



# CreativePro

## A Rebrand Evolution



BY David Blatner



AND Nicté Cuevas

**CreativePro's new brand goes beyond pretty—  
it's a deep reflection of who we are as a company.**

IF YOU THINK OF A COMPANY LIKE A PERSON, its brand would be the overall impression of how it dresses, how it speaks, how it acts around others. And that impression is how people will remember you. Just as people can make intentional choices in all these respects to influence how they are perceived in the world, companies make similar intentional choices in their branding. Through the process of design, these choices come together to convey meaning, to reinforce a value, to shape a message, to make us look... like us.



We at CreativePro have been teaching the importance of intentional design for over 20 years. But our dirty little secret is that we haven't been particularly intentional about our own branding. Until now.

We are so pleased to announce a new visual brand identity for CreativePro—the result of over six months and hundreds of hours of discussion, deliberation, and design.

Our new brand isn't just pretty, it's a deep reflection of who we are as a company—what we do and why we do it. We'd like to share that brand with you, along with the story of how it came to be, in hopes that showing our work might help you explore your own company's brand journey.

## The Beginnings of a Brand

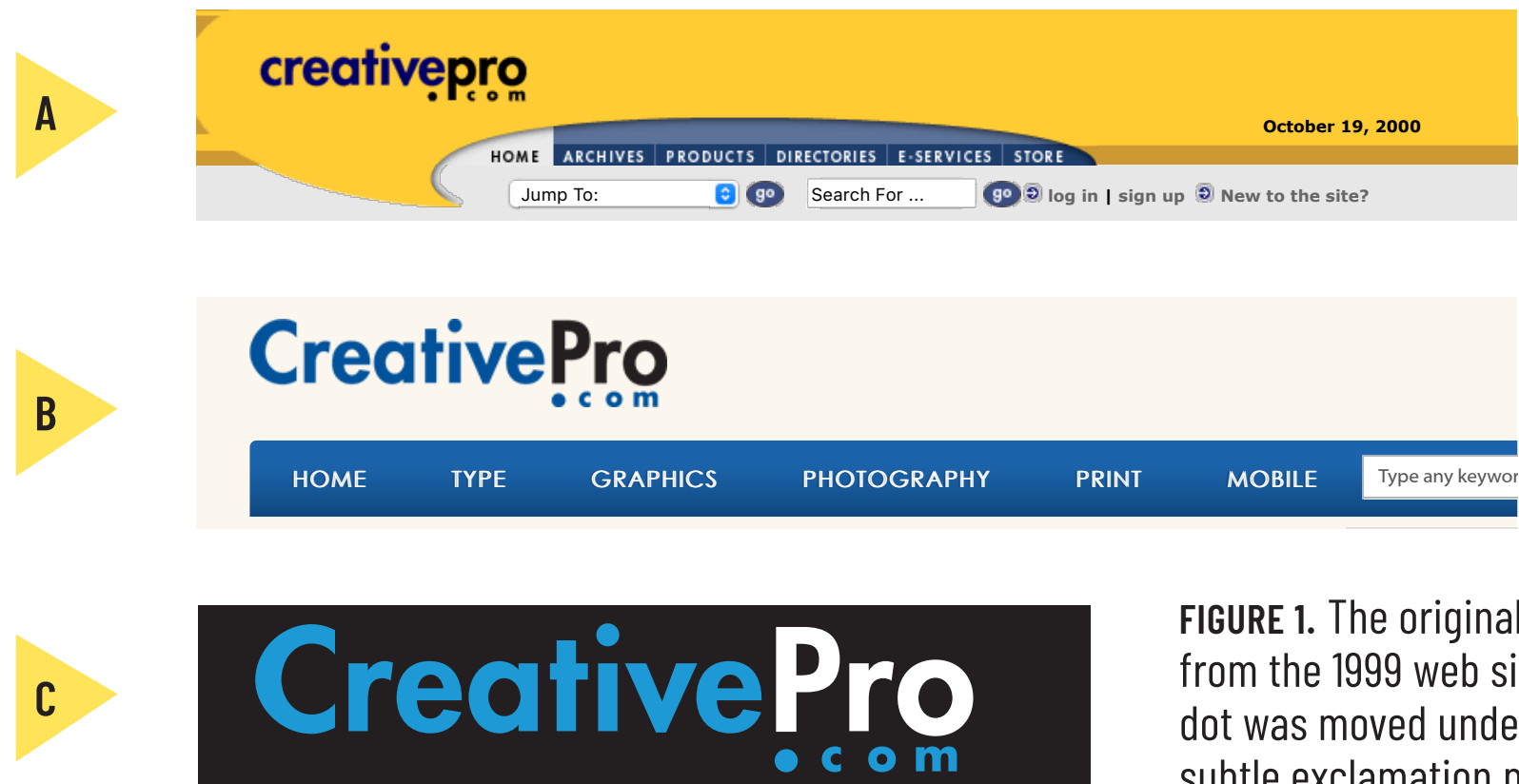
First, we need to look at some history.

