

PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING FIRMS

Robertson & Markowitz: 17 Years and Going Strong

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After being in business for 17 years, Ted Robertson of Robertson & Markowitz has a solid handle on his business of choice. "The advertising business is people," he said. "What we do offer is our staff, our people. If someone has an issue, whether it's to sell something, promote something, they have a crisis going on, our people come in and they are trained, they're qualified, and they're good to work with, and we love what we do. That's what we offer is our staff, our people."

It's their people and the love of what they do that's kept their firm constantly growing. Robertson & Markowitz Advertising & Public Relations began in 1990 as a joint venture between Robertson and Lisa Markowitz Kitchens. "I came from an advertising agency background, and Ted came from an agency background, but also had newspaper and radio experience," Kitchens said. "Ted and I are both from

Savannah. We started the agency, and started of course as a two-man crew, and now we are a 12-person agency."

Kitchens said the company's client base has become quite broad over the years. "We are an advertising and public relations firm; however, our clients are very diverse, and we like it that way," she said. "We like the diversity – it keeps it fresh, it keeps it innovative, it's a lot of fun. Our business is split; some of our clients are strictly advertising, some are strictly public relations, some are all-encompassing and some are strictly graphic design."

Robertson and Kitchens divide up the workload: Robertson focuses more on public relations, while Kitchens handles advertising.

Robertson said all companies need some form of public relations, even those that may not normally think they do. "For example, just this week after the Virginia Tech situation, I've actually been approached by a couple of people who want to set up a crisis communication program so that one is set in



Lisa Markowitz Kitchens and Ted Robertson look over some of the promotional materials they currently have under development for a client.

place and ready to go," he said. "It can be very intimidating to have TV cameras and reporters all of the sudden at you in a short period of time.

"Some of our public relations are a lot

more fun, such as the Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf," he added. "There's a lot to do, and there's a lot of media to work with just in the coordination of getting the releas-

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es out, getting the correct information to the right people, helping to coordinate the media to get them where they need to be to get the story that they want.

"On the PR side, there's a very serious need for coordination, and most people do not have a staff," Robertson said. "Obviously, your Fortune 500 companies have a staff and can handle this internally, whereas some of the smaller companies do not necessarily have that, though we have worked with some of the larger companies in a support capacity as well."

"On the advertising side, companies use us (to) handle their advertising, whether it's television, whether it's radio, their billboards, their print, etc.," Kitchens said. "Everything is all-encompassing, everything is cohesive – we can handle it turnkey. We create the branding and make everything consistent, of course, to produce 'wow' creative."

Kitchens explained they work with the budgets set by their clients. "We go back to them with it saying this is how we best see to use your dollars, place them in these particular mediums, then come up with the plan and we...make it happen."

"Then we implement it, and follow up to make sure everything happened, and then invoicing it. It's a little bit of work there," Robertson added.

"We also have a full-time media buyer/planner, and all she does is work with

media and negotiate rates, negotiating based on Neilson rates and Arbitron rates, and so on. It's a lot more intricate than most people realize," Kitchens noted.

Both Robertson and Kitchens are proud of what their company has to offer. "Number one, we have the longevity; number two, we have a love for what we do – we have a passion for what we do, and I think that's conveyed by the work we do," Kitchens said. "The majority of our clients have been with us for a very long time, and that's very important to us – the customer service and client relationship. Even though some people may only hire us for a project or two because that's what their needs are, but our goal is to establish long-term relationships and in that we feel we've been very effective doing that."

The reach of Robertson & Markowitz isn't strictly local, though many of their clients have some connection to the Savannah area. "Most of them, we've had some kind of contact with via Savannah, because a lot of our business is contacts, references, people who we've worked with," Robertson said. "We have banks, we have car dealers, we have car dealers from up in North Carolina down to Georgia – we're very diverse with our clients. It isn't an all-local agency, we're more regional in scope than anything else."

"We actually have an international footprint on some clients and projects that we're working on," he continued. "We've worked with, for example, Dark & Lovely - Dark & Natural, which was Carson Products when they were in Savannah, then they moved to Chicago and were bought out by L'Oreal.

We worked with French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, so it's been sent all over South America, South Africa, through Europe, so it was a very interesting project."

"For SpaCrest, we're doing French, Spanish and German right now for their brochures," Kitchens said of the hot tub manufacturer.

Robertson said they also have branched easily into the Internet. "Everything is going toward the Internet," he said. "We are probably more into electronics than your more traditional advertising. Internet advertising is very specific. More and more every day we get more and more advertising going that way. We do Web site developments, and we've worked on Web sites, banner advertising and that type of thing. Of course, every day it changes, and we're becoming more technology-driven. People still have to get their message out to the public, it's just how they get it out to the public."

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Hope sales manager Mike Dulaney. Dulaney should know. As a former service member, he remembers the stress of moving from place to place and tries to personally serve each new military family in the community. "I've been on the other side," he said.

In addition to financial incentives, Rice Hope also offers amenities that are attractive to military members, who often have young families. The neighborhood has a