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the starr conspiracy

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STARR TINCUP BECOMES THE STARR CONSPIRACY

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NEW BRAND MARKS CHANGES IN OWNERSHIP, EVOLUTION FROM BOUTIQUE TO MIDSIZE MARKETING AGENCY

October 3, 2011 (From the 14th Annual HR Technology Conference and Exposition in Las Vegas) - Starr Tincup has changed its name to The Starr Conspiracy and launched a new brand to mark changes in ownership and the evolution from a boutique to a midsize marketing agency.

The new brand reflects changes in ownership that date back to the summer of 2010 when Bret Starr bought out then-partner, William Tincup, to become the sole owner of Starr Tincup. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Starr extended equity to longtime employees Kevin Mangum, Dan McCarron, Mark Mitchell and Steve Smith, creating a five-person partnership.

The new partnership has resulted in significant growth - The Starr Conspiracy has increased revenue by approximately 40 percent on an annual basis and will earn more than \$20 million in capitalized gross billings by year-end. Furthermore, the agency is currently expanding its workforce by approximately 25 percent each quarter. Following the announcement of a major hiring plan during the first half of 2011, The Starr Conspiracy has welcomed new account managers, consultants, copy professionals and designers, and plans to continue hiring throughout 2011 and 2012.

DECONSTRUCTING THE NAME

In addition to reflecting changes in ownership and size, The Starr Conspiracy brand is also a more accurate representation of the agency's purpose, values and approach to marketing.

"Conspiracy" is used in the name as an engaging collective noun that denotes a group of persons working in secret to influence perceptions and outcomes. The Starr Conspiracy's purpose is to enhance its clients' market positions. To achieve this purpose, the agency often operates outside the confines of traditional marketing and advertising to influence perceptions and drive desired outcomes. Furthermore, the agency has nurtured a reputation for confidentiality and even secrecy over the past decade. For example, The Starr Conspiracy does not disclose clients, present portfolios or otherwise discuss market trends in public forums.

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DAN McCARRON
PARTNER

Taken as a whole, “The Starr Conspiracy” name achieves multiple important goals.

First, the naming convention shifts emphasis to the collective noun “Conspiracy” by positioning “Starr” as an adjective that modifies the collective noun. This shift in grammatical structure sends the message that the “Conspiracy” is more important than Mr. Starr. In fact, the “Conspiracy” refers to the broader group of consultants and subject matter experts who set client strategy and who constitute the productive force of the agency. While Mr. Starr generated the creative spark that resulted in the founding of the agency, the current partners, consultants, account managers, copywriters and designers surpass Mr. Starr in every functional area. However, by keeping “Starr” in the name, the brand benefits from historic brand equity.

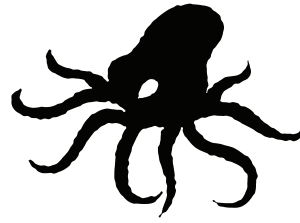
Second, “The Starr Conspiracy” utilizes a unique naming convention to foster interest and engagement. By eschewing traditional agency naming conventions, “The Starr Conspiracy” delivers a message that the firm is unique while also appealing to a segment of the market that prizes big ideas.

Finally, the name is fun and serves as a reminder that marketing is a personal and emotional art form. “If I can’t make you smile, I’m probably not a very good marketer,” said Mr. McCarron. “Business-to-business marketers are traditionally a very serious bunch. We’re serious too, but we haven’t forgotten that a big, beautiful idea has to ice that marketing cake. Without it, no one is going to want a slice.”

“We wanted our new name to read like a novel,” said Mr. Smith, “because we wanted people to open it up, read more and have a good time. That’s what marketing is all about.”

DECONSTRUCTING THE BRAND

The Starr Conspiracy logo and brand are inspired by the historical records of secret societies such as Skull and Bones, the Freemasons and the Illuminati. The logo and brand are evocative of organizations that have operated for centuries, cloaked in mystery, at the fringes of society. Alchemic and mystic symbols, illuminated manuscripts, mythology and cryptology influence the vision and tone of the brand. The logo itself is reminiscent of old-world libraries, manuscripts, journals, diaries, stone engravings and lost treasure.

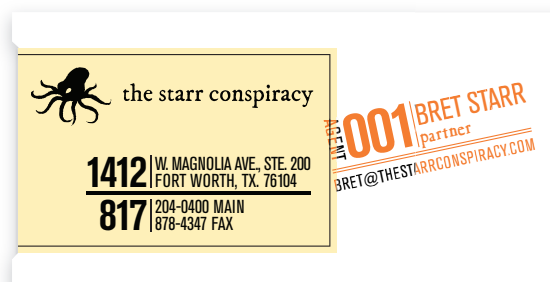


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The logo is black and white, consisting of an octopus logo mark and old-world typography. The octopus represents creativity, mystery and intelligence, and has been used as an engaging and positive icon across Eastern and Western cultures for centuries. The single eye is a nod to the Eye of Providence, which appears most notably on the U.S. one-dollar bill and is derived from both the extensive use of the symbol by Freemasons since the 18th century and the Eye of Horus from ancient Egyptian mythology. In all instances, the eye is a symbol for protection, power, wisdom and prosperity. The complete logo is treated as an artifact of the Old World with simple forms, minimal color and rougher edges as would be produced by the printing and manufacturing technology of a bygone age; the logo would be at home in a ring signet or simple wax seal, while the form itself summons iconic images such as the Jolly Roger. The logo mark also conceals a secret message.

The basic brand elements are characterized by a simple, understated design aesthetic with black, gray and white anchoring the brand. Elements of warm red and yellow-orange add visual interest while creating a striking color palette.

The Starr Conspiracy brand is executed across all communication channels with an equal mix of fun and substance. For example, the use of redaction in communiqués creates intrigue, with opportunities to reveal the redacted information at a later time. Coded messages and communications are central to all brand dissemination. To maintain a persistent sense of mystery and intrigue, every member of The Starr Conspiracy (including customers, friends and family) is assigned an agent number and code name that reflect their agent personae. Rubber stamps are employed to create a handcrafted-yet-institutional feel for stationery (as in the business card below).





The new brand had already been introduced to employees and customers, but was seen for the first time by the general public at the 14th Annual HR Technology Conference and Exposition in Las Vegas. “If we’re lucky, half of the people will think our new brand is the best thing they’ve ever seen, and the other half will think we’ve destroyed the agency. And they will argue about it for months. In very public forums,” said Mr. Mitchell.

“If your marketing idea doesn’t make you nervous, it’s probably not a very good idea,” said Mr. Mangum. “People don’t notice safe marketing.”

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KEVIN MANGUM
PARTNER

ABOUT THE STARR CONSPIRACY

The Starr Conspiracy (formerly Starr Tincup) is a full-service marketing agency for companies in specialized market segments. We build brands by telling the truth (to you, to your customers and to ourselves). We promise an unyielding pursuit of the truth as we work to discover the mysteries of your idiosyncratic buyers.

We enhance your market position by thinking, writing, designing and developing. And talking on the phone. We talk on the phone a lot.

For more information on this topic, or to schedule an interview with the partners of The Starr Conspiracy, please email Jason Martinez at jason@thestarrconspiracy.com.