

CASE STUDY 4

Carolyn Davidson versus Nike

Davidson designed the swoosh in 1971 while a graphic design student at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. Phil Knight, who was teaching an accounting class at the university, noticed Davidson working on an assignment, and asked her to do some work for what was then Blue Ribbon Sports, Inc. Needing to choose a logo in order to meet looming production deadlines, Knight settled on the swoosh, after rejecting various other designs.

*At the time, he stated of the logo,
"I don't love it, but it will grow on me."*

*For her services, she billed the company
\$35.*

Davidson continued working for Blue Ribbon Sports (it officially became Nike, Inc. in 1978), until the design demands of the growing company were beyond one person's capacity. In 1976, the company hired its first external advertising agency, John Brown and Partners, and Davidson went on to work on other clients' needs.

In September 1983, nearly three years after the company went public, Knight invited Davidson to a company lunch. There, he presented her with a diamond ring engraved with the Swoosh, and an envelope filled with an undisclosed amount of Nike stock. Of the gift, Davidson says, "this was something rather special for Phil to do, because I originally billed him and he paid that invoice."

