The new logo

Lenovo's new logo is a white colored wordmark enclosed in a rectangular shape. This allows the freedom to place the logo in vibrant backgrounds and create an active synergy with images. Within the enclosed shape, the logo appears like a tag.



The wordmark

The thick font of Lenovo stands on its own and the slightly tilted 'e' casts a great impression especially when displayed in huge font. Although it is often touted that the two tech giants, Google and Lenovo, that rebranded this year, fell in love with the same 'e'. This uncanny resemblance between the slanted letters is purely coincidental but it goes on to explain that Lenovo is not far behind Google in creating visual synergy.

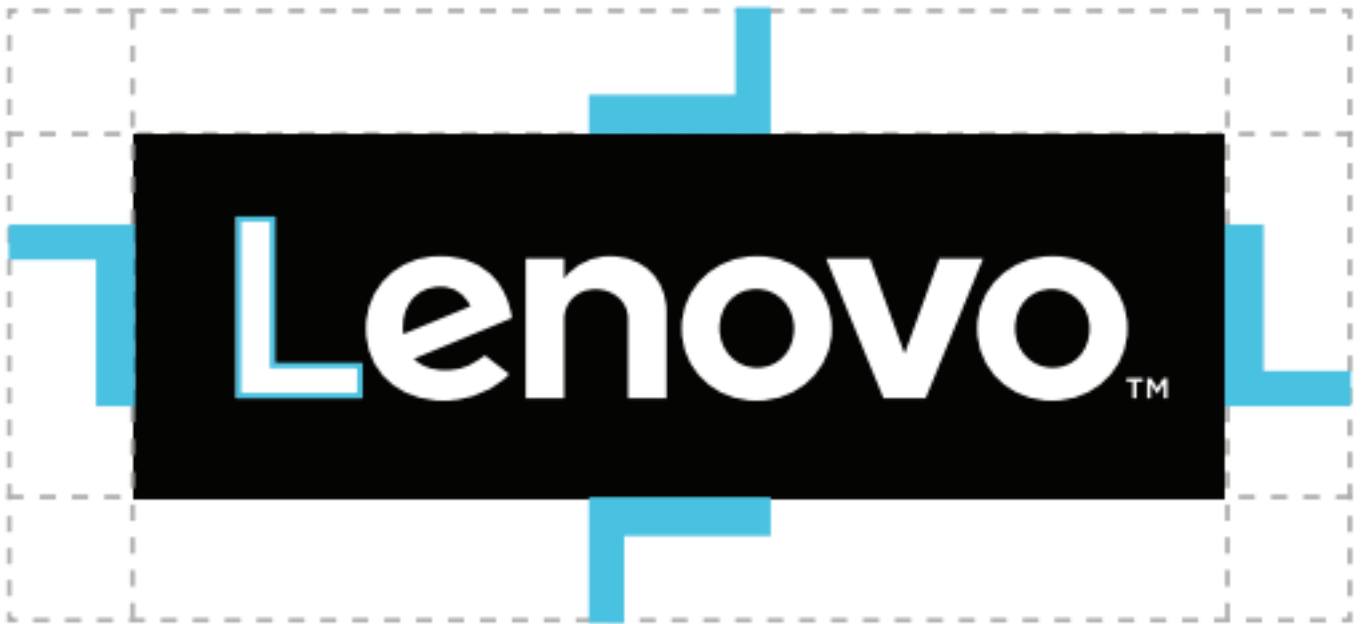


In some cases, the wordmark is used alone without a containing shape. It is interesting to note that the brand new look comes with an attitude. When presented in vertical orientation, the logo can only be displayed bottom-up and not the other way round. Besides that, the logo can never be tilted at any other angle accept for the sharp 90 degree clock-wise twist.



