

RiverCentre

Touchstone Energy Place & Roy Wilkins Auditorium

Marketing Department Summary 2002

Discovering New Avenues to Increase Business

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RiverCentre's Marketing Efforts

2002: Discovering New Pathways and Answering Old Challenges

Goals and Objectives

After a year of growing pains and challenges facing a new company, the Saint Paul Arena Company found its rhythm in 2002. Departments within SPAC refined and improved policies and procedures, resulting in smoother operations internally and an increase in our ability to deliver a more seamless service to our clients. Moreover, SPAC began to draw upon the additional resources available to it as part of the Minnesota Sports and Entertainment family.

Once again, RiverCentre's marketing continued along two intersecting paths established in previous years – to focus on brand identity for both Touchstone Energy Place and Roy Wilkins Auditorium and the RiverCentre complex name; and to aggressively mold a business development strategy that would successfully increase sales opportunities.

Given that the economy continued to stagnate in 2002, new ways to reach our target market were necessary. After analyzing past results, we decided to change a number of tradeshow we participated in and took our first foray into the world of Internet advertising. In addition, the interaction between the sales/booking department and marketing also underwent an adjustment to formulate a way to translate the expertise of each area into a more effective marketing plan.

It became clear early on that one of the major challenges of the year would be finding a solution to satisfying our naming partner's increasing concerns and demands. Demonstrating our adherence to the partnership agreement and convincing them of the value of their investment quickly became an all-encompassing effort. Their perceptions were colored by the spectacular results of the arena branding and they neglected to account for the inherent differences in the exposure from the events each venue hosts.

In 2002, our marketing theme was "Make Connections". The theme was a subtle acknowledgement of the opening of the RiverCentre Connection but also a term to illustrate the myriad "connections" we can offer clients: in our space options – from ballroom to exhibit to multi-level to multiple venues; in our convention service – from marketing to event management to catering; and in our connections to the community. Read on for the highlights of 2002.

Accomplishments

The RiverCentre marketing department out-performed the 2001 record of achievements while at the same time tightly holding the line on expenses. The following is an overview of some of the more notable accomplishments.

- **Touchstone Energy Place Sales Brochure**

After two major revisions and a year in the making, the TEP sales brochure is truly an end product of team effort. In direct response to the sales team's requests, the brochure contains a new "working section" designed to guide the client through each level of the venue, each page illustrating the countless choices they can make for their event plus helping them visualize their many options through the presence of numerous photos. Substantially more pages than the previous brochure, the TEP sales piece consists of an introduction section and the "working" section along with technical information inserts that slip into a back pocket. In response to today's business communication modes, all inserts were adapted for faxing and emailing directly to the client.

- **Touchstone Energy Place Tradeshow Banner**

The TEP tradeshow banner replaced an out-dated full-size tradeshow booth. The new design allowed a fresh look at the facility while cutting future exhibit freight costs. A blend of eye-catching images, the banner was designed to specifically brand the convention center as a top-notch facility.

- **Event Marketing**

Another new area initiated in 2002 was full-service event marketing for Touchstone Energy Place and Roy Wilkins Auditorium. The marketing staff began working with clients to create and implement an effective marketing plan to promote their event. Skillfully combining target market analysis with ad placements, cross-promotions, direct target contact, complex-wide visuals, internet promotion and PR support, we helped them reach their ticket buyers and sell their event. Notable events we aided were the *USA Wrestling 2002 World Team Trials*, *2002 USABDA National DanceSport Championships* and Brunette Brothers boxing matches.

- **Touchstone Energy Place Brand Enhancement**

In an effort to increase brand awareness for the convention center, we turned to an outside creative source to develop a novel approach to educate the media (once again) on the name of the facility. They came up with the idea to send a stone paperweight to key media contacts as "a little reminder...you can use on your desk", thereby physically and visually reinforcing the name, Touchstone Energy Place. On the outside of the accompanying box, we asked, "Are you

“stone cold” sure you know the NAME of the CONVENTION facility at RiverCentre?” The project produced immediate results, both in acknowledgement of a clever idea, but more importantly, in the correct name being used with greater consistency.

