MEANING **MAKER**

Its visual expression took ACE from being a word of ubiquity to being a word that meant business.

Few names are better known, or logos more prevalent, than ACE Hardware. But with the rise of big box retailers like Home Depot, Lowes, Target and Wal-Mart, what had been ACE Hardware strengths—locally located and service-driven—were in danger of becoming synonymous with 'small' and 'expensive'.

A big part of the solution was in sight—actually, it was right there up on the storefront: the Ace Hardware sign.

By establishing a more resonant ACE retail identity—standardized among more than 4,600 licensees—we were able to leverage the considerable equity and authority of this well-known, 90-year-old brand and create a distinctive brand mark for the ubiquitous "ace" word that confirmed that *this* ACE *is* ACE Hardware.

We also established clear, usable guidelines for standardized application of the new ACE retail identity nationally across thousands of touch-points from storefronts to in-store signage to ACE's robust private label portfolio.

RESEARCH
Important insights on shoppers' impressions of, and attitudes toward, emerging big box retailers vs. the familiar locally-owned hardware store franchises was culled from independent large sample studies reported by industry associations and trade publications. Comparison of these findings showed significant consistency about shopping experiences and brand dimensions and defined the problem. Follow-up probative primary research was fielded by ACE.

DESIGN

A successful new retail identity for ACE had to evoke the brand's uniqueness and a value equivalent to what shoppers expected from big box stores. The extant ACE mark was non-descript and ordinary and the word, "Ace," was overused. Our solution took the three letterforms of "ace" and transformed them into an integrated, distinctive, protectable symbol that said ACE and meant hardware.

SIGNAGE

The new ACE retail identity signage system had to deliver store-naming models and signage styles and sizes with standardized vs. customized options that were affordable and still accommodated a lot of variety.

APPLICATION AND STANDARDS

The entire retail identity system, branding standards, nomenclature, language and application guidelines were codified in a simple PC-based program that delivered independent use by franchises and governance by corporate marketing.