

# Company that rebuilds initiates a rebranding

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Boston Valley Terra Cotta President John Krouse knows a thing or two about what's needed to rebuild something. The Orchard Park company, which his family bought in 1981, makes architectural terra cotta for restoration and new construction.

Krouse said he realized in 2009 that his company's brand needed attention. Eventually he selected OtherWisz Creative Corp. to oversee the process.

"Rebranding is all about understanding your audience, understanding what their needs and expectations are and delivering on that product or service in a way that differentiates yourself from the competition,"

said Robert Travers, principal at Travers Collins & Co.

The Buffalo-based marketing communications firm has rebranded companies such as Northtown Automotive Cos., Medaille College and Catholic Health.

Over the years, Krouse said, customers seemed confused about his company because of inconsistent messaging. He said it resulted from different people over time managing various components of its communications efforts.

"We needed to reel it in," he said.

There are other reasons why businesses consider rebranding, according to James Hettich, CEO of Crowley Webb and Associ-

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ates.

He said some clients may notice a competitor ramping up communication or advertising efforts.

Other times, clients think rebranding can help them take advantage of a business or market opportunity, he said.

"They want to evolve so that they are perceived as credible in delivering on the market opportunity," Hettich said.

Mark Wisz and his wife, Jill, own the advertising and design firm Otherwisz, which the Boston Valley company originally asked to revamp its website before the rebranding began.

"The company exploration process included research, interviews, questionnaires and brainstorming sessions with Boston Valley employees. Everyone had a voice to refocus the company's message and taglines," Jill Wisz said.

For Krouse, the process was eye-opening.

"Some questions made us think that we had to redo our business plan and how we thought of our company," he said.

Hettich said when researching a brand and compiling feedback from decision makers and other key influencers, "you get an understanding of how executives understand the brand. Then you juxtapose that with how the brand is perceived."

Mark Wisz, meanwhile, said Boston Valley Terra Cotta's previous materials didn't accurately reflect the kind of company it is - one that uses clay and other natural products.



John Krouse, left, of Boston Valley Terra Cotta customizes a box of materials used by his sales staff. It was designed by Mark Wisz, center, and Jill Wisz as part of a rebranding effort.

"Their image is as artisans and innovators," Jill Wisz said.

The new look emphasizes earth tones, high-end printing and natural ink colors to accentuate the elegance and sturdiness of the company's products.

Krouse and Sheri Carter, sales and marketing director, said they are happy with the rebranding so far.

Of the Wiszes, Carter said, "We felt they listened and told us, 'This is what we're seeing in your graphics.'"

"We created a new logo that reflected the legacy of architectural terra cotta by creating a bas-relief antefix, a roof ornament that appears throughout architectural history," Mark Wisz said.

New business cards were printed on a thick, brick-colored textured stock and feature an embossed antefix. The Wiszes also designed a compact, full-color box packed with terra cotta chips for sales staff that earned a 2011 American Package Design Award.

## Rebranding 101

There are many audiences to consider when rebranding a business.

"But perhaps the most critical audience is employees," said James Hettich, CEO of Crowley Webb and Associates. "They are the most important touch point. The interface that a customer of one of our clients will have is with their sales force or sales representatives."

Employees must have a deep understanding of what the brand is and of the company they work for, he said.

"Employees are on the front lines, and those are who need to live and breathe the brand," added Tod Martin, President of Martin Group.

A new brand identity is shared with employees before the public, he said, adding that's what happened when his agency rebranded Evans Bank. Employee rollouts can be accomplished with videos, handouts, T-shirts or other giveaways that include the new brand messaging or tagline.

Doing so can make employees feel part of the brand and the process, Martin said.

"Good leadership in an organization will say, 'This is why we are doing this. And for our brand to be successful, everyone has to be a part of it, has to tell the same story,'" said Robert Travers, principal at Travers Collins & Co. "If you can't get your people on the same page, how are you going to deliver on your promise to your customers?"

- David Bertola