Experience, Creativity Sparks Communications Strategies Growth

Communications Strategies, a public relations and public affairs firm, began business in 2004 with a basic but determined mission, “which is to provide services that exceeded client’s expectation”, says Peter Woolfolk, company founder and President. Mr. Woolfolk brings his vast national level experience here to Nashville, with his sole intent being to share what he acquired in order for his clients to benefit. In addition, his associates at CS have exceptional credentials as well.

Why have major organizations such as AARP, Cummins/Fleetguard, Center for Non-profit Management, Goodwill Industries, Meharry Medical College, Metro Transit Authority, Metro Nashville Airport Authority, Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau, Nashville Opera, Nashville Sounds, Nashville Business Incubation Center, and others enthusiastically engage the services of Communications Strategies? The answer is, “highly successful results”, says Mr. Woolfolk. He goes on to say “that a number of successes with nationally recognized organizations was central to our gaining great credibility and visibility.”

In addition, CS clients appreciate dealing with the principal of the company because having senior level hands-on experience is very important when helping clients resolve major issues with substantive solutions. The company work ethic is dedicated to providing client satisfaction with quality results.

The highlight of Mr. Woolfolk’s communications and public affairs career was his White House appointment in the administration of President Bill Clinton. As a Special Assistant for Communications to the Assistant Secretary of Education, he had many outstanding accomplishments including: producing and hosting two award-winning satellite television teleconferences; successful media placements around the nation; comprehensive program for developing policies and strategies development, a successful internal communications program which included his first video conference event; and advance work for the Secretary of Education, and more.

He successfully worked five years as a senior press secretary to three Members of Congress--dealing with the national media, producing their television and radio shows, event creation, and much more.

Following the close of the Clinton administration, this experience landed Woolfolk with a Washington, DC consulting firm where he was quickly assigned to manage communications projects for former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher. Along the way, Woolfolk has appeared as a panelist on communications issues, served as a keynote speaker on public relations matters; produced and hosted a national and two local radio shows; produced and hosted a national cable television public affairs show; written nationally syndicated newspaper articles; and news anchor for a national satellite news program.

Communications Strategies works with an organization’s senior officials to help them achieve specific goals. Here are a few examples.

A local client wanted to be viewed as a leader in their field. Communications Strategies secured an assistant secretary from the US Department of Labor to speak at their event. Once the word got out that the official had agreed to participate at the event, a significant increase of over 200 individuals decided to attend (88% increase). Ultimately, the client ended up exceeding their goal.

Another client wanted to promote their annual region-wide event beyond Middle Tennessee. Communications Strategies secured incentives from the event sponsors. Radio stations in 16 cities were contacted and the free incentives were used in exchange for on-air promotions in several cities (i.e. New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Atlanta, Miami, Tampa, New Orleans, Houston, et.) The creativity from Communications Strategies generated over $200,000 in on-air exposure for the event.

Communications Strategies’ reputation for creativity and solid achievement is growing. Perhaps your organization should meet with them to discuss fresh approaches to your public relations or public affairs goals. Communications Strategies—Fresh Thinking. They sell Results.

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A native of Dallas, Texas, she attended The Business and Management Center High School similar to the magnet school that we know today. She actually started working in banking at the age of 15. All through high school and college, she gained experience in the areas of marketing, human resources, private and professional banking, and underwriting—which paid her way through college at the University of North Texas in Denton, graduating with a bachelors in Business Administration.

Her vast exposure in corporate banking, along with sound advice from her parents to pursue a traditional career path, landed her a job as an underwriter for an insurance company. After relocating to Tennessee, Joseph decided to step outside of the traditional business role and work as an independent contractor in the printing and business forms industry.

Joseph had a vision of becoming an entrepreneur; “a person who has a vision of what he or she wants to become and the faith to act on the dream to create his or her own destiny.” With that vision in mind, Joseph decided it was time she made her dream a reality. She believed there was “A Call Within” between her and her God, daring her to do whatever it would take to see just how far her wings could stretch to propel her drive to become a business owner. She realized that her biggest challenge was fear itself and the risk associated with it.

