

September, 2014

BRANDING, DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING ACTION PLAN



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Tri-Cities of Washington

Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, everything has changed about marketing places successfully, affecting the marketing of tourism destinations, places to live and raise a family, places to retire, and destinations to establish or relocate a business.

Billions of dollars each year are spent marketing communities for economic, residential, business and tourism development, yet 97% of that marketing is ineffective. People are exposed to 5,000 marketing messages a day – far more than the mind can absorb – so they automatically filter out generic marketing messages and those that don't cater to their individual needs or desires. The days of being “all things to all people” are over. To be successful – in business or as a community – you must differentiate yourself from everyone else. You must stand out from the crowd.

Consider this: In the United States there are 19,500 cities and towns and nearly 3,500 counties, and information about every one of them is available to us in a fraction of a second via the web. In Washington State there are 546 cities and towns in 39 counties, and each of those is also instantly available to us within seconds.

The Internet has changed the game: People no longer search for cities, counties, or even states. We search for experiences, and then add a general or specific location secondary to the experience. When we use the Internet we seldom type in a location first. We search along these lines:

- Job opportunities, Eastern Washington
- Investment opportunities, Tri-Cities, Washington
- Best Italian restaurant, Kennewick, WA
- Sports facilities, Tri-Cities, WA
- Boat rentals, Richland area, WA
- New residential sub-divisions, SE Washington State
- High school rankings, Eastern Washington
- Wineries, Tri-Cities, Washington

Ninety-percent of all Americans have immediate Internet access, and out of that group, a full ninety-four percent use the Internet to decide where they might want to relocate a business, buy a new residence, or visit this coming weekend.

When it comes to tourism we ALWAYS look for the experience first: “Hydroplane races, Northwest” or “winery tours, eastern Washington.” Visitors – and site selectors – don't search for “Tri-Cities, Washington – what to do.”

Compounding the challenge, every city, town and county in Washington is looking for a more robust job base, for new investment, for increased tourism, and for residential development. The only city we've come across in Washington that is NOT looking for increased jobs, residential development or tourism is Stanwood. Competition is fierce!

In addition, virtually every city, town and county in Eastern Washington is attempting to tap into the greater Puget Sound market area, the 12th largest MSA in the U.S. Also marketing to that same audience are the states of Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Hawaii, Oregon, California, Alaska, Montana and Colorado, and the province of British Columbia. The Puget Sound region is pummeled with place-marketing promotions and advertising: on television, the web (pop-up advertising), newspapers and print publications, billboards (Utah is spending millions on billboards in Western Washington), direct mail pieces, and radio.

On top of all of that, nearly every Eastern Washington city, town and county is promoting the same list:

- Wineries
- Water (rivers and lakes)
- Golf courses
- Sports and conference facilities
- 300+ days of sunshine a year

- History
- Special events
- Outdoor recreation (boating, hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, bird watching...)
- Educated work force
- Available land and properties
- “We mean business”

Once again, since everyone is promoting the very same things, ninety-seven percent of ALL community-based marketing is now ineffective. The marketing falls on deaf ears.

For the first time in U.S. history, quality of life is leading economic development. Nearly every single community in America was founded on either transportation (rail lines, freeways, or waterways), or on natural resources (agriculture, timber, fishing, mining), or on a combination of things leading to manufacturing. Now that we are in a global economy and out of the “industrial revolution,” cities everywhere are looking for their “second acts.” But now when we look for a place to visit, live or work, we consider lifestyle elements (or a brand) that fit the way we live. If we like biking and hiking, we’re going to look for places that offer and excel at developing, caring for, and promoting trail systems.

To be successful, you must go beyond promoting cities, counties, areas (Tri-Cities) and regions. When teams and sports organizations are searching for a great destination for a major tournament, they will search for “sports facilities” and then the general location “Eastern Washington.” Will you show up on the first page of search results? After all, 88% of search-engine users never go past the first two pages of search results.

Likewise, a family looking for a weekend getaway is not going to type in “Tri-Cities things to do there,” they are going to type in the experience that they want to enjoy, and then the general location: “Family hiking trails, Eastern Washington.” Will you show up on that first page of search results?

