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Brand Revival

BluCurrent and CJR are among the new names and looks being pushed by company marketers

Brian Brown
Reporter



Jenny Reynolds says a name change to BluCurrent lets people know its membership is open.

As the real estate industry looks to rebound, officials at Carol Jones Realtors hope a marketing and branding campaign can position the firm to be right in the thick of it.

The agency is spending up to \$30,000 between June and December to rebrand itself as CJR in its residential real estate signs, billboards, and television and radio advertisements, said President Shaun Duggins. It has even developed a jingle.

"It was time that we got a new image and became kind of slicker and cooler," Duggins said. "It was time for us to reposition ourselves as a leader in real estate in the community, and I think that's what we've set out to do."

Other Springfield-based companies have either gone through a recent change or are beginning to work on ways they can evolve their brands. Guaranty Bank has just started an icon campaign that could morph into a brand change as it nears its 100-year anniversary in 2013. In August, Postal Federal Community Credit Union officially transitioned to BluCurrent Credit Union.

Executives at the former Postal Federal Community Credit Union had been talking about a change for more than five years. In late 2010, they decided to stop talking and press forward.

Jenny Reynolds, the financial institution's vice president of marketing services, managed the name change process with hired help from Seattle-based Weber Marketing Group.

The intent is to welcome accountholders beyond the credit union's historic postal



BluCurrent Credit Union's logo was adopted in August as part of its name change from Postal Federal Community Credit union.



CJR is the new branding image developed by Red Crow Marketing for Carol Jones Realtors.



Guaranty Bank has unveiled a new icon-based campaign that could be used as its brand evolves and the bank nears its 100th anniversary.

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employee base, and the move is producing results. In September, the first full month since the new name was unveiled, new memberships are up 26 percent compared to September 2010, Reynolds said.

Short, energetic, catchy, memorable and unique were the five characteristics credit union officials decided were most important for the name during brainstorming sessions with Weber Marketing representatives who flew in from Seattle at the first of the year. They also set out to find a name that could be trademarked.

“Blue is the color most closely associated with the postal service, and we liked the word current, obviously, for the energy and electric current, but then ...the definition also means ‘with it’ and ‘now,’” Reynolds said, noting less than 15 percent of its members are currently connected to the postal service, which proved to be a leading statistic in the desire for a new name. “The word current won’t go out of style because it is style. It is now.”

Weber Marketing Vice President Randy Schultz said the firm specializes in branding financial institutions and has cultivated nearly 50 credit union name changes and provided brand updates for another 200.

“To us, that brand is more than logos and colors and brochures. It’s the staff’s culture. It’s how the staff interacts with the community,” he said.

Schultz said he always asks what a company wants to gain from a new name or branding change.

He’ll ask clients about what attracts them to the businesses they frequent, and then see if the ideas they contribute to the changes match their operations.

“If they’re saying they’re fast, easy and simple, and then you get on their Web site and it’s slow and dysfunctional, then you go, ‘Well, there’s some work there that needs to be done,’” Schultz said.

Both Schultz and Reynolds declined to disclose the rebranding costs, but Reynolds said it was less expensive than a typical annual marketing campaign.

Thirty-year marketer Ron Marshall of Springfield-based Red Crow Marketing said he has been working on Carol Jones Realtors’ rebranding to reassure would-be home buyers and sellers that the local market isn’t something to fear.

Marshall said real estate signage now features a new logo: CJR enclosed with a circle, designed to be easily recognizable and memorable to 25- to 45-year-olds.

“We felt that (the company) needed to do a facelift on (its) brand. Many brands need facelifts,” he said. “A good brand can do so much more for your marketing and make your advertising go further.”

The commercial division of Carol Jones has operated as CJR Commercial for some time, and the acronym, Marshall thought, would both appeal to a younger generation and create synergy with the commercial branch of the company.

While the company is not undergoing an official name change, Duggins said connecting the residential and commercial identities was top of mind. He feels the changes are critical as it seeks to generate new interest in the market.

Carlye Wannemacher, director of marketing for Guaranty Bank, said the organization has been slowly unveiling its icon-centric marketing campaign after Schilling/Sellmeyer & Associates Inc. developed an icon for its mobile banking application. The campaign features a “G” incorporated with maroon in boxes meant to represent specific banking products.

Wannemacher said 21st century marketing is visually concentrated, and potential customers aren’t interested in reading paragraphs of copy about a business. That means messages have to be attractive, and quickly and easily understood.

“In bridging the gap between a 1913 company and a 2013 company, it’s kind of a challenge to maintain that heritage,” Wannemacher said, “yet look like a forward-thinking company that’s moving into the future.”

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