On an early Saturday morning in the year 2000, while training for a marathon, Joseph called on a friend to share her concerns. The friend shared the book, Who Moved My Cheese, and, believe it or not, that book and her faith, brought to the forefront that her cheese had moved and she had to move with it. In the midst of this excitement and fear, she decided to step out on faith. She knew that it was time to take action; she needed to fulfill her desire to leave a legacy of knowledge and wisdom to not only her children, but to all who had the same fear of greatness.

After reading the book, Joseph resigned from her position as an independent business forms contractor and started Thomas, Lloyd & Shedrick (TLS). Her first customer was Fisk University, and her answer to most questions was “I think we can do that.” When she left the scene, her challenge was to learn how it was done. She teamed with the best graphic designers in Tennessee, built relationships and learned from the best printers throughout the United States, and began developing new customers. Within two years, she hired a graphic designer and customer service representative. Today, she has a team of experts that has helped her company’s growth and development.

TLS has clients in Tennessee, Texas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Their expertise has expanded from business forms to full service graphic design, commercial printing, and promotional products. The fear that was once a stumbling block has transformed into Joseph’s tenacious business practices, product knowledge, and service sensitivity which makes her a top professional in her field. On a daily basis, her passion has been nurturing her professional relationships with her clientele by making sure they receive special attention that is quite uncommon in today’s business. When Joseph made her mind up to become an entrepreneur, she also promised herself that being successful was her only alternative. Customer satisfaction is top priority, which explains why she answers most of her customer’s questions with, “Absolutely, when would you like your proof?”

Vanderbilt gave TLS a chance by placing an order for business card magnets for students in 2001. Today, she has worked with John Irvin, Supplier Diversity Program Manager, advertising and marketing materials for Vanderbilt’s Diversity Fairs and has plans to work with several departments for printing and promotional materials.

As an Independent Communications Specialist, TLS prides itself on providing solutions to problems, not just products. Their goal is to provide their clients with the highest quality solutions in the most cost effective manner, not the cheapest product.

Currently, Thomas, Lloyd & Shedrick’s client roster includes Vanderbilt University, HCA, Cummins, Inc., Baylor School of Chattanooga, EPB, Nashville Department of Housing, Fisk University, TSU, Sodexho, Advanced Composites, Inc., Chattanooga Multicultural Chamber of Commerce, City of Chattanooga, Arvie Personnel Services, Ernst & Young, Urban League, Minority Business Center, 100 Black Men, TMSDC and many other non-profit organizations, independent schools and colleges, universities, manufacturers and distributors.

TLS has been highlighted by the Nashville Business Journal in “Women Ink,” Tennessee Minority Supplier Development’s “InBusiness” (Continued on page 3.)
CMS Uniforms is a small woman-owned business, located solely in Nashville, TN. Our warehouse/showroom is centrally located on Ewing Avenue, which affords us the ability of providing the most expeditious service to the greater Nashville area. Dating back to the 2000 calendar year, CMS has grown from two employees to fourteen full-time, five part-time and three contract employees. CMS Uniforms strives to maintain a strong relationship with our clients. Our entire team considers CMS Uniforms to be a partner in our customer’s uniform and identity program.

CMS specializes in managed uniform programs. CMS provides clients a variety of methods to procure logo and uniform apparel and accessories. As a distributor of apparel products, CMS has access to over 600,000 apparel and accessory items to enhance clients’ brands and extend their image when it comes to their most important assets – their employees.

Currently, our warehouse is 50% larger than our retail showroom space. The value of the inventory on hand currently to service the existing clients exceeds $800,000. CMS Uniforms is committed to providing ample inventory, showroom space, and staff to service the needs of our clients. The design of our local facility is versatile with additional capacity for expansion opportunities.

CMS Uniforms subscribes to a common mantra throughout our business:

- The mission of CMS Uniforms and Equipment, Inc. is to provide quality service - stellar customer service and quality products - while assisting our clients in promoting their identity and authority?.
- CMS Uniforms provides municipal governments, private companies and state agencies with allowance management systems and uniform programs.
- “The goal of CMS Uniforms is to provide a specialized level of service to the demands in our demographic area”, says Julie Roate, a Uniform Specialist. Providing a diverse line of apparel and accessory products, while effectively managing the allowance accounting, order taking and distribution of designated items has made CMS Uniforms a successful uniform provider.