It may come as a surprise to you that CreativePro was started in 1999 by the same parent company that owned font management software company Extensis. Their goal was to create a web portal for designers. Founding Editor in Chief Pamela Pfiffner remembers that founder Craig Barnes

wanted to start an online marketplace for software and services (a radical idea at the time).

It's unclear who designed the original brandmark, which featured Linotype Futura Heavy text set in a muted, dark blue and black, with an alternate, lighter blue

used when the logo was placed on a black background (**FIGURE 1**). That brand remained virtually unchanged for 17 years, even though CreativePro was sold three times: once to a private equity firm, once to a printing company, and finally, in 2013, to David Blatner and Anne-Marie Concepción.



**FIGURE 1.** The original CreativePro logo from the 1999 web site (A). Later, the dot was moved under the P, creating a subtle exclamation point (B). Here, on a black background (C).

Over so many years in service, any brand gains an inertia that is difficult to overcome. Even though David and Anne-Marie wanted a new look and feel from the beginning, the work that would be involved in changing it seemed overwhelming—until one day in 2016, when David just couldn’t take it anymore and designed a new CreativePro logo.

Here’s how he remembers his process: “I wish I could say we spent a lot of time on it, but honestly, it was born more out of frustration than inspiration,” David said. “I personally hate the font Futura, and I really hated that our logo used it. So I switched the type to Gotham, and then—in an effort to make the logo fit into a square space better—I stacked the word *creative* over *pro*. The goal was simply to make something that looked cool and could be seen at small sizes” (FIGURE 2).

## Rethinking Everything

By 2022, CreativePro had grown significantly as a company, and we were having trouble juggling all the various brand identities



**FIGURE 2.**

- A) David Blatner’s original 2016 CreativePro logo, later fine-tuned by Anne-Marie Concepción, Mark Heaps, and Michael Ninness
- B) It was a struggle to find a place for the word *week*, until we thought of dropping the word into the counter of the *O*.
- C) In 2019, we boosted the weight to make the logo stand out better.

we had developed or taken on over the years. The website had a distinctive look, but *CreativePro Magazine* was completely different, and neither looked anything like the branding for the annual conference. Then there were the online events, books, email newsletters, and more. Each had drifted into its own look and feel. The only visual consistency that tied everything together was David’s logo.

Frankly, it was a mess.

To standardize our look, we hired brand strategist and designer Nigte Cuevas. At the time, David assumed that Nigte would simply rework our colors and imagery and create a consistent look and feel across our products, but he imagined that the brand logo would remain the same. After all, the logo was like his own child!

However, it didn’t take long for everyone involved (including David) to realize that *every* aspect of the company brand needed attention... even his precious design.

After all, the best brands don’t just present or reflect a personality, they tell a story. For example, Apple’s brand tells a story



of simplicity and elegance, of distilling a process or product to its essence. Microsoft's brand says, in effect, "we are the foundation on which you will build great things." Amazon tells of happy outcomes; Nike evokes speed and power.