- **Reception for Prospective Clients**

The marketing department supported the sales staff in this most important effort to generate bookings. In partnership with Wildside Catering and the Saint Paul CVB, a reception for current and prospective clients was held in TEP in November. Members of MPI, MSAE and the Saint Paul Chamber were among those targeted. The hosting included a self-guided “tour” of the facility with each room set for a different type of event, thereby showcasing the multiple uses of the space. Each set was catered in the appropriate mode giving attendees a comprehensive look at how their event can be hosted. The hosting was another winning venture with over 100 attendees and numerous leads generated.

- **Skyway Kiosk Sign**

Located at the crossroads of the Rice Park corridor and the RiverCentre Ramp skyway, the kiosk quickly became a focal point for guests, answering a number of their questions in one comprehensive display – Where am I? How do I find my event? What events are coming to the complex? – by melding a brochure rack, a promotional sign frame and a directional map into the design. In addition, the kiosk contains 12 backlit panels that can be sold for advertising income.

- **Strategic Advertising Campaign**

The strategic print advertising campaign focused on three main areas; national and regional conventions, local meetings and social events. Specific ads were used depending on the audience we wanted to reach and the type of event we wanted to book – general meeting/convention, social events, or multi-cultural. A special ad was created to support the sales team’s Summer Special campaign. The size of a publication’s target audience, the cost per impression and whether editorial content was included, were all factors considered in drafting the placement calendar. In a number of instances editorial enhancement was realized.

We partnered with the Saint Paul CVB on the national and regional campaign. The marketing theme of “Making Connections” was illustrated by a number of dynamic photos showing individuals “connecting” within the confines of Touchstone Energy Place. The text supported the images by describing the “connections” our clients can make between our space, our service, community amenities and a successful event. The ads appeared in industry magazines nationally – *Expo Magazine, Tradeshow Week, GWSAE Executive Update, ASAE Association Magazine, MPI, PCMA Convene,*

Facilities – and regionally – Minnesota Meetings and Events, and Midwest Meetings.

We also partnered with Touchstone Energy on both regional and local campaigns. Placements were made in *Twin Cities Business Monthly, Minnesota Meetings and Events, MSAE Member Directory, Minnesota Hispanic Directory, and Minnesota Black Pages.*

Additional placements for regional and local business appeared in *The Business Journal, Asian American Directory, La Voz, Minnesota Chiefs of Police, Qwest Directories, the Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce, The Wedding Guide* and the *Wedding Directory*. Nationally, we went “on-line” with a virtual booth on the *Society of Independent Show Organizers (SISO)* web site.

- **Tradeshow Marketing**

Marketing and sales personnel, in cooperation with the CVB, participated in several tradeshows in 2002, returning to proven performers like *MPI Vendor Showcase* in the Twin Cities, *MSAE Annual Convention* in Minneapolis, *ASAE Annual Convention* in Denver and *Quest MN* in the Twin Cities. Based on business development research performed in 2001, new shows added to the agenda included *GWSAE Springtime in the Park* in Washington DC, *MPI WEC Expo* in Toronto and *IAEM Expo!Expo!* in Orlando. Our gifts and giveaways for each show played off the “Make Connections” marketing theme.

All tradeshow results were evaluated and tracked throughout the year to analyze the effectiveness of the campaign. In 2002, tradeshow exhibiting generated over 88 solid leads for future event business, a substantial increase (more than 100%) over the previous year.

- **Public Relations Development**

The marketing department added a whole other component to its array of services by expanding the Marketing Assistant duties to include establishing and cultivating relationships with key metro and state media sources. The MA regularly sent out press releases to inform the media and public about events in Touchstone Energy Place and Roy Wilkins Auditorium and worked diligently to expand the event’s exposure through TV, radio and print. Just one more added value we can offer to clients who bring their event to our facilities.

- **Marketing Collateral**

Clients will interact with multiple staff members and be furnished with a number of information and communication pieces in the course of doing business at RiverCentre. Since those pieces were created over time, the design can vary dramatically from piece to piece. To bring synergy to the branding of the complex, specifically Touchstone Energy Place and Roy Wilkins Auditorium, we began work on standardizing the look of our business collateral.