The Kerning and Spacing

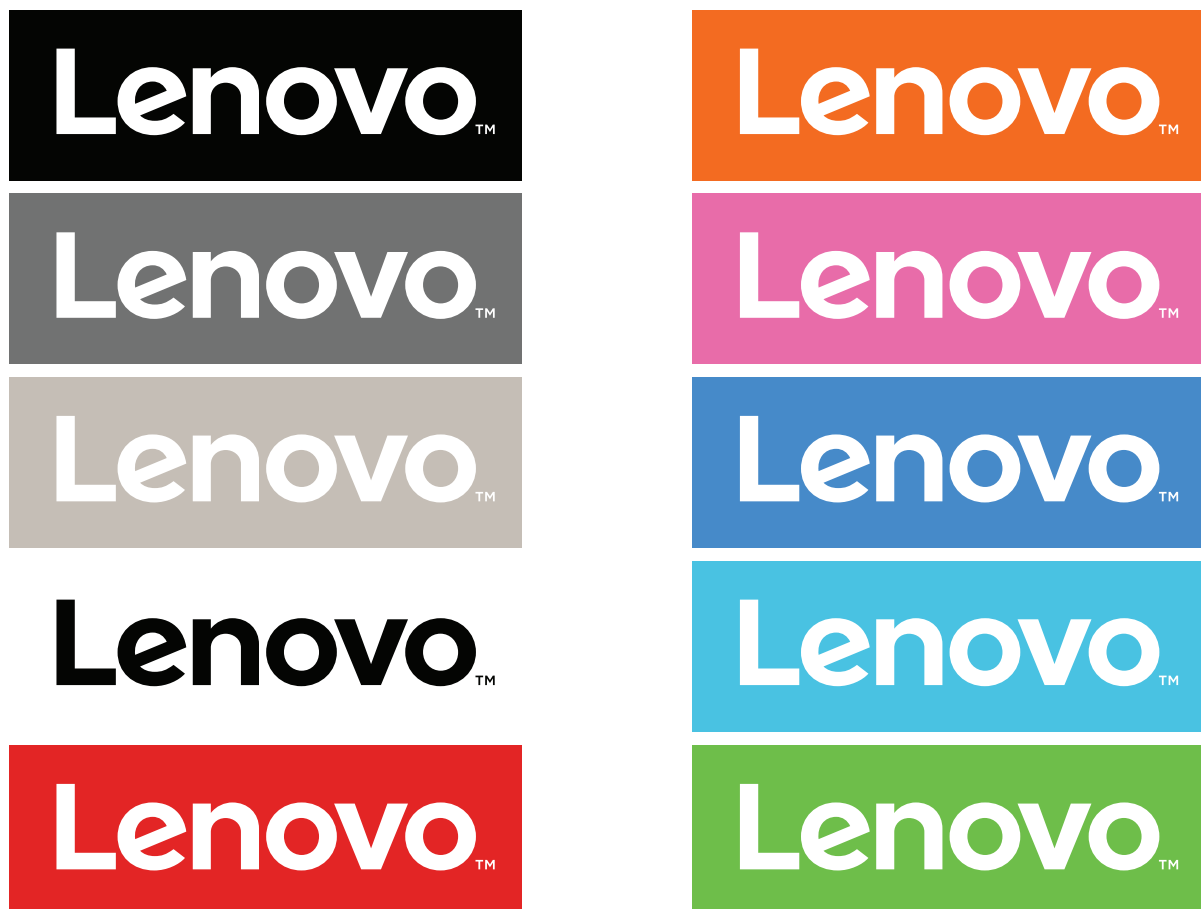
The natural logo maintains less kerning but to avoid erroneous reading, some clear space around the logo has to be maintained. That way, the logo can be separated from the contrasting elements that can mask the visibility of the wordmark. The minimum space allowed outside the logo is measured with the width of Lenovo's 'L'. Also, the primary logo has certain limitations for the allowed size. It cannot get smaller than 15 mm for print and publications or it will lose its visual strength. Size limitation also applies in digital applications.



The colors

Looks like Lenovo has a new found obsession with pastel colors. It has chosen a set tone of colors to represent the wordmark in white. Apart from the de-saturated colors, Lenovo can also be branded in bright red, two shades of grey and black. The new logo allows more room to get playful. Besides the monochromatic color shades, the primary logo can also appear in artistic and image-based backgrounds. The idea is to bring the brand to life and personalize it for specific events or according to the consumer.

