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Hitting the Mark— *Successful Branding for Today's Professional*

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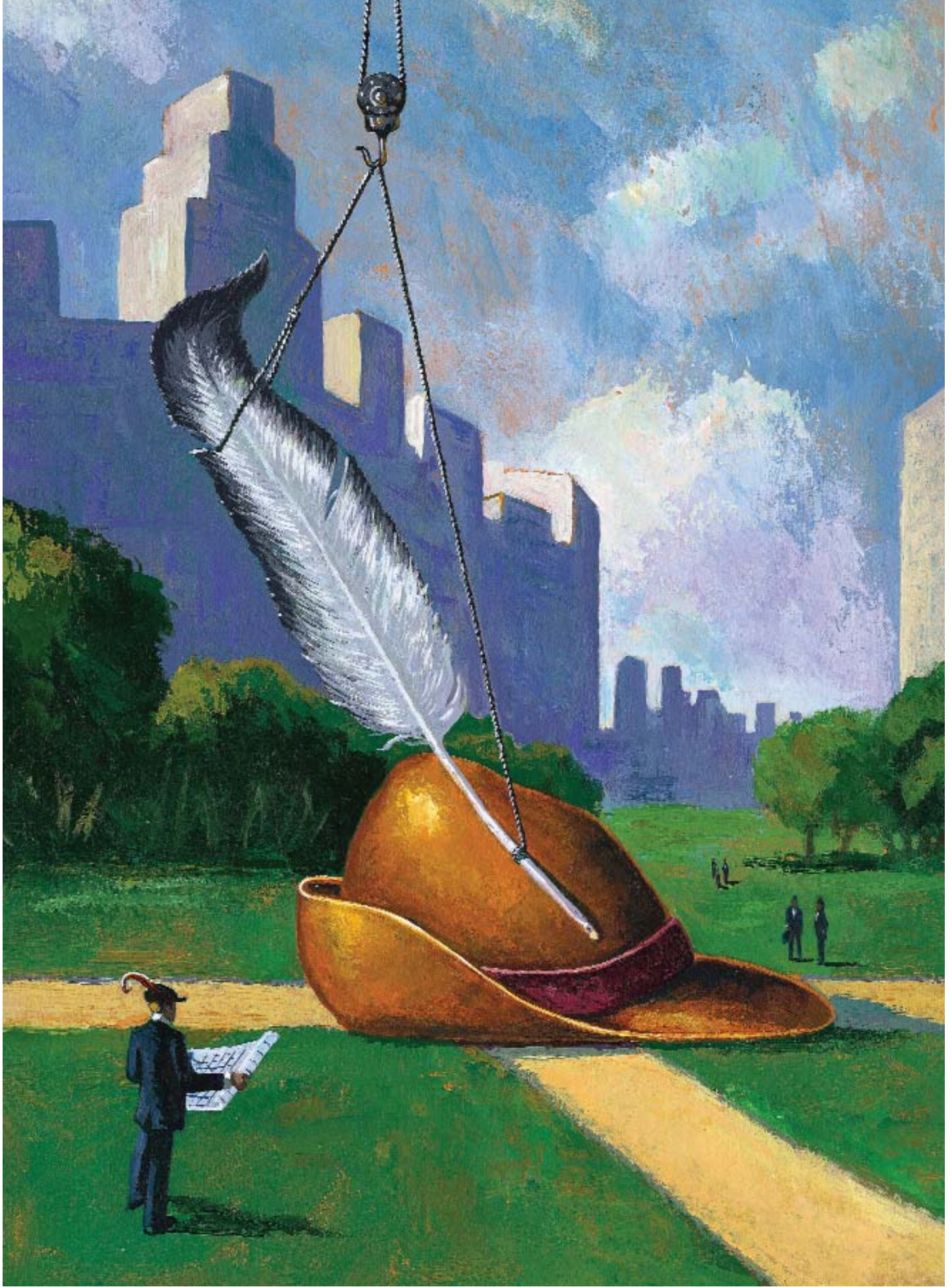
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Building Brand Awareness

By Keri Jones

When considering marketing as a function of disaster response, many of us conjure up images of doughnut runs, golf tournaments, luncheons, endless hours of handshakes and toothy grins. Although these activities are an important function of effective marketing, they fall perilously short of a complete marketing program.

Marketing is not all about selling. Rather, marketing is about building a brand in the mind of your prospect. If you successfully build a powerful brand, then you have built a powerful marketing program. Brand building and marketing are so completely intertwined it is impossible to separate the two.

What exactly does branding mean? Wikipedia states branding is to mark as you would cattle with a branding iron to identify ownership. From a business point of view, branding in the market place is much like branding on the ranch. A branding program should be designed to differentiate your service from all the other cattle on the range. The dictionary also states branding is how consumers associate with the brand name of a manufacturer or source. For example, someone in your office holds up an envelope and says "I need to overnight this." Most people will automatically think "FedEx."

"The most profound thing about branding is that it is a singular idea or concept that you OWN inside the mind of the prospect. Most of our knowledge that affects our purchasing behavior has been pre-sold through effective branding."

—Al Reis, world renowned marketing analyst

For years, disaster response contractors have focused their branding efforts on more of an individualized basis. For example, a good relationship with an insurance adjuster brands a specific contractor as being a reputable company. However, in an industry full of ever changing and over challenging insurance programs, many contractors have started looking for

alternative outlets to build their brand within their service communities. One such outlet is in public relations and advertising campaigns directed at the end consumer.

