

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2010

BiS

Travel agent **NANCY DAVIS** started as a nurse, but found a new career fulfilled her passion to see the world. **4 >>>**

When Halloween approaches, **ACME COSTUMES** gears up for the onslaught and goes from six year-round employees to 50. **8**



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A branding powerhouse

For 20 years, Lisa Markowitz Kitchens and Ted Robertson have been getting to the heart of clients' messages | **12-13**



John Carrington/BiS

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20 years getting to the heart of the message

Every branding campaign created by Robertson & Markowitz Advertising and Public Relations Inc. and Robmark Interactive started with a conversation and tough questions.

BY TINA A. BROWN • For BiS

Strategically placed billboards blaring "The 400" in bold burgundy letters started popping up around town about three years ago.

Although most advertisers tell their customers exactly what the business wants right away, this ad campaign created by Robertson & Markowitz Advertising and Public Relations Inc. and Robmark Interactive was whimsical and played coy with its initial message.

The second billboard campaign — "The 400. Be One." — gave the public a clue about the questions they had been asking about the meaning of the original "The 400" billboard. It contained a tagline listing The Benedictine Military School's website address.

The next generation of billboards included photographs of students reciting the phrase "I am one of the 400." Radio ads, brochures and the bc400.com website were also created to raise public awareness that something new was happening at the school.

The net effect was a multi-faceted advertising campaign intended to lure the public, staff and student body into the school's new brand approach to public awareness.

The school wasn't selling a product but a private educational institution, said Pamela L. Veiock, director of marketing at the private all-male military Catholic school.

Other branding campaigns developed by Robertson & Markowitz, a full-service ad agency celebrating its 20th anniversary, are more direct.

The company that opened its doors in a converted house 20 years ago on East Montgomery Crossroad using typewriters and fax machines has grown into a branding powerhouse that provides advertising, website designs, logo marketing and social media for businesses across the country.

All of its campaigns start with a conversation with Ted Robertson and Lisa Markowitz Kitchens and their 10 staff members. They ask the tough questions that get to the heart of whatever message their clients are trying to communicate to the public.

No advertising, branding or public relations campaigns such as the Benedictine promotion occur without significant planning, problem solving and execution, their clients say.



Photos by John Carrington/BiS

Ginny Sanderlin, left, and Lisa Markowitz Kitchens, center, look at artwork produced by graphic designer Chaz Cruz, right, at Robertson & Markowitz Advertising & Public Relations Inc.

Benedictine Military School

About three years ago, the student body at Benedictine, which had traditionally remained steady at 400, had slipped to about 290. The board of directors wanted to reverse that trend and reached out to Robertson, an alumnus, to help create a message that it wanted to return to a student body enrollment of 400.

The multi-pronged campaign helped the 108-year-old institution establish its brand, something it hadn't done before, Veiock said.

"The 400 became the symbol of the school" and galvanized the student body and alumni, she said.

"By using a firm, we were able to focus. Yes, we want to drive up enrollment and to remind our students and alumni about how special they are."

Enrollment is inching up, she said.



Radio ads, brochures and the bc400.com website were created to raise public awareness that something new was happening at Benedictine Military School.

Critz Buick Mercedes BMW GMC

The Critz dealership wanted to connect with all of its potential customers using one ad campaign for all of its brands. Thus, the radio slogan "We make it happen" became the signature statement for the dealership.

Dale Critz Jr. had just finished recording a radio commercial recently for his car dealership when he talked about how Robertson & Markowitz had helped him shape his company and personal brand. It's easy to tape commercials, Critz said, because Robertson and Markowitz do them all the time.

Robertson wrote the script, and Critz was the mouthpiece: "This is Dale Critz Jr. where we make it happen."

"That was Ted's idea," Critz said. He said the campaign carries a consistent message that works for all of his customers,

whether they want to lease, buy or trade any of the company's brands.

"I'm very happy with the message. ... All that message can lead to is someone walking in the door, and we have to handle it from here."

Critz also used the advertising company to shape his public image two years ago when he took the helm of the United Way of the Coastal Empire's fundraising campaign as "Dale Jr., NASCAR," complete with posters and cutouts.

The firm also has prepared press releases, logos and marketing materials for the car dealer's sponsorships of the Savannah Music Festival and the Tybee Run.

"In the past five years, I've never thought of using anyone else," Critz said.



www.fanci-fullhair.com

The Colomer Group had trouble selling its temporary hair-color product to younger but graying women. It sought out Robertson & Markowitz to change a product called Roux. The outcome was a hot pink bottle with a new name, Fanci-Full Temporary Hair Color, a website and other marketing materials.



The Colomer Group

An international hair-care company based in Jacksonville, Fla., had packaging issues with its temporary hair-color line for younger but graying women. The existing bottle for a product called Roux was the color of a tin can and wasn't attractive to Colomer's younger customers.

Shawn Tollerson, the company's vice president of marketing, said she'd done business with Robertson and Markowitz before she left a similar position at Carson products. So she hired them to solve the problem.

"I knew they'd be fast and efficient," Tollerson said. "We were creating a new look for a product that had been around for a long time. We wanted to go after the younger customer who was graying."

The company also owns Crème of Nature and Lottabody hair-care products.

Tollerson said she asked the advertising company to come up with samples of a new bottle and ideas for a new image.

"They are very skilled and extremely passionate about what they do. They don't sit on things. They keep the ball moving until the job is done," she said.

Once packaging samples were developed, Tollerson said her company recruited potential customers for feedback.

The outcome was a hot pink bottle with a new name, Fanci-Full Temporary Hair Color, a website and other marketing materials.

Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Savannah's airport started its push to increase air traffic several years ago by changing its name from the Savannah Airport to the Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport. With the help of an aggressive ad campaign, it has been branded as a regional airport rather than a single-city destination.



ROBERTSON & MARKOWITZ ADVERTISING & PUBLIC RELATIONS INC. | ROBMARK INTERACTIVE

Co-owners: Ted Robertson and Lisa Markowitz Kitchens

Website: robmark.com; robmarkinteractive.com

Phone: 912-921-1040; 912-921-0004

Headquarters: 108 Montgomery Crossroad, Savannah, Ga. 31406

Opened for business: 1990

Unofficial company motto: "We don't do cookie cutter anything. We really come up with the best strategy," said Lisa Markowitz Kitchens. "We don't have a loyalty to any media. We recommend the combination of media that is best for the client."

Employees: 10 full-time

Company services: Television, print, online and radio advertising, public relations, web development, graphic design, creating marketing strategies.

National industry honors: Telly Awards, Silver Microphone Award, Graphic Design USA and ADDY Awards

Clients include: Hospice Savannah, Wendy's, The Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, the Savannah Hilton-Head International Airport, Air Tran, Comcast, The Colomer Group, Spa Crest Hot Tub Manufacturing, First National Bank, The Savannah Philharmonic and Liberty

ABOUT TED ROBERTSON

Education: Earned his bachelor of arts degree in advertising and public relations from the University of Georgia in 1980

Hometown: Savannah

Age: 53

Wife: Karen

Children: Lee and Thor

Background: Started the company with experience in radio, TV and print advertising and sales.

ABOUT LISA MARKOWITZ KITCHENS

Education: Earned her bachelor of arts in advertising and public relations from the University of Georgia in 1986

Hometown: Savannah

Age: 47

Husband: Don Kitchens

Children: Cole and Hannah

Background: Started the company with experience in advertising and marketing.