But what about CreativePro? What story did this hastily manufactured logo tell? What fractured tale was implied by the name appearing as two words when the company name is a single word? And what did it mean that *creative* is smaller than *pro*?

One thing was clear: The CreativePro logo told no story. It reflected no deeper intention. It had to go.

## Communicating Messages and Values

Once again: Think of a company as though it were a person. Who would this person be? What would their personality, their values be? What would they like and dislike? What would their purpose be?

In the initial stages of the rebranding process, Nicte guided the CreativePro leadership team through exercises to draw out

### THE MANY LOOKS OF CREATIVEPRO

Over 20 years of organic growth left CreativePro with a wide variety of brand identities and logos. Here are a few of the brands you may have seen over the years.

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answers to these questions. She encouraged us to dig deep to explore CreativePro’s corporate persona, what we stand for, and how we act in the world.

In one of the most interesting early discussions, Nichte presented a series of brand *archetypes*. The use of archetypes enables brands to share stories and journeys that are relatable to our human experiences. A focus on personalities, beliefs, and desires helps us to express something authentic and unique, while avoiding stereotypes and stale generic personas. Brand strategists often use this technique to help focus a company’s positioning. (A quick search online for

*brand archetypes* will uncover hundreds of examples, [such as this one](#).)

Nichte also had the team delve into real-world concerns to clarify our understanding of our audience, of our competitors, and how CreativePro is unique in the market. Fortunately, we had recently completed a series of in-depth surveys and customer focus groups that provided us with clear data and helpful insights to work with.

Our answers to all these questions—from purpose and values to personality types and market differentiators—became the foundation on which the new branding would be developed (**FIGURE 3**).

Creating Meaning Through Color

Nichte Cuevas loves color. She has recorded multiple [video training courses](#) on the topic, spoken about it at CreativePro events, and written about it in [Issue 7](#) of this magazine. As she explains in one of her courses, “Color can make you feel bold, empowered, relaxed, inspired, and even energized.”

But when color is used incorrectly, “it can also make you feel overwhelmed, sad, and even angry,” she continues. “How we perceive a brand, product, or service can be influenced by how you use these brand colors and how they make us feel.”

**FIGURE 3.** CreativePro’s purpose, values, personality archetypes, and core language that reflect who we are and how we connect with our audience.



Our brand promise & purpose:

CreativePro helps individuals and organizations connect and thrive *by design*.

Brand values:

- ▶ Together we thrive
- ▶ Committed to kindness
- ▶ Get curious
- ▶ Quality of connections
- ▶ Find joy
- ▶ Get things done

Persuasive language:

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| ▶ Innovative   | ▶ Join Us      |
| ▶ How-To       | ▶ Dive Deep    |
| ▶ Fearlessness | ▶ Grow         |
| ▶ Curious      | ▶ Experience   |
| ▶ Open         | ▶ Discovering  |
| ▶ Flexible     | ▶ Building     |
| ▶ Efficiency   | ▶ Demystifying |
| ▶ Experiment   | ▶ Empowering   |

When shaping a brand, Nicte always begins by considering the hue(s) it will use. CreativePro has an international audience, so she wanted to ensure its colors would reflect a global awareness, aligning with the needs of our audience, but one ultimately rooted in the essence of who we are—our archetypes, culture, and values. The result was a collection of five core colors, plus several alternates and black (**FIGURE 4**).

Here are a few more factors that went into the color choices:

- ▶ CreativePro is not a one-dimensional brand, so we couldn't express everything we do in a single color. Instead, we chose a set of colors to convey depth and meaning and drive emotions connected to our purpose, values, and offerings.
- ▶ The multiple hues reflect the energy and creativity sparked by people coming together as they are in a genuinely friendly, honest, respectful, and supportive manner.
- ▶ The colors and combinations had to offer sufficient contrast for viewers with color blindness or other visual disabilities.