Lenovo Global and Brand design team certainly outdid itself by maintaining consistency in an ever-evolving brand.



Suggestions for future

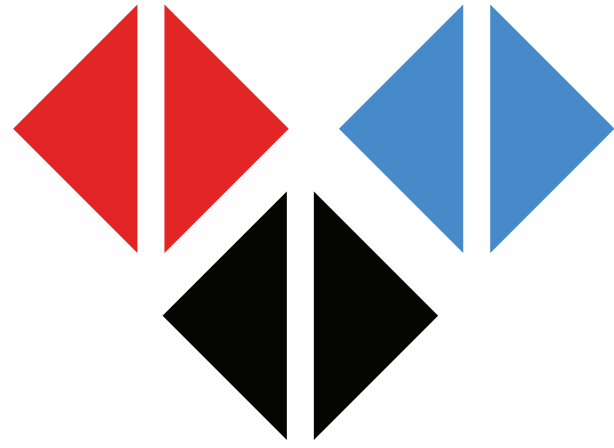
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Lenovo is evolving as a brand as well as a tech organization but the speedy pace creates unprecedented challenges along the way. It still lacks effective market segmentation despite all efforts invested in improving the marketing department. Here are some advices that that will enhance the brand power in the long run.

- Since Thinkpad has become a sort of flagship product for Lenovo, it will serve as a way to out-perform competition. Thinkpad as a brand has not yet reached maturation phase. There are still certain unexplored markets for its quality products.
- Lenovo is on its way to become one-stop shop for mobile devices but they need to reconsider their pricing strategies so that they can cover more diverse markets.
- They will also improve sales by marketing their mid-range laptops for lower spectrum employees other than the executives.



Conclusion

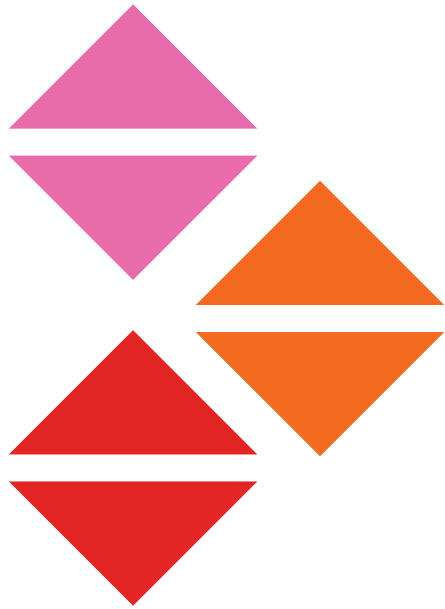


So far Lenovo as a Chinese multinational brand has emerged from the local economy and move on to compete with the international giants. No one could have imagined that a local Chinese technology hub would acquire the money-losing divisions of major companies and leverage them to expand their international market share. It was a smart move that the global competitors couldn't foresee. Interestingly, Lenovo has taken some latest acquisitions and it might take a while before they get completely absorbed into the company.

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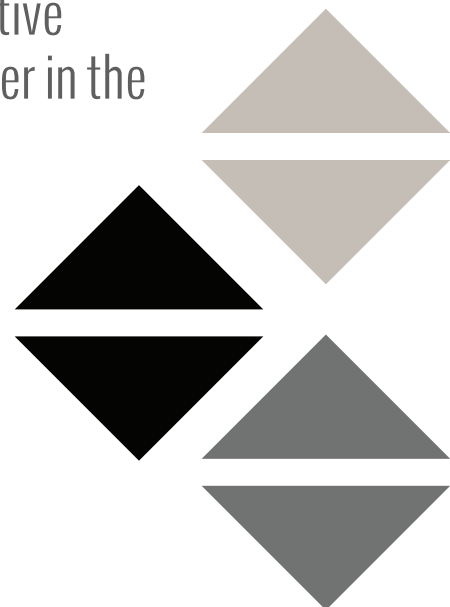


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Mehreen is a social media buff and design blogger, who keeps a keen eye on graphic design trends. She has a passion for experimenting with design ideas, and wouldn't mind if it means going out of her way to find them in Timbuktu. Follow her on twitter for daily inspirations and findings.

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