In addition, as a small, woman-owned company, CMS Uniforms wholesales products to two major Tennessee corporations in order to assist them with meeting their SBA requirements for government contracts. CMS Uniforms has also been designated one of Tennessee’s Top 50 Small and Diverse Businesses for three (3) consecutive years.

Special thanks go to our current clients in the Vanderbilt family: the Nurses and staff at VUMC and VCH, the Vanderbilt EVS department, Vanderbilt Linen Services, Vanderbilt Emergency Department, and long time customers Vanderbilt Police Department and Vanderbilt LifeFlight.

We appreciate the business of our current Vanderbilt Clients and look forward to serving the needs of many other departments at Vanderbilt.

To learn more about the products and services that CMS Uniforms can offer your department, please contact Julie Roate, Uniforms Specialist at 615-533-4758 or 615-726-0009. www.cmsuniforms.com

Thomas, Lloyd & Shedrick

(Continued from page 2.)

magazine, and NMSDC’s “Minority Supplier News”. Received honors such as: 2003 Regional Supplier of the Year by NMSDC, 2003 Tennessee Supplier of the Year, by TMSDC, 5-Star MBE Recognition by TMSDC’s Impact Awards, Visions To Our Future award by Cummins, Inc. and recognition for Outstanding Service as a volunteer and board member of Chattanooga’s Multicultural Chamber of Commerce.

“Our goal is to always have our customer’s best interest and needs as our top priority.”

Laquita Joseph, President, Thomas, Lloyd & Shedrick

www.thomaslloydshedrick.com
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COSH Healthcare, Ltd.

COSH Healthcare is a family-owned business established in 1988 in Tucker, GA. The owners are the husband and wife team of Karen and Ron Shinault. For the past 20 years, the Shinaults have worked hard to build COSH into a small but successful minority, women-owned distributor business in the metro Atlanta area. COSH offers a wide range of products for the medical, scientific, clinical, laboratory and research related markets. They have built a niche serving governmental entities as well as academic research centers, which includes Vanderbilt University.

Where did WE start?
Both from Yonkers, New York, Karen and Ron first met in 7th grade at Gorton Junior High School. After graduation, Ron attended Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, graduating with a B.A. in Economics. Karen attended The College of Mount Saint Vincent on full scholarship in Riverdale, N.Y. graduating with a B.A. in Modern Foreign Languages. Ron then moved to Chicago to attend graduate school at the University of Chicago. While in graduate school, he accepted a position with Johnson & Johnson in distribution/transportation, and after a two-year long distance relationship, Karen joined him. When it became clear that success within J&J would probably mean relocating, Ron began looking for jobs in Chicago. In 1977, shortly after tying the knot, Ron accepted a position with Baxter Travenol in logistics and transportation management. Karen was honing her customer service skills while being employed by Illinois Bell.

Ron’s job eventually took them to Memphis, where he became traffic manager of the distribution facility, and Karen was able to transfer to South Central Bell. After two and a half years, they returned to Chicago where Ron was purchasing manager of the company’s nutritional home care division (currently known as Caremark) and Karen worked for the “new” AT&T.

How did WE start?
While giving credit to his cousin, Eugene Knox, an aspiring entrepreneur in Chicago, Ron always wanted operate his own business. While working for Baxter, he met a college intern from Atlanta’s Morehouse College, Marlin Cousins. After kicking around the idea, the three launched COSH Healthcare in 1988 in Tucker, GA. (The “CO” comes from Cousins, the “SH” from Shinault). Ron & Karen and their two children stayed in Chicago while Cousins supervised the Atlanta business and Karen & Ron managed it from afar. Nine months into the venture, Cousins decided to take a full-time job in the industry, which forced me, Karen and the kids to relocate to Atlanta, GA. Still with AT&T, Karen was able to transfer to sustain an income and benefits for the family, while Ron went full throttle to get COSH up and running. His mom, Sue, was near retirement and moved to Atlanta to assist in the “new” family business, with her bookkeeping and accounting skills.