- ▶ Most of our marketing and outreach is digital, so these rich, vibrant colors were originally defined in RGB. However, they were almost all outside the CMYK gamut and had to be modified significantly for print. We carefully found process color equivalents that would provide a similar feel and visual contrast.
- ▶ We discovered that one color, Energetic Blue, worked great on a white background but was difficult to see when placed against black. We decided to create Alternate Cyan to provide a similar but far more legible and accessible visual experience.

## Translating Ideas into Shapes

Each industry has its own language—not just a verbal language of words and phrases, but also a vocabulary of visual symbols, shared concepts and understandings, and even humor. Building this language into a company's brand helps it to connect and resonate more easily with its audience.

In our case, understanding that CreativePro supports *design* professionals,

**FIGURE 4.** Color communicates non-verbally. The CreativePro colors were chosen carefully to reflect our personality, our audience, and our values.



Nicte next worked on identifying our “design language.”

In the language of visual design, shapes act like words arranged into sentences to convey meaning. So Nicte first collected a wide variety of shapes and patterns—primitive elements such as squares, circles, arcs, wavy lines, straight lines, and angles.

Of course, the letters of an alphabet are also built from primitive shapes that can

convey meaning. We had hoped that Nicte could construct a logo that both contained the letters *C* and *P* and also conveyed a sense of trust and creativity. Unfortunately, after dozens of drafts, none felt right. So, we pivoted and decided to focus on just the letter *C* (**FIGURE 5**).

Still, nothing felt like it really clicked.

The team then tried asking: “Of all the attempts at designing the CreativePro brand,

which was the most successful? And what is it that we most like about that design?”

We all agreed that the clear answer was the “color triangles” design motif, which we’ve been using for conferences and online events since our longtime designer Pamela Sparks developed it in 2019 (**FIGURE 6**).

There is a concept in both science and philosophy called *emergence*, in which the properties or behaviors of a whole system

**FIGURE 5.** Using Adobe Illustrator, Nicte and the team explored the foundations of a new logo by arranging a wide variety of graphic elements.



**FIGURE 6.** Triangles form hexagons and blocks in this example of the “facets” design, used for CreativePro events since 2019.





cannot be fully explained by examining any one part. For example, if you could see a single water molecule, you'd have no way of knowing about the “emergent phenomena” that results from bringing a lot of them together in a variety of conditions: water, ice, steam, and more.

Pam helped us understand that these triangles (which we called “facets”) had certain emergent properties: The facets formed hexagons, which were nested inside other hexagons; moreover, they could also be colored or tinted to emphasize a subtle optical illusion of three-dimensional blocks or steps.

After using this design for our conference and our online events, we had built up our own symbolism around the facets. We came to see each triangle as like a person—strong alone but even stronger and smarter after coming together with others at one of our events or as part of the CreativePro community (see the sidebar, “Triangles”).

In another story, we likened each facet to a piece of software or a service. After all, we reasoned, a core part of our job at

## TRIANGLES

While the circle is the simplest of the shapes, the triangle is the strongest—at least from a real-world perspective. The triangle provides the strength in bridge trusses, roofs, shelving, water towers, skyscrapers, and anything else that must be prevented from collapsing.

Triangles are named based on the relative lengths of their sides or size of their angles, and an equilateral triangle is one where the sides and angles are all the same. Equilateral triangles are cool because they fit perfectly into hexagons, which tessellate (form a seamless tile, like a beehive).

Of course, triangles are also central to some of the world's most important philosophical and religious symbols, including the Hindu Sri Yantra, the Jewish Star of David, pyramids, the Christian trinity... even the Eye of Providence that appears on the back of the U.S. \$1 bill.

Moreover, we like to think that the sides of a triangle also represent the three elements that come together to form the CreativePro community: people who *use* the primary tools of our business, the companies that *develop* this software, and the third-party developers, consultants, and other technical folks who *support* creatives.

