

MARKET

Settings

A newsletter directed to SMS clients and prospects to communicate topics of common interest.

Summer 2003

KEY

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What's New In Branding?

Actually, aside from the impact of the internet—which can be quite considerable—not very much really; but that's not a good reason to ignore it. In fact, that's a good reason to look at your own branding activities.

Branding techniques and strategies are a very important part of marketing and selling products as well as establishing company name and image.

Branding strategies like publicity, press releases, articles, application notes, case studies, catalog web sites, corporate graphics, tag lines, and more have as their single most important purpose the establishment of brand awareness. Strong brand awareness can relate directly to brand association with those products and company characteristics that buyers appreciate most—namely quality, consistency, and service.

Branding can be a double edged sword. Create a brand or corporate awareness for a product that fails or is inconsistent can create serious problems for other product lines and the company's sales efforts in general. Creating a corporate or product brand is an important undertaking since that brand—and your corporate reputation—are one and the same as far as consumers are concerned.

How are Brands Created? What Strategies are Used?

Frankly, most brands are not created. They simply happen accidentally. Accidental brands are those leading brands such as

DuPont, Bayer, Whatman, Millipore, GE, Mercedes, and others too numerous to mention that became brands through long service, excellence of product lines, value given, and prominence in their markets.

No one in those companies set out to create a "brand". They created good products, stood behind them, and became leaders in their markets through their excellent reputations—

and none can dispute the incredible value of those brands or the awareness that they

Brands help to make your promotional dollars more effective by enhancing your message with a preconceived perception of your company or product brand.

enjoy—worldwide—their names became hallmarks of excellence that materially enhance their products and services.

All of us, as consumers, use brands to identify perceived quality gradations. We are aware of the top brands, suitable brands, mediocre brands, and poor brands. Companies like Proctor & Gamble exploit brand preference and market segmentation by creating premium brands, midrange brands, and low cost brands for similar products and allow the marketplace to select the brand they prefer based on economics or other reasons.

So not all brands are the leading brands in a marketplace, nor should they be. Knowledgeable marketers look at the sizes of markets and their segments to determine the maximum profitability for specific products. Hertz, Avis, National, Dollar, and Budget all compete in the car rental market. Which segments of the market do you suppose Budget and Dollar

are addressing? *Right.*

Brands help to make your promotional dollars more effective by enhancing your message with a preconceived perception of your company or product brand. Your market already knows your credibility, quality, and support posture so they need only learn about specific product features—those of tactical importance. Preference has already been established by the brand, only the application and need ratios need to be determined.

Branding Is Not For Sissies...

Your product line(s) may already carry your company name as a brand, but that might not be enough to compete effectively. You may need to create product "brands" under your umbrella brand name to compete. These brand names frequently state or imply a product

advantage or function. The more vertical the market to be penetrated, the more seriously one should consider creating a specific brand for the specific market to attach it closely to the market needs.

Brands are just words, not products, but they are important and valuable tools in creating market acceptance or even dominance.

People use brands extensively when they purchase products. They become part of their frame of reference and constitute an important advantage in the sales arena. Tried and true brands frequently sell for more money, and earn more profits which in turn allows those brand owners to further promote their brand advantage. Brand X is a dangerous brand, let SMS help you enjoy the advantages of branding.

The above article is set in Helvetica Condensed.

The Path to Visual Media Enlightenment:

THE SMS MEDIA CENTER

Just about everyone who visits the SMS Media Center (formerly SMS Video Productions) for the first time says the same thing, "I had no idea all of this was back here!" While relative anonymity is something we're proud of, our low-overhead hideaway boasts some of the industry's best work at the most affordable prices. We still like to get out there and show our stuff and work closely with clients.

Luckily, we've got some highly experienced marketing people a mere pine-cone's throw away.

So travel with us over to the *other side* of the SMS campus path and take a look at what's happening inside that rather intriguing looking brown building with the long, unmarked driveway. And get ready to be blown away.

