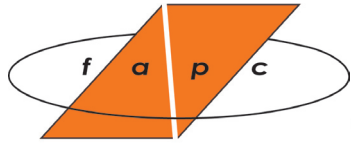


Food and Agricultural Products Center



FLASH!!

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY™

March 16, 2004

Center Uses OKC Ad Agency as an Information Resource

STILLWATER, Okla. – The Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center is a valuable resource for many people throughout the state. However, the Center also uses resources within the state to keep current on new methods and technology in the food and agricultural industries.

One company that the Center has developed a relationship with is Harsha & Associates, an advertising firm located in Oklahoma City. Mark Harsha, president and creative director, is devoted to the food industry and works with approximately 1500 stores, mostly food retailers and wholesalers.

Jim Brooks, business and marketing specialist for the Center said the Center is fortunate to have Mark and his agency as a resource.

“His experience and knowledge of the food industry have proven to be invaluable since he started his own agency,” Brooks said. “Mark and his staff are very creative and emphasize the importance of building a ‘brand’ recognition rather than selling a product.”

Harsha graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in advertising and a minor in marketing. He worked for Fleming Co. for 19 years before starting his own business more than three years ago.

Harsha said he gained his experience working with food industry companies while at Fleming.

“I’m taking advantage of what I learned at Fleming and applying it to my own business,” Harsha said.

Harsha and his 13 associates believe an important aspect when working with a client is to get to know the client’s business through research.

“Researching the client can save our customer money because we better understand the task at hand,” he said. “We’re financially committed to our clients being stewards of our their money.”

Harsha said advertising has changed over the years. There are more, diverse ways to advertise now than there was in the past; however, advertising has become more expensive.

According to an article in the *Progressive Grocer*, Harsha offered several tips to companies about marketing products and ways to improve companies as a whole.

These tips include: be proud of your independence, question everything, focus on service, look at other ways of doing things, listen to people, watch your customers, develop a detailed advertising and marketing plan, get involved in the community, and at times be a kid and have fun.

Because of his experience in marketing and the food industry, Harsha was asked to speak at a “Real World” Marketing Workshop held last year at the Center. He spoke to approximately 75 people, who sought help from the Center in starting their own businesses, about “branding” their products.

During Harsha’s presentation, he said most successful companies develop brands that deliver quality, either

actual or perceived. A brand's objective is to attract a customer, and innovation and marketing are two basic functions used to attract customers.

However, Harsha said the single most important consideration any business should make is "what does the customer want?" Innovation and marketing should address the consumers' needs and influence how they perceive the value of the product or brand.

Positioning the brand is the next important strategy. The customer determines the positioning of the brand, not the retailer or manufacturer.

Two implications are important when positioning the brand, Harsha said. Occupying a strategically, strong position will result in a marketing success, but occupying an ineffective area will ultimately result in a marketing failure.

"If the 'brand' isn't distinctive in what it offers, it becomes a commodity, forced to compete on price," Harsha said.

Harsha & Associates is a full service agency providing services such as consumer research, strategic planning, creative services, digital photography, public relations, communications and more.

"I would advise any client we work with here at the Center to budget an appropriate amount of money in their project for the type of service that Mark and his agency provide," Brooks said.

For more information on Harsha & Associates, contact Harsha at (405) 604-0404 or mark@harshaassociates.com.

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