As we bring all three together into one ecosystem, we say, “Together, we thrive!” And now we have a logo to reflect that concept with precision and beauty.



CreativePro is to help design professionals by *connecting* them: to one another, to experts, to solutions, to information.

Suddenly, the road forward became clear: The triangular facets *were* our fundamental design elements, the core of our design language. And by removing one triangle, a C appeared (**FIGURE 7**). Moreover, the “missing triangle” created an opening, like an invitation to our audience to come, learn, and thrive by design. Then, by separating the facets just the right amount, the shapes resolve into five emergent phenomena:

- ▶ A C shape, representing CreativePro and creativity
- ▶ A hexagon, representing a hive-like cooperative community
- ▶ An asterisk/star (from the negative space between the triangles), representing intersectionality
- ▶ A cube, representing depth and dimensionality
- ▶ Arrows, representing forward movement and energy

**FIGURE 7.** The emergence of the CreativePro C



**The triangles in our mark symbolize the facets of growth we share, uniting us as designers who come together to create designs with stories that have depth and dimensionality. Our mark celebrates our journey and provides the resources and tools needed to tell these stories with creative excellence.**

—From the CreativePro branding guidelines

## Choosing a Font

More than any other design element, fonts reflect personality. As font expert Sarah Hyndman points out, fonts can evoke feelings and even sensory reactions. If you try, you can imagine the sound of a font’s voice or even how it might taste.

In branding, it’s critical to get the typography right. So, to choose a type family as the backbone of the brand identity, we again

returned to the essence of CreativePro’s personality: its purpose, core values, and message.

Nicte and the team reviewed more than a thousand fonts, looking for one that really expressed fearless creativity, innovative professionalism, and joyous efficiency. The

winner was Qualion, a geometric sans serif designed by Roch Modrzejewski from ROHH Type (**FIGURE 8**).

Not only does Qualion communicate friendliness and approachability while still feeling grounded and reliable, but it also balances the sharp angles of the brandmark

with organic and gently rounded forms. The font is practical, yet gently playful, with sweet quirky touches—like the curves in the lowercase *t*, an *a* and *e* that seem to be grinning, and a lowercase stacked *g* that looks like a professor’s pince-nez. Even better, Qualion has a variety of weights,

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890  
!@#\$%^&\*!  
RkSpeQu

**FIGURE 8.** Qualion is a beautiful geometric font with humanist leanings.

## COLOR ORDER

If there’s one thing we’ve learned, it’s that when working on a brand identity, nothing should be chosen hastily. Even the order of the colors in the brandmark were subjected to an hour of testing and discussion.

You can think of colors as having a *weight* or *energy*, based on their hue, brightness, and saturation. As we moved the colors around in various permutations, it became clear that Energetic Blue, the strongest color, should sit as an anchor at the left. If purple or red were next to it, the logo would feel unbalanced and too heavy on the left side. When red was on bottom, the optical illusion of the cube diminished.

The order of the colors also represents the continual learning cycle that our members and event attendees experience with CreativePro. Our passion and commitment to our craft (Dynamic Red-Orange) is fueled with joy and nourishing experiences (Joyful Golden-Yellow); this leads to being grounded and driven by potential (Energetic Blue), nurturing an emergence that leaves us feeling refreshed by what we learn (Refreshing Mint); leading us to feel fueled with wisdom and creativity (Visionary Purple).

Through this sort of reasoning, we found a configuration that not only felt right, it amplified our mission.

alternate styling, ligatures, and swashes that provide a rich flexibility in setting type.

However, every font has its quirks, and no font works perfectly in every situation. Our biggest challenge with Qualion was the large circular dot over the *i* that unexpectedly clashed with the hexagonal brandmark. We tried using a dotless *i* (which was distracting in a different way) and substituting the dot with various shapes (even attempting a triangle, which looked dreadful). Ultimately, we replaced it with a small rectangle (**FIGURE 9**). While it might seem a bit over-the-top to focus on something as small as a dot, it's often the little details that make or break a logo.



