

BUSINESS

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SUBURBAN BUSINESS LEADERS

Larry E. Knox of Troy has been appointed director of joint education activities for General Motors Corp. and will serve as GM executive co-director at the UAW-GM Resource Center, which provides training, education and development programs and activities for approximately 289,000 UAW-represented GM workers.



Larry E. Knox

W.B. Doner & Company has hired Mary Gael Senko of Southfield as senior vice president/management supervisor on the Chiquita Brands International account. Senko has 15 years experience working on name brand products in the packaged food category.



Mary Gael Senko

Lee M. Gardner has been named president and chief executive officer of Masco Industries, Inc., succeeding E.H. (Bill) Billig, who, having held the position since 1986, is retiring. Prior to his appointment, Gardner was president — automotive operations for Masco Industries.



Lee M. Gardner

Fran Thels of Bloomfield Hills has been named marketing communications/public relations coordinator for Schmaltz and Company, P.C., certified public accountants and consultants. Thels' responsibilities include marketing materials and development, public relations advertising, and seminar and special events planning.



Fran Thels

To submit materials to this column, please send a brief biographical summary along with a black-and-white photo, if possible, to: Business Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.



STEPHEN CASTELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Designing logos: Dick Nicolson helps companies develop images and identities through graphic representations.

Businesses get a leg up with logos

■ How a company is perceived by its public often starts with a company image or logo. But translating a company's identity into a symbol that can be readily identified takes more than putting pen to paper.

By DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

It's difficult to put a value on image.

But without it, businesses tend to have problems surviving, designers, public relations professionals and image consultants maintain.

"Non-verbal communication can make or break a business," said Joyce Knudsen, owner of Image Maker in

Bloomfield Hills. "The first thing you have to do as a reporter is get people to talk. As a consultant, the first thing I have to do is get people to know I exist."

"Everyone has to do something to set themselves apart from everyone else," said Beverly A. White, a marketer for Graphic Visions in Northville.

"Nowadays, CEOs are seeing that it's more important," said Dick Nicolson, president of Nicolson Design in Bloomfield Hills. "The logo sometimes is the first and only thing the market will see about your company."

A good logo, image or identity won't guarantee more business, professionals say. But it's difficult to get invited to the dance if no one knows who you are.

Nicolson designs logos and develops plans for the logos' presentation.

"When we look at image design, we try to portray what image a company thinks it should be," he said. "Big companies are so visible, they don't have to go into a detailed image. When you think of Chrysler and GM, you think about cars."

"A lot is input from client," Nicolson continued. "You research how a company is perceived by its market by talking to its clientele. Owners are probably the last ones to know how they're perceived in the marketplace."

Nicolson's own stationery consists of "Nicolson Design" printed in black letters in one corner plus the basic shapes — triangle, square and circle in the primary colors of red, blue and yellow in the other corners.

He recently designed a logo to be used to promote the 1994 U.S. Figure Skating Championships. "We had to create an image that immediately told you it was skating, it's going to be in Detroit and it's going to be special."

His design — a pair of skaters as a hood ornament on a classic car.

The philosophy is the same for business. "The basic goal in any logo is to give a clear, concise, simple message that can be identified almost immediately," Nicolson said.

Take, for example, a logo he designed for the former owners of Charley's Restaurant Group. "We tried to create a '40s tavern look with older style lettering and a plain, simple

See IMAGE, 2C

Commercial trade exchange records growth in bartering

By R.J. KING
STAFF WRITER

As a growing number of companies are being sent to the regulatory woodshed due to fraud, falsifying corporate data and outright embezzlement, commercial trade exchanges are moving in the opposite direction.

In recent years, companies have been turning to exchanges as a safer, more secure way of doing business, taking advantage of a stone-aged method of trade — bartering — to fight off the economic slowdown.

But with the advance has come growing pains. Popular items that come up for trade on a limited basis, such as computers, fax machines or trucks, are often bartered away. While charges of favoritism have been rare, some trade brokers have taken pains to stifle such claims.

"When we have a high demand for a good or service, clients want assurances that I'm acting in an ethical manner," said Daniel Blugerman, a Farmington Hills resident who is senior account executive for the Michigan Trade Exchange (MTE) in Oak Park.

"They want to know that I act the same way no matter what the product. Members, some of whom are competitors, want to make sure there are no tipoffs which go into processing a trade. When there is a waiting list for a particular item, we work on a first-come, first-serve basis."

To add a measure of ethical standing to his profession, Blugerman was recently accredited a Certified Trade Broker (CTB) by the International Reciprocal Trade Association, the third barter professional in Michigan to receive the designation in the four years it has been offered.

"The certification is based on educational degree, years of experience, activism in the industry along with three client references," said Blugerman, who now lists CTB after his name on business cards.



Daniel Blugerman

"Once those factors have been met, you're eligible to take a comprehensive written and oral exam. The exam takes about half a day.

The questions center on ethical and business matters, with six essay questions and 50 multiple choice."

With 13 years of experience, Blugerman has 400 clients, 30 percent of whom are concentrated in the restaurant industry.

"Most of what I do is over the phone, encouraging members to trade," he said. "For all the technology out there today, this is still a personal-service industry."

Overall, MTE has 4,000 members which last year recorded \$20 million in sales volume. Over the last five years, Fred Detwiler, president of the exchange, said annual sales have grown 8 to 10 percent on average.

"Companies have become so accustomed to exchanges that they've appointed bartering managers to keep track of everything," said Detwiler. "The minute we print a catalog, it's already out of date. Many of our members say they would never have been able to make improvements to their businesses without the exchange."

Bartering offers companies a way to increase sales, move surplus inventory and make use of excessive capacity — all priorities in a downturn. Many firms have even used bartering as a way to collect on bad debt or as a creative means of financing.

But even in good times, companies have quietly been discovering the unique method of trade. Small firms can accumulate trade dollars, or credits, in return for products or services offered on an exchange. Using those credits, firms can then purchase goods and services offered by any other member of the exchange.

For instance, a printer may barter its services for office furniture, maintenance work on its delivery trucks or repairs on a leaky roof. While members pay wholesale for items bought through the exchange, they don't escape the Internal Revenue Service. Trade dollars are treated exactly like cash dollars for tax purposes.

"The trade exchange dollars have allowed me to remodel and expand my practice, as well as (buy) office supplies and furniture," said Dr. Michael McGrath, an optometrist and owner of the Farmington Vision Clinic in Farmington, an MTE member since 1991.

"It's also brought us business by bringing in new people, so I can use my trade dollars to advertise. We're even starting to use our dollars on the supplier side. It's a very creative network."

Most exchanges charge an average \$500 membership fee and a 10 percent transaction fee — a 5 percent to the buyer and 5 percent to the seller — on every deal. While complete figures on the dollar value of barter in the U.S. don't exist, the Reciprocal Trade Association estimates companies will trade over \$1 billion in goods and services this year.

If non-exchange trading — primarily large deals between corporations arranged through trading companies — is counted, total barter volume would rise to over \$6 billion, said the association.



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