

Harsha Speaks at FAPC Marketing Workshop

STILLWATER, Okla.—An advertising and promotions specialist was one of nine presenters during the Food & Agricultural Products Center's second annual “Real World” Marketing Workshop held recently.

Mark Harsha, president and creative director, for Harsha & Associates spoke to approximately 40 participants regarding advertising and promotional strategies during the workshop.

Harsha, a 1979 graduate of Oklahoma State University with a degree in advertising/public relations, has more than 25 years experience in creating award-winning advertising.

He began working as assistant advertising manager for Oklahoma City-based Fleming Companies, a national wholesale and retail food company, in 1982 and was soon promoted to director of advertising.

After leaving Fleming in 1999, Harsha went to work for Jordan & Associates. In 2000, Harsha, along with his wife Kay, started his own advertising and promotions agency, Harsha & Associates, headquartered in Oklahoma City.

During his presentation, Harsha discussed branding and marketing a product effectively.

Research shows one common thread present in almost every successful business, said Harsha. That common thread is branding, and it is an important part of successful businesses.

Harsha said whether it is retail business or business in general, brands provide the consumer intrinsic value or the illusion of such value. Brands have one objective and that is to attract a customer.

“Emotions are very important and branding is a lot about emotion,” he said.

To attract a customer, a company has two basic functions: innovation and marketing, Harsha said. Innovation and marketing should address consumers’ needs and influence how they perceive the value of a product or brand.

Harsha also discussed the concept of brand positioning. Companies need to know what customers perceive as the “image” of the brand.

Harsha encouraged the participants to not think of advertising as an expense, but as an investment. The key is to advertise effectively and efficiently, he said.

"The process for effective advertising is research, planning and execution," Harsha said.

The first stage is to research consumer attitudes, competitive analysis and market information. The second stage is to develop a marketing plan and identify situation analysis, objectives and strategy. The third stage is execution, which involves being creative, selecting the correct media and measuring results.

Choosing the best media is important and critical for advertising the message.

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

The purpose for the marketing workshop was to help participants address marketing issues such as market identification, market research and market planning, said Jim Brooks, FAPC business planning and marketing specialist and chair of the workshop.

"The fact is a good marketing program is essential to survive and succeed in the highly competitive food-marketing arena," Brooks said. "Marketing is not just radio, television and other advertising. It's not just knocking on doors of prospective buyers and attending trade shows. It's critical for success."

Other speakers during the workshop included Del Van Horn, Advance Food Co.; Steve Long, Food Marketing Specialists; Bob Johnson, Sysco Food Services; Vince Orza, Eateries, Inc.; Randy Earhart, Taco Mayo; David Books; Shawnee Milling Co.; Gerald Cockerham, Associated Wholesale Grocers; and Lee Ann Potter, Oklahoma Restaurant Association.

###

Oklahoma State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, State and Local Governments Cooperating. The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or status as a veteran, and is an equal opportunity employer.