**FIGURE 9.** Replacing the dot of the *i* made all the difference when combining the text with the brandmark.

## Products and Sub-brands

Once the primary brandmark was established (**FIGURE 10**), it was time to turn our attention to our other products and services. How would we identify those within this new brand language? Many companies employ both a primary brand identity and some combination of sub-brands and product brands. For example, FedEx has a primary brand and a similar (but different) sub-brand for its FedEx Office subsidiary.

The two most visible CreativePro products are *CreativePro Magazine* and CreativePro Week. We decided to handle each differently. First, because the magazine is an extension of the website and membership program, we chose to use the primary brandmark, with a small addition of the word *magazine* below (**FIGURE 11**).

However, CreativePro Week is a markedly distinctive product—so much so that many attendees don't even realize that it's part of CreativePro.com! Consequently, we felt it needed its own true sub-brand, something that could stand alone, yet also be recognizable as part of the CreativePro family. We



**FIGURE 10.** The final CreativePro brandmark



**FIGURE 11.** The new *CreativePro Magazine* brand leans heavily on the primary brandmark.



found the solution by leaning into the flexibility and power of the facets.

By rearranging the five triangles into a four-sided trapezoid, we were able to maintain a similar color balance—once again, anchored in the center with the rich Energizing Blue (**FIGURE 12**). And, to our delight, the shape resulted in several emergent phenomena:

- ▶ A negative space *W* formed in the white areas between the triangles.
- ▶ The trapezoid evokes the shape of an event stage or podium.
- ▶ Just as the hexagon *C* appears to contain a “white (invisible) triangle,” you can imagine this shape as the base of an even larger triangle topped with a white (or invisible) triangle.

Perhaps that white triangle is *you*, a member of our CreativePro community, ready to show up and learn what you need to reach the next level as a design professional.

## Your Company, Your Voice

Like all animals, humans communicate essentially for two reasons: to attract or



**FIGURE 12.** CreativePro Week deserved its own imaginative reworking of the facets into what we call the “CreativePro W.”

repel. For example, the way you speak and the clothes you wear (and all the ways you express yourself) tell a story, one that will engage certain people and turn off others.

So it is, too, with a company’s branding: Its logo, colors, font, imagery, and language all communicate a message. A brand designer’s job is to ensure that a company is attracting, not everyone (that’s not possible), but the *right* people, those who are or are likely to become your customers.

There’s no doubt that you can quickly throw together a cool logo, pick some colors you like, and call it a brand—and you may even find it works out fine for a while. We’ve been there, done that.

But to build a richer, lasting connection with your audience, it’s worth taking the time and effort to be more intentional in your design process. Consider not just what your product or service is, but also who your company is, what it stands for, and what the experience of working with your company should feel like. Then design the brand as an accurate reflection that will resonate with the right people in the right way.

Ultimately, while our new CreativePro brand identity system is a giant step forward from the approach we’ve used in the past, we consider it more evolution than revolution. It’s as though the DNA of our company is finally blossoming, emerging, through the use of elemental shapes and colors: the triangle, the hexagon, Energizing Blue, the Qualion type family, and all the ways we carefully construct our message.

If you're a design professional and want to connect with a global community of lifelong learners, we hope our brand speaks to you. But just as importantly, we wanted to be transparent, and share the process we employed to bring our brand into full alignment with what we are always striving to build at CreativePro.

We hope you've enjoyed this journey through the CreativePro rebrand process. It was a challenge, but we all found the experience to be rewarding and energizing, and we're so proud to finally share the results with you.

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**David Blatner** is the President and CEO of CreativePro Network and the author of 15 books on a wide variety of subjects. He also writes a semi-regular ["museletter"](#) on [LinkedIn](#).

**Nicte Cuevas**, an award-winning bilingual brand strategist and designer, owns [Nicte Creative Design](#). She connects color, culture, and design into a purpose-driven brand strategy for visionary companies.



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