

SOUTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

2008

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Mercury Award
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Brand/Reputation Management

PJ Norlander
Arcadia Publishing
"Your Place in History" Branding Initiative

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Arcadia Publishing Branding Initiative

In February 2007, Arcadia Publishing (Arcadia) embarked on an aggressive initiative to develop a cohesive methodology for strengthening the company brand. In an increasingly competitive business environment, the company acknowledged the need to impose a higher level of standards in the area of company branded communication tactics. The overall goal was to create and implement clear, consistent, and influential messaging throughout all company communication tools. Upon implementation, the new brand messaging and concepts would ultimately enhance the company's overall reputation and increase the perceived value of the organization and its products.

Research

Arcadia conducted a formal RFP¹ process and engaged HOOK, a Charleston based advertising agency, to assist with research and message development. Arcadia and HOOK employed numerous research tactics² including an information dump provided by the Arcadia executive management team to aid the agency in understanding company values and market place position. Targeted surveys were also conducted with three key audiences measuring how retailers, individual consumers, and field sales employees perceived the company. The inherent belief was new messaging couldn't be created until a thorough understanding of existing perceptions of all the company's constituents was first captured and analyzed.

Research showed each key audience (consumers, retailers, and sales staff) similarly recognized Arcadia's strengths.³ Results demonstrated that regardless of the audience relationship with the company, each identified similar attributes – attributes that could be streamlined and focused into a razor sharp branding campaign. The final step of the research phase culminated in a cohesive understanding of the need for Arcadia to not just present their product, but to also convey the emotional connection to the product. Core brand values⁴ and positioning were collectively agreed upon and Arcadia's new core brand message *Your Place in History* was born.

Planning

Arcadia identified the most often utilized and widely distributed communication tools as the key pieces to begin implementing the new brand messaging. Early adapter items consisted of print advertising concepts for use in newspapers, magazines, and online banner ads; brochure concepts for communicating the company mission and purpose; direct mail concepts; and event promotion concepts for use leading up to and during events. The latter included branded concepts for event posters, flyers, bookmarks, and point-of- purchase display materials.

From April 2007 through October 2007, Arcadia and HOOK worked on fine-tuning design schemes and core messaging statements. Extensive planning revolved around keeping the executive management team apprised of progress and continually seeking and gaining buy-in from future team members who would be charged with implementing the new brand strategy. The project budget was increased several times to accommodate requests from Arcadia planning team members.

Execution

Execution of the plan involved developing print ad templates⁵ to support a variety of ad sizes and media types. Direct mail templates⁶ were developed for all nine series in the Arcadia publishing program. Additional event material templates⁷ were developed to accommodate a variety of event scenarios, and both the corporate brochure and point-of-purchase materials⁸ were rebranded to implement the new messaging. On Nov. 4, 2007 the new brand campaign was presented to all employees via a company-wide webcast. Several promotional items⁹ were shared with team members to engage and support employee staff buy-in of the new initiatives. Since the November internal campaign rollout, all of the concepts identified in the first phase of execution have been implemented.¹⁰

Evaluation

The qualities identified through meticulous research ultimately developed into focused messaging implemented across multiple marketing platforms, creating a cohesive brand strategy that now parallels the company's core mission. Concepts developed are solid, utilizing a cohesive visual palette, and allow employees to customize the look and message of marketing initiatives on an opportunistic basis. Though it is still early in the campaign, initial results show sales have increased year over year, feedback from retailers and customers is positive and further implementation of the new brand messaging across all company communication tools is planned for March 2008.

50-Word Summary

Arcadia Publishing embarked on an aggressive initiative to develop a cohesive methodology for strengthening the company brand. Extensive research culminated in an emotionally focused branding campaign. Executed concepts are now visually unified and achieve the goal to implement clear, consistent, and influential messaging throughout all company communication tools. Improved brand messaging has ultimately enhanced the company's overall reputation and increased the perceived value of the organization and its products.