When it comes to economic development, a factory might be searching for “least expensive power rates in the Northwest.” Does the Tri-Cities show up? This is why you MUST find your niche – your competitive advantage – and put that front and center in your marketing efforts. That “competitive advantage” is the core of your brand – it’s what sets you apart and elevates you above competitors in your marketplace.

So if you are hoping to attract new industry, new business investment, new residents or visitors, you MUST get potential “customers” to know about you, and you must differentiate yourself from everyone else. You must find your Unique Selling Proposition or USP. While this term has been around for decades, it’s more relevant now than ever before, and it is key to the branding process. In fact, that’s what branding is all about:

- Differentiating you from everyone else in your market.
- Finding and promoting your unique selling proposition.
- Planting a perception of “who you are” in the minds of your prospects that differentiate you and makes you stand out among the crowd.
- Making sure you deliver on the promise that perception represents.

In this new reality of shrinking federal and state funding for communities, each city and county must think and act like a business, finding new ways to import more cash than is exported when locally earned money is spent elsewhere. This is what economic development is all about: importing cash. And tourism is a part of economic development. In fact, tourism is the front door to all of your non-tourism economic development. Site selectors, commercial lending and real estate companies will shop the area as a visitor.

Because we have every city, town, county, area and region at our fingertips instantly, communities have been forced to get into the branding game in order to attract industry, new jobs, visitors and new residents. To win, you MUST find your niche and promote it like crazy.

There are five ways to build your brand:

1. TOTALLY DIFFERENT

You can be significantly different than everyone else in your market, in this case Washington, Idaho and Oregon. This is why concerts at The Gorge sell out, even though the same acts may be in Seattle, Portland or Vancouver, BC. The Gorge is totally different from every other concert venue in the Northwest.

2. THE BEST

You can be clearly better than competing communities – but ONLY by third-party endorsement – not because you say so. Because Whistler Resort has been the highest-rated ski resort destination in North America, people will skip over other ski areas closer to home to go there.

3. THE MOST

You can have the most of something. If Kennewick's Vista Field development became home to 30 or 40 non-chain restaurants, people from all over Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Northeastern Oregon would be flocking to this area for its culinary offerings. The Tri-Cities has more sports facilities within its boundaries (the four cities) than any other location in the Northwest that we could find. Is it any wonder why sports makes up such a large portion of tourism spending in the Tri-Cities? Think about the Orlando area and its 172 attractions. It's the world's most popular "kids and family" destination because they have the most to offer, and they have an incredible "anchor tenant" in Disney World. Other cities that have built brands on having the most: Napa Valley and wineries; Nashville and country music artists; Branson, Missouri and its 49 music theaters – this town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year; the Colorado Rockies and its 19 ski areas. But if you're going to have the most of something, it must be experiential. Having the "most miles of shoreline" means very little. Having the largest number of wineries means very little if they are not accessible – although that may attract even more wineries. Industry is always drawn to "clustering" – technology and Silicon Valley, Aerospace and the Seattle area.

4. THE BIGGEST

You can have the biggest – something. The biggest events. The world's biggest water slide. The biggest technology center in the Northwest. We will skip over similar activities or amenities if you have the biggest Wine Education Center in North America, for example.

5. THE FIRST

You can also be the first in a new category, in your marketplace. If you want to be the "Sky Sports" capital of the Northwest – or America, for that matter – then you'd "own" that brand. You'd host the largest hot-air balloon festival in the Northwest. You'd have gliding lessons and schools, sky-diving exhibitions and training, pilot training and fly-ins. You would "own" the brand because you are the first to claim ownership. This is why Napa Valley won't be dethroned as America's wine capital. And why Branson owns the music theater brand, or Nashville owns the country music brand.

Combinations are extremely effective; Orlando is home to the largest and best (by third party endorsements) theme park in America – Disney World. Plus there are 171 other major attractions in the Orlando area. Biggest, Best, and Most. Orlando is the most visited destination in North America as a result.

But there's a sixth way to come up with a brand, and that is through packaging. If you don't have the biggest or the most of something, you're not clearly better at something (by third party endorsement) than everyone else in your market, you're not significantly different, nor are you the first at something – then sometimes the solution is to package your offerings in a way that differentiates you, or positions you as clearly better than the competition.

