Evolution of the SBC and AT&T Brands: A Pictorial Timeline

1880

A series of corporations controlling Alexander Graham Bell's patent rights is organized beginning in 1878. The first, Bell Telephone Co., is soon superseded by National Bell Telephone Co., which is replaced with American Bell Telephone Co. These firms supply telephones to their licensees across the country, including the Southwestern Telegraph and Telephone Co. (formed in 1880), who, in turn, rent them to local subscribers (in this case, to Arkansas and Texas customers).

1885

American Telephone and Telegraph Co. (AT&T) is established as a subsidiary of American Bell Telephone Co. Through a first-of-its-kind network, the firm connects remote exchanges and is popularly called "the long distance company."

1889

The first Bell logo is adopted by AT&T. Angus S. Hibbard, the company's general superintendent, conceived the design. In a corporate reorganization, AT&T acquires the assets of its parent, American Bell Telephone, and becomes the new owner of the local Bell operating companies nationwide.

1900

The second Bell logo is introduced to convey the growing interconnection between local and long distance service. It is adopted by the local Bell telephone companies, with their names appearing at the top within the double circle, including the Southwestern Telegraph and Telephone Co. AT&T remains the head of the Bell System until its breakup 84 years later.

1920 – 1921

Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. is formed. One year later, it adopts the third Bell logo, instituted with the words "Bell System" placed inside the bell itself. The logo design is eventually used by all local Bell companies.

1939

The fourth Bell logo is inaugurated with minor modifications to the typeface. In an era of cutting innovation, AT&T has taken telephone service both transatlantic (1927) and transpacific (1934) and operates the country's first example of television (1927). By 1947, AT&T will offer mobile telephone service and enable the nation's first broadband transmission through installation of coaxial cable in the network. Its scientists will develop the concept of cellular telephony, as well as invent the transistor.

1964 – 1969

Southwestern Bell

As the result of the 956 consent decree barring AT&T from engaging in unregulated businesses, the company limits its endeavors to special projects for the federal government and to operating the national telephone system. The fifth logo is installed for use by local Bell System companies in 1964, followed by the sixth and final Bell logo in 1969.

1983

Southwestern Bell Corporation

AT&T agrees to divest its local phone companies, and Southwestern Bell Corp. (SBC) is incorporated as one of seven regional holding companies in anticipation of the AT&T divestiture and retains the bell in its logo.

AT&T

To mark the restructure, a distinctive AT&T globe logo is designed symbolizing a world circled by electronic communications. Later that year, in conjunction with Ameritech, AT&T launches the first commercial cellular telephone system in Chicago.

1995

Southwestern Bell Corp. is renamed SBC Communications Inc. at its annual meeting of stockholders and adopts a new logo. The five-state SBC region includes Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas and Texas.

1997

AT&T acquires Teleport Communication Group, the largest alternate provider of local service in the country, which becomes AT&T Broadband. The globe symbol is redesigned to convey added dimension and depth. The following year, its network data traffic will exceed voice traffic for the first time.

1999

SBC Communications Inc. completes its $16.5 billion purchase of Pacific Telesis Group, capping the first acquisition among the regional holding companies. The new company provides wireline and wireless services to seven states, including the nation's two most populous (California and Texas). The stylized Pacific Telesis "access" button is added to the logo's "B" to mark the combination.

One year later, SBC Communications Inc. will merge with Southern New England Telecommunications Corp. in a $6.5 billion deal and, in 1999, will close a $75 billion acquisition of Ameritech Corp., extending its footprint to its current total of 13 states and representing roughly one-third of the nation's telephone lines.

2005

SBC Communications Inc. and AT&T embark upon a historic industry merger, marking the beginning of a new era of capability, innovation and convenience in global communications and entertainment services. In October, SBC announces that the combined company will be called AT&T, Inc. The new AT&T logo was unveiled following the merger close in November 2005.