

A STAR-GAZING, 3D BRANDING CAMPAIGN DELIGHTS CLIENTS

By Marilynn Deane Mendel

Branding campaigns need to keep their momentum. They need to be consistent and for Hickok Cole Architects, they need to be fun. We have kept a “LOOK” campaign as a constant throughout the last three years of branding the firm using simple ads with tag lines like “Look Up” set over an image of a class A office building. Words like “vision, visionary designers, looking forward,” have all played a central part of the brand message. (see “Through the Looking Glass: A Brand New Vision,” *A/E Rainmaker*, May 2006). It was imperative to fold the LOOK campaign into our 2008 marketing plan.

Few things catch Washingtonians’ eyes, so I knew the firm’s 20th anniversary had to start with a splash, and be jazzy throughout the year to draw people to our web site. And, I wanted to bring in a new element. Out-of-town “star” architects have steadily moved into the local scene, so I wanted to show that Hickok Cole Architects are STAR architects as well.

I like a play on words when approaching clients. It has always paid off with an overwhelmingly positive response. It worked with the “Big Brand Ranch” party invitation the previous year. (see “Rebranding Continues,” *A/E Rainmaker*, June 2006). In this case, I thought that calling attention to ‘local’ star architects for an entire year might put a subliminal buzz in the local developers’ ears.

I started with a concept of 3D glasses to view 3D images of our buildings on our web site. In addition, I laid out the social marketing component that would go with the plan, the ways to draw people to the web site, and the gift that would tie everything together and make a big splash right from the start — electronic telescopes that worked from computer-generated disks.

All 35,000 glasses would have to be consecutively numbered, for tracking the prize drawings, (that’s five mailings over the year). The winning numbers would be posted on the web site, along with a “star chart” for each month, 3D images of the firm’s buildings, prizes of designer eye-glass frames, a link to the NASA space satellite, and a “star gallery” for photos of people seen around town wearing their 3D glasses. In my mind, I could see these glasses everywhere.

I wanted to foreshadow the campaign with a holder for the first glasses to keep them on people’s desk for the year, as well as build enthusiasm for what was to come. I envisioned a magnetic holder with five pairs of wild and crazy glasses hanging on people’s filing cabinets, and my passion and belief became electric — total buy-in from the start. After that it became a total team effort.

The graphic designer at Hickok Cole, Sarah Barr, has produced complicated campaigns that won national awards, and are fun, yet sophisticated. Yolanda Cole

came up with “20/20 vision,” and a special type of star chart to go with the telescope. Sarah researched how to produce 3D glasses and developed a budget that made us all take a deep breath. Michael Hickok laughed as he said that “three years ago he never would have approved a 3D glasses campaign.”

The final version has Hickok Cole’s best projects inside a star-shaped image, with a holder for the glasses, and a holiday card inside a clear red envelop with stars printed on it, and a postage stamp with an image from “Star Wars.” While Sarah worked out the printing solutions, Noel Carson and Jennifer Afflerbach coordinated the delivery, wrapping, and the personalized gift card signing for the 250 telescopes. It took more time figuring out how to wrap the (31"x10"x15") object than it did to organize most everything else.

Sarah found red nylon laundry bags for \$3 each. We had a fulfillment house remove the outside box and price tag, then insert the inner box. We picked them up with a van and hand delivered the telescopes to Hickok Cole’s clients and prized contacts. The team tied a silver ribbon, star chart, and signed card to each package as they drove throughout the city.

Two days later the phones rang off the hook. E-mails poured in from all over the city. (It was the first time we ever had people call us and ask us for a gift). Our clients were delighted as revealed by the following comments.

“You have all lost your minds! I just got back to my office and found a

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telescope in it. WOW! I took astronomy in college and as a sailor the stars at night have saved my bacon offshore many times. I am blown away with your generosity and I am extremely touched."

"Yolanda and Mike: what an over-the-top and wonderful gift. Wow. I can't thank you enough...although I'm across from Verizon Center, I promise to use the telescope to look skyward only."

"Thank you both so much for the wonderful, unnecessary but very much appreciated telescope! My children and I assembled it and stargazed over the weekend in the mountains. The bitter cold brought with it a beautifully clear night sky which we enjoyed in shifts due to the one-degree temperature! Thank you very much. It is a very thoughtful gift and one which we will use often."

"Thank you so much for the telescope. My 5 1/2 year old is so excited, he was actually asking for one for his birthday. He loves science and the stars. Please thank your other associates as well, we really appreciate it. This was a refreshing change from a lot of the other things you receive in this business."

"Many thanks!!! for the ultra cool gift! There is no end to your creativity and we can't wait to use our telescope."

"Great marketing idea! Splashy, fun, clever. And congratulations on your anniversary!"

Don't take our word for it - go to the Hickok Cole web site and take a look at some of the people who have sent in their pictures. www.hickokcole.com.

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RAINMAKER RESOURCE:

TRACKING DOWN A CONTACT

By Ford Harding

Tracking down and talking to people you went to school with or worked with earlier in your life can be great fun and generate leads for lots of new business.

This is even truer of old clients. One person I know had consulted to a financial services mega-corporation for years, when a sudden change in the CEO put most of his contacts at the company on the street looking for work. He stayed in touch with about ten of the most senior ones who quickly found jobs in other organizations. Three of these brought his firm in with them.

Three years later he took a look at a list of other people he had known at the mega-corporation who were no longer there and with whom he had lost touch. He tracked down fifteen more. One of them bought \$1,000,000 worth of services this year. The ballot is out on many of the others.

Finding old contacts is easier that it has ever been, because of the power of the Internet. Lifehacker.com has just posted an article entitled, *How to Track Down Anyone on Line*. This is a valuable source for finding people whom you have misplaced over the years.

But, before we give in and do it the easy way, let's be sure it is the best way. In the old days (just yesterday, if you are my age), finding a lost contact often meant calling mutual friends who might know where he/she had gone. You might have to contact three people before finding someone who knew where the contact could be found.

Not as efficient as a Google search, it provided a wonderful excuse to call other people with whom you wanted to reconnect. You can call up someone you haven't talked with for years and say, "Remember me. I know it's been too long since we last talked. I was trying to track down Bev Binder and thought you might know how to reach her. But first, how have things been going for you since we last talked?"

Having an adequate reason for calling is a challenge for most professionals just starting out to develop new business. Tracking down a contact is a ready-made reason for calling lots of dormant prospects. Don't let new technology seduce you away from taking advantage of it.

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