Of the five branding options noted here, all, except the first two (Different and Best) are "Asset Based" brands. The "most wineries" is based on assets. The "biggest water park" is based on assets. The first at something is typically based on assets.

Sometimes finding your brand can be packaging what you have so that it makes you clearly different or better, using a combination of things to elevate you above all others. Here are some examples:

Squamish, British Columbia is positioning itself around the word's "Epic Adventures," which is a tall order. But it's the combination of "Sea, Sky and Wind" – mountain sports (the best rock climbing in North America), aquatic, and wind sports all packaged together that sets them apart. By combining these sports, they can easily "own" the brand "epic adventures," and they can deliver on the promise that represents.

Old Strathcona, a business improvement area of Edmonton, Alberta's brand is "Where Edmonton comes to celebrate." They are the "Life of the Edmonton party." The basis for this brand is the combination of restaurants with sidewalk cafes, cool hip shops, a year-round public market, and a dozen nightlife destinations. It has become the place to hang out after work and on weekends. It's a "lifestyle brand."

League City, Texas – a suburb of Houston with 70,000 residents – wrapped its brand around "League City Style" attracting millennials because of its way of life. To deliver on that promise, they are building creative office space with open-beam ceilings and polished concrete floors; they are building 200 miles of trails throughout the community; they are very recreationally-oriented – much like the Tri-Cities. Their brand wraps around a lifestyle where "lunch-break League City Style" can mean kite boarding on Clear Lake, or "corporate attire, League City Style" can mean wearing a white shirt and tie, with shorts and flip-flops. It's a lifestyle brand.

To determine the Tri-Cities brand, the three area-wide organizations got together (The Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce, Tri-City Economic Development [TRIDEC], and the Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau) to find the "umbrella brand" for the Tri-Cities area.

UMBRELLA BRAND

Chevrolet has an umbrella brand focused on two marketing taglines: "An American Revolution" and "The Heartbeat of America." The brand really is geared to encourage people to "buy American" cars rather than German, English, Japanese and now Taiwanese vehicles.

But Chevrolet never run ads that just say "buy a Chevy." They sell the Corvette to its particular audience (middle-aged men), the Aveo to its audience (young people wanting a high-mileage, low cost entry car), the Suburban to its audience (contractors, men, large families), and the Impala to its audience (middle-income families looking for a four-door sedan). Then they "tag" each ad with "The Heartbeat of America" or "An American Revolution." Each automobile has its niche, and its niche brand.

As you will see in the recommendations, each city and port district needs to find its point of differentiation – its niche, and then fit it under Tri-Cities' umbrella brand. For instance, Richland's amazing waterfront development plans may make it the "Aquatic Sports Capital of the Northwest," if it includes waterfront restaurants, boat rentals, kayak and canoe rentals, offers parasailing during the summer months, hosts concerts on the waterfront, etc. This is just a wild idea – but Richland needs to go through this process to find its niche.

Kennewick may develop Vista Field into a central gathering place with a large plaza that is activated at least 250 days a year, wrapped with perhaps a couple-dozen non-chain restaurants and a performing arts center. It would become "Where Eastern Washington Comes to Celebrate." It would become the place to go for dinner, after dinner and on weekends. Once again, Kennewick needs to find its brand.

Downtown Pasco, with a rich Hispanic influence, may become the place known for its great Mexican food, Cinco de Mayo and other festivals, playing up the culture with its shops, events, and culinary offerings. Pasco needs to find its niche.

And so do each of the port districts. Everyone – even in business – needs to have a central focus. Perhaps the Port of Kennewick's Columbia Gardens project will be known for its artisans – a true artisans' live and work village.

No matter what the individual brands are, the key – and most difficult task – is to wrap them under an umbrella brand. This is extremely important for two reasons:

1. You are far more effective as one loud voice than a bunch of small, singular voices.
2. The more you have to offer, collectively, the further your reach will be, and you'll draw a bigger audience and repeat visits.