Specifically, campaigns designed to influence the insured or property owner/manager to call them before the insurance company gets involved. With this in mind, a successful branding program is extremely important as it defines who you are and what you do for the end consumer. It's a very different process to brand your company within the minds of say 500,000 people than it is to brand with a handful of property managers or insurance adjusters. This is not to say the latter is unimportant. It just takes a different strategy to effectively brand not only your company, but also the disaster response industry, which for the most part, most end consumers don't even know exists.

Proper branding techniques are extremely important when reaching out to a broader and diverse audience. In order to be effective with your branding, there are some helpful guidelines. Al Ries has written numerous books on branding, including his most famous book, *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*. In my opinion, he is one of the great authorities on branding. If you are interested in branding, I would encourage you to read his books. They're well written and easy to understand. In one of his books, he outlines "The 22 Laws of Branding."

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All 22 laws in some way or another apply to all of us. However, there are certain laws that are more applicable to our industry. To kick off these laws of branding, let's start with brand name and logotype.



A few years ago, Utah Disaster Kleenup reformatted their logotype to fit these laws. Can you see the improvement of the new edition over the previous?

We adopted the horizontal shape, changed the typeset and spacing, and the clean white lettering on top of the black box really makes the letters pop. The symbol was part of the new edition, but does not dominate the brand name like the previous logo. Notice how the symbol itself didn't change, just the way it now appears with all of the other elements.

disaster response. It's a perfect fit and ties in well with the company's overall branding objectives.

The Law of the Name

Probably the most important branding decision you will ever make is the one to name your brand because, as Reis likes to say, "In the long run, a brand is nothing more than a name." Many companies like XEROX, Coca-Cola, Zippo and WD-40 have chosen to keep the corporate and brand name the same. However, most marketing experts agree brand names should be separate and almost always take precedence over the company name. For example, I don't wash my clothes with Proctor and Gamble, I wash them with Tide. For the disaster response industry, this is a tough one because many have company names relating to their core business and there are just as many who don't.

My career began years ago with a disaster response firm called UDK Solutions. They are known in this industry for their brand—Utah Disaster Kleenup. When we began our branding campaign to reach the end user, we chose "Utah Disaster Kleenup" as the brand name to represent our core business, which is

The Law of the Shape

The law of the shape refers to a company's logotype. A logotype is the trademark (visual symbol of the brand) combined, in typeset with the name of the brand.

The first element of a logotype is the shape. Logotypes come in all shapes and sizes. Experts agree that the ideal shape and size of a logotype is horizontal providing maximum impact for the eyes.

The second element is the typeset used to express the brand. For instance, some companies use the typeset to create the "mood" for their brand. A company using Bookman Old Style as their typeset is trying to create the mood of an old, established brand. A company using the typeset Kristen ITC is trying to create the mood of a more informal, casual brand. Whatever your typeset, it should be clean, legible and easy to read.

The last element of the logotype is the symbol. Symbols are important, but even more important are the words accompanying the symbol. Oftentimes, artists place too much emphasis on elaborate symbols. Keep in mind the symbol should not overpower the word.

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The Law of Color

There are other ways you can make your brand stand out and that is through color. One of the most important laws when selecting color is to use a color that is the opposite or different than that of your major competitor. Just like Pepsi chose blue because red was already taken. When you are the leader in your category like Coke was, you have the first choice. Normally the best color to select is one representing your brand.

John Deere picked green to represent the color of grass, trees and agriculture. For our industry, yellow represents hazard, black and red represent smoke and fire, and blue stands true for water. As far as the emotions related to color, Reis believes that over the

years, some colors have become identified with various attributes. For example, white is the color of purity. Black is the color of luxury. Blue is the color of leadership. Purple is the color of royalty. Green is the color of the environment, and red is the color of energy and excitement. Whatever color you choose to brand your company with, the most important factor to remember is color consistency over the long term can help a brand burn its way into the mind of the prospect. Look at what yellow has done for Caterpillar, brown for UPS, and the way our eyes can spot the purple and orange stripes on a FedEx package from 100 feet away. These powerful brands have indeed burned their colors into our minds.

While considering these three laws, creating or modifying your brand still requires a great deal of patience, research and introspection. It's a reflection of who you are and the culture of your company. Just as people recognize you by the unique characteristics of your face, they will also recognize your company by the unique characteristics of your brand. Therefore, be cautious and never feel compelled to rush the process of creating the brand that represents your company. Spending four to six months, or longer, is a reasonable amount of time to contemplate and ensure the elements of your brand are the expressions you want to convey.

Over the next year, other laws of branding and how they might apply to the disaster response industry will be featured. We will take a close look at some of your peers who have put in place consistent end user branding campaigns and analyze their overall success. Future articles will provide tools and tips to help you with public relations, which is one of the most important elements of successful branding.

In the end, the hope is to erase the sticky stigma of "doughnut runs" as a perceived marketing plan and replace it with the knowledge that marketing is all about branding and the essence of marketing is building a brand in the mind of the consumer. ■



Keri Jones has 13 years of marketing experience in the disaster response industry. She was a driving force behind the organization and inception of Restoration Media Marketing, (an advertising agency designed specifically for restoration contractors) and continues to play an active role in developing

public advertising campaigns for companies in this particular industry. She can be reached at kjones@disastershappen.com.