In 1988 when COSH got started, the industry was in the throes of a glove shortage sparked by a sudden awareness of the dangers of bloodborne diseases. Sensing an opportunity, COSH stocked plenty of gloves, and Ron began to pound the pavement seeking customers among the Atlanta-area hospitals, doctors’ offices and clinics. Soon, COSH acquired Emory University - Animal Research Department and Yerkes Primate Research Center as a key customer. The catalyst that made the relationship grow was Emory’s need for medical, surgical supplies and equipment as well as scientific supplies. After five successful years of operation, Karen decided to leave her job at AT&T and work full-time with Ron, supporting COSH Healthcare.

Where are WE now?
We are a one-stop shop, broader than a traditional med/surg distributor or a scientific lab distributor. We created a niche when we rolled out to other academic research departments and universities. Working in our favor is that many academic research operations rely on federal funds, and are required to conduct a percentage of their business with small, women or minority-owned businesses. COSH qualifies as all of the above as well as being 8(a) certified. We position ourselves so that we know what our customers’ expectations are in terms of delivery and service, and meet their requirements with cost-effective quality products. Our biggest challenge is to identify what our customers need and use our sourcing expertise to their advantage, by locating hard-to-find items.

COSH has transformed its small business into opportunities with fortune 500 companies that are seeking small business partners who can meet the supplier diversity or Federal sub-contractor utilization requirements of their key commercial and government customers. It also allows our clientele the peace of mind to continue choosing quality products from premier vendors. Currently COSH is partnering with Thermo Fisher Scientific, Cardinal Health and VWR at various academic and government locations.

What is in store for the Future?
COSH has some room to grow, but we will hold onto our status as a small business which we view as an advantage in the marketplace. When we promote ourselves as a small business, we gain access, because people like the competition and they like to facilitate small businesses servicing their needs. The marketplace is beginning to understand that competition is great, putting the customer in the best position, because they have people vying for the business. We are not going anywhere, we are here to service you…our loyal customers. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Vanderbilt University for extending COSH the on-going opportunities to supply our products to the research laboratories and various other departments at the Medical Center.

Thank you for your business!

COSH Healthcare
1.800.822.COSH
www.cosh-healthcare.com
LSL Industries is a minority owned manufacturer of medical supplies and trays based out of Chicago. Our business has been in operation for nearly 25 years, and we have built a reputation on quality products, service and the ability to provide significant cost savings to our customers. We supply a variety of products to the Vanderbilt Medical Center as well as other hospitals throughout the United States. Our products range from disposable kits like IV start, suture removal kits, and laceration trays, to drainage bags, urologicals, central line dressing change kits, patient slippers, and bedside plastics.

LSL early on lacked name recognition and often found itself losing business to large manufacturers that were already established with numerous hospitals. As our company continued to grow, LSL partnered with Premier, Inc. a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) based out of North Carolina. The Premier Organization, knew that the hospital supply field was lacking in the area of diversity involvement in both organizational and leadership roles within the hospital sector. Even though LSL encountered an unusual amount of resistance from the hospital community due to the limited representation of diversity throughout hospitals across the country, LSL pressed on to become a recognized diverse supplier in hospitals across the country.

Satisfying the requirements of Premier contracted hospitals like Vanderbilt was not an easy task. But with our proven track record, LSL was awarded at least three additional contracts which directly affected the company’s workforce, and resulted in hiring additional manpower to meet the needs of our increases in business opportunities. We are proud to say that our company’s makeup has changed, and LSL is now employing additional resources and making a real difference for both the company and the local community surrounding our operations in Chicago.

“Our employee base is derived primarily from the low income groups within our local community,” says Ash Luthra, President of LSL Industries, Inc. As a direct result of the additional business contracts mentioned, LSL has hired more than a dozen additional employees from these low-income areas. LSL currently has contracts with Vanderbilt, Premier, HealthTrust, Broadlane, MedAssets, the Veterans Administration and other GPOs. Earning these contracts and servicing them well has enabled LSL to grow considerably over the past 8 years. “Our company has grown from a 10,000 square foot manufacturing facility to an 80,000 square foot facility, and we have realized a significant increase in our employment ranks, which had a positive impact on the Empowerment Zone district of our company”, says Mr. Luthra. Over the last two years LSL has put a major investment in state of the art capital equipment purchases to improve their capacity and production capabilities. The growth in size has allowed LSL to stay ahead of the increasing product demands of customers and supplied the foundation for increasing our growth potential.