THE TRI-CITIES CHALLENGE

The Tri-Cities first coined the phrase “300 days of sunshine a year” as a way to draw visitors (and new residents) away from Western Washington – the primary market – which is one of the cloudiest areas in the United States. But within a couple of years virtually every Eastern Washington city, town and county touted the same thing – its sunshine. If you live in the greater Seattle area, you wouldn't need to travel past Cle Elum or Ellensburg to get those sunny days.

Nearly every area in Eastern Washington claims to be “wine country,” but the people in Western Washington can find dozens of wineries closer to home in Woodinville, or in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, which is about the same distance away as the Tri-Cities. If they come into Eastern Washington, there are a lot of competing wine areas; they can head to Lake Chelan, or Yakima, or Sunnyside and Prosser, without ever getting all the way to the Tri-Cities.

To win the “Wine Tourism” game, the Tri-Cities must position its winery experiences as different or position its wines as clearly better than others. Currently, many visitors skip over the Tri-Cities to head to Walla Walla. Once again, if you're positioned as better than others, then you'll skip over wineries closer to home.

While the Tri-Cities sits at the confluence of three rivers (the Columbia, Snake and Yakima), that's not an attraction in and of itself; brands must be built on activities, or the use of the rivers, not just the fact that they exist. The Northwest is home to hundreds of rivers, lakes, and shoreline communities. Puget Sound alone boasts more than 400 miles of shoreline, and some of the most popular lakes in the Northwest include Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington, and in Eastern Washington the choices are abundant including Lake Chelan, Sun Lakes, Lake Roosevelt, Idaho's Lake Coeur d'Alene, Moses Lake, and, yes, the rivers of the Tri-Cities.

We can talk about golf courses, schools, terrain, trails, educational facilities, workforce training and education, quality of life, and on and on, but at the end of the day, the Tri-Cities is not significantly different than what other areas of Eastern Washington offer, including Spokane – the third largest city in Washington. So the task at hand is to package the Tri-Cities in a way that will differentiate the area from everyone else or elevate it above the competition.

The Tri-Cities, while beautiful, modern, and full of great opportunities, is not significantly different from other cities and areas in Eastern Washington: Wenatchee and the Lake Chelan area, the greater Spokane area, the Okanogan, Ellensburg and Cle Elum (both have up-and-coming downtowns), the wineries of Walla Walla, Sunnyside, and Yakima.

Walla Walla has become the branding poster child for Eastern Washington. Known first as a prison town, then for its onions, then for a dying downtown, it is now a national gem, having shifted its brand yet again to become an upscale wine destination. As a result, they attract visitors from throughout the U.S. and abroad. They claimed the wine brand first in Washington State, and like Napa Valley, they now own that brand in Eastern Washington. Woodinville claimed the title in Western Washington.

Brands are all about ownership: Bellevue owns the “most upscale shopping and dining destination in the Northwest.” Pike Place Market owns “the best public market in the western U.S.” It hosts 14 million visitors a year and is the biggest tourist attraction in the Northwestern five states. Covering six acres, it's the biggest, best, and has the largest number of vendors.

Walla Walla and Woodinville own the wine brand. Redmond owns the technology brand (along with Seattle). Leavenworth owns the Bavarian brand and other towns like Poulsbo (Norway), Ballard (Sweden), Winthrop (old west), Port Townsend (Victorian seaport village), and Westport (deep sea fishing) all own their brands. Snohomish and Centralia are now both antique capitals.

While these may seem like tourism brands, they go far beyond that. A great example is Ashland, Oregon. Home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, this city of just 22,000 residents has become one of the West Coast's best destinations for technology start ups.

Ashland and the Shakespeare Festival, which runs six days a week, nine months of the year, hosts just 400,000 visitors a year, but the average stay is four nights. They produce 11 productions a year – only four are Shakespeare plays. More than 90% of the 2,200 seats are sold out annually, and 82% of their visitors come back every year or two because the productions change every year. The festival's annual budget is nearly \$80 million, and it employs 350 full-time, year-round creative professionals. This is attracting non-Shakespearean creative professionals: small tech start-ups, video production companies, software companies, and research and development companies. Why? Because these creative people want to live and work in this inspirational climate, and they enjoy being around other creative professionals.