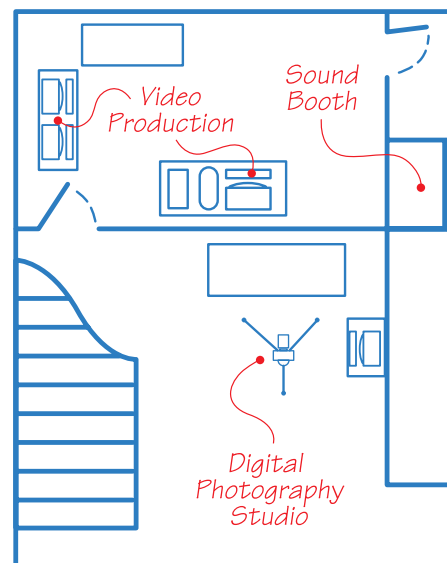
The moment one enters the front door, expectations of a rustic, country style setting disappear altogether. The main room is divided into a versatile digital video/photography studio space, complete with high ceilings, an array of lights and backgrounds, and a web services and multimedia production department, screens flashing and blinking. **On any given day, one may witness a live-action shoot involving a client's breakthrough product on one side, and on the other, web page flowcharts being meticulously plotted, which become intuitively navigable designs.**

In keeping with today's digital media crossover climate where programs such as Flash™ and Macromedia® Director® are incorporated into a variety of projects, many multimedia presentations are done here as well.

The open architecture of the space conveys a real sense of community, allowing the talented SMS Media Center staff to circulate and interact easily, creating a synergistic environment much like that of a film set or newsroom. Ideas are exchanged openly and freely, which keeps the concepts fresh and unhinged. In fact, it's difficult not to become immediately engaged in what's going on in here. There's no reception area, no foyer of garnered trophies (though the Center



Web Design & Site Management: Creative juices being poured on screen as a client's web site comes to life.



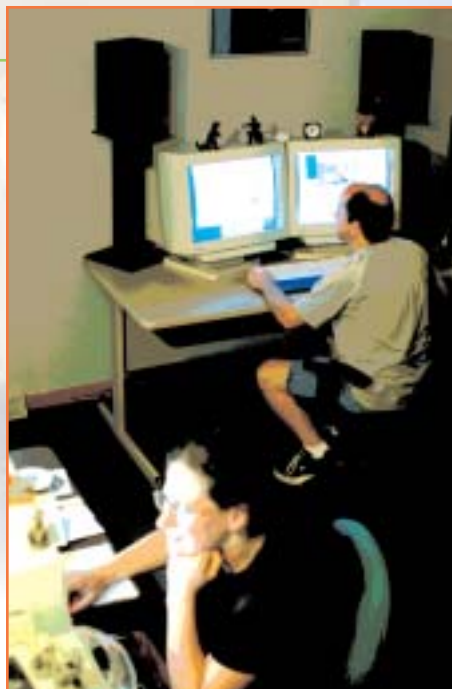
Digital Video/Photography Studio: The Art Department comps an ad as the product is being digitally shot



Web Design & Site Management: A bird's-eye view of client site revisions being implemented "as they speak"

is still winning its share when it remembers to enter the various industry contests).

Once you're in, you're a witness to the process of creating highly energized, professional visual media for professionals. Crossing over the digital video/photography studio floor, we pass through a door into a familiar looking scene: people seated in front of computers, intently tweaking "tekkie" looking visuals and sounds. Welcome to the SMS Media Center's editing and animation suite.

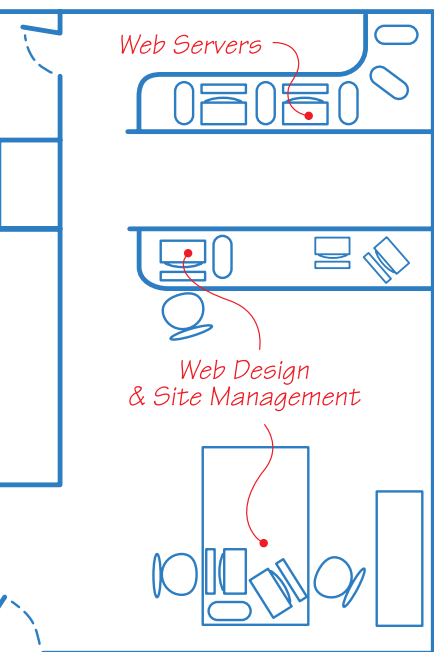


Editing/Animation suite: Gina brings a drawing to life with animation as Frank digitally edits a client video

A quick look "behind-the-behind-the-scenes" shows a collection of servers that host and support all of SMS clients' web sites. Their count seems to grow every six months or so. Rest assured that it's a sign of good work, on time and on budget and not some strange computer mating ritual. Not yet, anyway!