The first piece completed was the sales brochure. The next pieces addressed were the site map, the “Getting to RiverCentre” bookmark and the ParkSmart! pamphlet. We combined the bookmark and ParkSmart! info into an all-inclusive “Parking Guide”. Both the parking guide and the site map were then re-designed to share similar graphic elements as the sales brochure.

- **Diversity Marketing Advisory Committee**

Building on a plan outlined in 2001, the Diversity Marketing Advisory Committee moved ahead with its marketing effort to reach business prospects in the multi-cultural communities. Translating the three-step process into the Diversity Marketing Research Project, an RFP was drafted and approved by the RiverCentre Authority. The RFP was sent to 12 companies and 5 submissions were received. The Committee narrowed the field down to two candidates, who then gave presentations to the Committee. Each committee member reviewed both finalists by way of a detailed evaluation form and with much discourse in a post-presentation meeting. A finalist was selected and approved, along with the budgeted funds, by the RiverCentre Authority. The project commenced in January 2003.

- **Database Update**

In 2002 the marketing department undertook a massive project – an across-the-board revision of the RiverCentre database. Although the project is still in progress, the most used component – media contacts – was the first section to be overhauled. Not only were records updated with basic company and individual information, the media lists were sorted and re-classified, resulting in greater ease in application.

- **Client Service**

The marketing department upheld its excellent record of providing swift, thorough service to all client requests. New in 2002 was the incorporation of event promotion on our in-house TV monitors and LED signs, allowing us to visually enhance an event’s presentation with the use of arresting images.

In the area of client and guest servicing, the marketing department worked closely with the General Manager in identifying and placing additional descriptive and directional signage throughout the complex.

- **Special Projects**

RiverCentre Connection - In the spring of 2002, the marketing department joined the project team, to deal with the challenge of the backlit advertising panels. All four sections of backlit advertising had been designed larger than the industry standard, in continuous panels ranging in size of 10 ft. by 10 ft. to 7 ft by 35 ft. Upon viewing the architectural drawings, we immediately realized that finding buyers for each entire section was going to be a daunting prospect, and

we needed to come up with a means to break down the sections into smaller, more affordable spaces.

First, we looked at the sheer size of the sections. Our graphic designer took each section and fashioned a “photo gallery” border of Saint Paul images to run along the top and bottom of the sections. Then she divided the sections by using a black border to frame them into a variety of smaller open spaces. Secondly, we had to figure out a method of production that would not be cost prohibitive to a buyer. Working with a representative from 3M, we chose two different materials for production; a permanent application for the photo border and black frame and a less-expensive removable, peel-off material (like a post-it note) for the ad itself.

Our next challenge was to fill the ad space. As other SPAC/MSE staff had not been dedicated to selling the space, the marketing department took on the role. We sold four spaces bring in a total of \$21,300 in sponsorship dollars (\$4200 in 2002, \$17,100 in 2003). In addition, we devised “filler ads” to be used when the space is not sold.

Summer Special – For the first time under SPAC management, discounted packages for new bookings were offered by the sales department in an effort to fill the convention center during the summer months, a typically slow period. Marketing supported the campaign with the creation and production of a striking design that was used for an ad, a flyer sent out via email and small gift cards for key clients.

Conclusion

Think outside the box, try something new, analyze, cooperate, adjust, produce – words to describe a year of trials and tributes. The journey was fraught with pitfalls and obstacles but, in the end, the year can be tallied as a triumphant one for RiverCentre. A successful company is one where all the “players” work as a team. Marketing plays a special role for the simple reason that we are out at the forefront, shaping the public’s perception of RiverCentre before they ever set foot inside our doors. If we use our knowledge and expertise to find the right combination of factors that will portray the product as most desirable, we’ve helped set the table for a unbeatable production.

The 2002 business climate did not entice one to take risks, nor did it allow easy victories. But the key to winning marketing – and likewise thriving companies – is being quick to respond to the changing marketplace and having the flexibility to do so in a timely manner. And that will always be our goal – to refine, to adapt. To just do it better.