

NEW OFFERINGS GIVE CLIENTS MORE MARKETING SERVICES

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When a partner at accounting advisory firm Rachlin Cohen & Holtz LLP saw that a client's health-care management firm was stagnating, he inquired about the client's marketing. The client admitted competition was stiff and their marketing was poor.

So the partner introduced the client to Rachlin Design Services, the firm's in-house marketing services division. The marketing team reviewed existing marketing materials, the competition and the client's goals. Within months, the client had a new design, collateral materials and marketing campaign and was watching business grow. The work recently received an American Graphic Design USA Award.

"Most of the companies we work with are not marketing-savvy. They don't know when, where and how to tell people what's news," said Suzanne Ormento, the marketing director who oversees Rachlin Design and its six full-time marketing staffers. "Most businesses don't know whom to turn to, they're skeptical. People like to go with people they already have the relationship with."

An accounting firm offering award-winning marketing services. An ad agency creating package design. A graphic design firm selling online printing. An interactive marketing firm enlightening clients about effective internal communications on their corporate intranet. Companies are expanding their offerings sometimes beyond what's expected in their category to grow their own business, and that of their clients.

In West Palm Beach, Wilesmith Advertising and Design has recently added Web design, animation, production, electronic newsletters and Web hosting to its list of services. In Boynton Beach, Platinum Graphics has evolved from graphic design to offering a new printing Web site. As part of its new product offering, Platinum has debuted an initiative offering 100 free logo designs each month through year's end to promote the service, said Case Cooper, the firm's owner.

The move from graphic design firm to printing positions the company as a "convenient one-stop shop for all corporate printing needs," Cooper said. The printing Web site "fills a void for companies and organizations that are tired of the high cost of working with a traditional local print shop."

In a recent report on corporate intranets, marketing firm Avenue A|Razorfish extolled the use of internal information technology to improve marketing communications. Was it a stretch for a marketing firm to write such a report? No, said Susan Kidwell, an agency vice president. Between weblogs (or blogs), wikis (files created by and edited with community input), and podcasts, such internal data stores can help improve internal branding as well as external communications.

Avenue A has taken the application a step further. Working with Carnival Cruise Lines, the company set up applications that allow customers or prospects to create their own communications. CarnivalConnections lets prospective cruisers to plan a cruise itinerary online, and invite friends, family or others to preview, register for and join the sailing. The social networking effort is akin to a corporate application of "MySpace." Internet enthusiasts call the application "Web 2.0," where site content is created and posted by users -- not the site owner. Marketing firms and their clients increasingly will discover the synergies between evolving Web applications and their marketing needs, Kidwell said.

At Fort Lauderdale marketing shop InterMedia, the leap into package design earlier this year was no stretch. Two years ago, the firm handled its first foray into development and packaging. Today, while the firm handles many aspects of marketing communications, moving into marketing-based design of product packaging was a logical next step, said Christine Madsen, the firm's president.

The firm branded its package design and display division "Packetizing," the strategic merger of packaging and advertising or, as its marketing materials say, to "think on the box." Heading the division are packaging, design and sales veterans Robin Kupfer, Roly Rodriguez and Jack Edelman.

"My ah-ha moment came when I realized that if you're going to be working in the branding arena, then you have to be thinking about how that product will be packaged, how it will be branded, and how it will sell to the consumer," Madsen said. "You cannot rely on [advertising] agencies for that. You need people with vast experience in that area."

The launch of any new division requires the seamless integration with existing services, Madsen said. More than being all things to all people, agencies must serve specific needs.

"There are times that the corporate world thinks of ad agencies as being traditional in approach," she said, "and we're becoming less traditional all the time."