Other than a couple of production offices and duplication decks upstairs, and climate controlled storage downstairs, that's the short tour of the SMS Media Center's facility and daily

activities. Compact and efficient in size, not unlike the ever-evolving technologies it utilizes, the facility offers unlimited visual media capabilities. In fact, the analogy works fairly well...the SMS Media Center packs a ton of power in just the right amount of space. And that adds up to amazing benefits for SMS clients.



What was once a room full of bulky racks of tape decks and monitors of all sizes, has now been consolidated into a few computer workstations. Remnants of technology's past still exist—a tiny monitor here, some rack mounted equipment there—but all in all, things have changed for the smaller, and, thankfully, the better. High-end digital video is produced in this room, with sophisticated animation that adds clarity and zest to SMS client concepts. It's not unusual to shoot something in the studio, load it into Final Cut Pro, edit it, add music and sound effects, maybe a dancing

logo or two, and output it to DVD in the span of an afternoon. And an isolated sound booth brings with it the capabilities of professional voice-over and live sound effects on premise. So if you're getting the picture that everything is done more quickly, with more consistency, and therefore more cost-effectively, it sounds like your picture is working properly!



Web Servers: These little guys keep SMS clients on-line

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The above article is set in GillSans.

SMS
scientific
marketing
services

P.O. Box 600
Minotola, NJ 08341-0600
1-856/697-1257
FAX: 1-856/697-9639
E-mail: info@SMSmktg.com
www.SMSmktg.com

Sales Leads: How Many Buy?

In these days of falling inquiry numbers, the value of inquiries needs to be looked at carefully...along with ways to capture more prospect names.

According to research studies done by M.H. McIntosh, a professional sales lead tracking service, the numbers are higher than you might expect.

After tracing more than 40,000 sales inquiries from direct mail campaigns, trade shows, and other promotional activities, they found that

"24% of the people who respond to a promotion will buy from someone—either you or a competitor—within six months."

Forty-five percent buy within 12 months. Within a year nearly 50% will purchase someone's product or service!

So when your field reps tell you that your leads are "just collecting literature", remind them that getting the information is only the first step in a buying process. If they are really sales people, rather than "order takers" they will have to follow up regularly, build a relationship, and offer their assistance. If they don't, someone else will, and who do you think will get the order?

At SMS we've been preaching for years that we need to "close the loop" in the sales cycle with good literature, follow-up, and regular contacts (Cahners & McGraw Hill indicate that five to eight contacts need to be made before a sale occurs.) It's still important.

We really don't feel that most sales suspects are collecting our clients' literature for display on coffee tables, do you?

Talk to your SMS representative or give me a call, maybe we can help you close the loop on greater sales.

—Bob Norton

The above article is set in Futura Book.



And the SMS family goes on and on! Please join us in welcoming our two newest (and by far cutest) additions to this little marketing world...

Dustin Neil Pyles was born to Kevin and Becky Pyles on November 14th, 2002 at 8:43 pm. This little blue-eyed ham (or should we say "not so little") weighed 8 lbs. 10 ozs. and measured 21 inches long.... you go, Beck! I'm sure Nathan just can't wait 'til his little bro is up and running circles around mom and dad right along with him!

And just two months later, on January 23rd, 2003 at 11:11am, Nicole and Rob Blank were blessed with Trinity Catherine. Trinity weighed 7 lbs. 11 ozs. and was 19-1/2 inches long...she hasn't stopped growing since!

Well, they say each baby you have is bigger than the last...so who are "they" anyway!



THE ART DEPARTMENT's got a new attitude! *artist*

Melissa Hay joined SMS in November, bringing a whole new mind's eye (to say the least!) to the Art Department. It's always a good thing to continue getting fresh graphic ideas in here! Melissa earned her Associates Degree in Graphic Design from The Art Institute of Philadelphia and she adds, continues to learn since she's begun her venture here at SMS. When she's not pushing out graphics at her computer next to fellow artists, Melissa enjoys video games, music and sees her fair share of movies...which seems to have become the Art Department Monday morning topics. Well, Melissa, thanks for joining us... we welcome you and your hard-working attitude!



The above article is set in GillSans.

Color Chips

illustrations by David Ricci



I've never seen her hair down—it's always in a giant bun!...it's huge, it's enormous, it's just out there, it's in your face, it must have its own zip code, its own gravitational field...it's bunderful, it's the 9th bunder of the world, it's a bunderama, it's pure bundermonium, it's Alice in bunderland, it's Mutiny on the Bunty, it's the bun of my existance...I think she digs me!