Several healthcare facilities have put LSL on contract which has had a positive affect on the future growth of our company as a diverse supplier. Facilities like Aurora Healthcare System in Milwaukee, Methodist Hospital of Dallas, SSM in St. Louis, Fairview, and now Adventist and Bon Secours, have been instrumental in growing our business. These contracts have created mutually beneficial partnerships in which LSL has supplied high quality products at cost savings ranging from 10 to 25 percent over previous suppliers. LSL has been supplying the Vanderbilt University Medical Center a high quality suture removal kit at considerable savings and this has opened the door for other potential products that are being looked at currently. LSL is appreciative of the opportunities provided by Vanderbilt and we are currently discussing some additional opportunities which we feel will further our initiative of supplying the Medical Center with quality products at competitive cost savings. We would like to thank Vanderbilt and all of the individuals who have aided in the on-going partnership with LSL.

Ordering quality products from LSL is as simple as contacting Mr. Artis Carroll, Director of National Accounts, at: (773)878-1100, or email carroll.a@Islind.com.
Party Animals

Balloon twisting isn’t what it used to be – or at least, not with the national and international award-winning balloon artistry and entertainment company, Party Animals. From simple cartoon characters to life size sculptures of famous celebrities, Connie Iden-Monds brings her remarkable talent to many more adult festivities than children’s parties. In fact, corporate entertainment is the foundation of the Nashville-based company’s 10 percent annual growth over the past decade, and Connie boasts a list of notable names among her list of satisfied clients and repeat customers.

Connie’s experience with balloon twisting started in college when, after delivering a singing telegram, she was offered a job working children’s parties. She was handed a library book on twisting, and she mastered the art in short order because she really, “can’t stand to hear balloons pop.” Soon after, her career “exploded,” and she now participates in international competitions, always bringing home a string of awards. Most notably, she is still the only American to win in the European Millennium Jam Balloon Artist competition, was named 2004 Ballooniversity Designer of the Year and the 2003 IBAC Entertainer of the Year.

The staff and entertainers at Party Animals also place in many competitions and provide a creative twist to more than 1,200 private and corporate events every year. Other areas of expertise include costumed entertainment and airbrush tattooing.

Party Animals’ claim to fame is their ability to capture adults through intricate, fanciful or dramatic displays of complex balloon sculptures.

Party Animals take pride in their artists’ abilities to make anything out of balloons. A cartoon penguin, a giant woven flower, Elvis, or even a world champion body builder (complete with a set of six-pack abs) can be constructed in less than 12 minutes. Connie even choreographed an especially large Wizard of Oz sculpture with a combination of round and non-round balloons. It took a team of four professionals and 40 man-hours to complete the masterpiece, which featured the Wicked Witch of the West sneering at Dorothy and Toto on the yellow brick road through her crystal ball.

The company is environmentally responsible and uses only the best biodegradable products. With a balloon release, or even if a child pops their animal, Party Animals’ balloons will degrade at the same rate as that of a fallen oak leaf.

Connie’s company is unique among balloon companies. Most are small Mom and Pop businesses that don’t specialize in the complex level of décor and entertainment offered by Party Animals. The Party Animals’ team includes five full-time and 26 part-time staff members. As a successful businesswoman and recognized as one of the most decorated women balloon artists in the world, Connie consults with entertainment companies globally.

For more information about Party Animals and its award winning decor, contact RJ Monds at 615-941-3177.

I would like to thank my readers for taking an interest in our newsletter – The Diversifier. Your feedback is requested in order to help us make improvements that you feel would make this newsletter more news worthy. If you would like to share your suggestions or ideas, please click here and email your information to John Irvin, SDC of Vanderbilt University. Once again, thank you for supporting our diversity initiatives. Have a wonderful day.

John Irvin, SDC
The Diversifier Newsletter

Those diverse suppliers interested in having your company’s article printed in our newsletter, The Diversifier or Vanderbilt personel who want to be on our mailing list, please notify John Irvin (SDC) at (615) 343-4825.