While not necessarily a good thing, the cost of living in Ashland is a third higher than average in the State of Oregon, and the average wage is nearly a third lower. People are willing to pay more and earn less to be in an environment like this.

Finally, Ashland is 300 miles south of Portland and 300 miles north of Sacramento. The only city in its immediate market is Medford, a city of 77,000 residents. Yet more than 90% of the visitors to Ashland travel eight hours or more to spend time there.

The bottom line: Tourism is the front door to your non-tourism economic development. And for the first time in U.S. history, quality of life is the leading economic development factor, over transportation and natural resources.

Finally, first impressions are lasting impressions. Most visitors coming to or passing through the Tri-Cities have little idea what the area has to offer. The “first impressions” along Highways 182/12, 395, 240 and even 82 are not overly impressive, and, in many areas, these routes give a less-than-desirable impression of the cities and area. This is caused by urban sprawl, where it's simply easier, faster, and cheaper to develop on the “outskirts” than to actually concentrate on the core “inner-city” areas that need redevelopment.

In fact, the urban sprawl of the Tri-Cities has created three major “holes” it needs to fill:

1. The downtown core areas have been, for the most part, overlooked, underutilized, and remain underdeveloped. All of them are what you'd typically see in communities of maybe only 2,500 residents – not in an area that's home to a quarter million people. Downtowns are back, and people want them more than ever. As one of the fastest growing areas in the Northwest, it's a shame that the investment is growing “out” rather than “in.” The development of Richland's waterfront and Vista Field will help alleviate this, but these development efforts need to include creating central gathering places with the attractions and amenities people want to spend time enjoying: eateries, small non-chain shops, plazas, entertainment, and cultural arts.
2. The area is so full of chain restaurants and chain retail, it's difficult to find “home-grown” eateries, shops, galleries and activities. Part of this is due to the urban sprawl and lack of centralized downtowns that typically are home to these types of organic businesses. In interviews we were told how the Red Robin and Olive Garden continue to break sales records, which is great for those establishments, but it's a shame that the Tri-Cities does not have more home-grown, organic-to-the-area, shops and restaurants.
3. While there are nearly 40 different cultural arts organizations in the Tri-Cities, the cultural depth is not apparent. There is a severe lack of cultural facilities – such as a performing arts center, public art, galleries, artist live/work places,

education in the arts, etc. While the arts and cultural depth does exist in the Tri-Cities, most people have no idea where to find it. There is a brochure available in the Tri-Cities Visitor Center highlighting the locations of public art, galleries, and art associations including a map; however, a better job could be done to promote the arts.

THE TRI-CITIES ASSETS

The good news is that the City of Richland's waterfront development, the development of Clover Island, Columbia Point, Columbia Drive, Vista Field and others will help fill the gap by creating central gathering areas with small eateries, shops, and entertainment venues – all small business opportunities that currently don't have a place they can call home. These projects can also become home to a regional performing arts center, artist live/work space, public art, and plaza development.

Like many Western Washington residents, Roger Brooks, CEO of Roger Brooks International, based out of Seattle – had been to and through the Tri-Cities on many occasions over the years. While knowing the area as nice, with rivers and waterfronts, rolling hills, beautiful golf courses and numerous wineries, nothing really stood out.

Even after getting off the freeways and highways, the lack of wayfinding signage made it impossible for Brooks to find Clover Island, Columbia Point, or any of the cities' downtowns. He was able to find some amazing waterfront trails.

Over a full afternoon, Brooks was provided with a tour of the Tri-Cities with the directors of the three regional organizations, and it was, in his words "mind-blowingly beautiful. I had no idea what the Tri-Cities was really like once you get past the first-impressions. Wow."

After interviewing dozens of local residents, business leaders, and stakeholders, and reviewing the input of more than 1,250 people, who weighed in on the assets, challenges, and the brand for the Tri-Cities, it became clear that the Tri-Cities is more of a lifestyle choice than just a location or asset-based choice for investment, as a place to raise a family, and as a place to start and grow – or relocate – a business. That attractive lifestyle is recreationally-oriented with locals desiring more cultural depth, central gathering places (downtowns), and more organic or home-grown businesses.

Everything is in place to make this happen in the next ten years.

BOTTOM LINE

Without having something that fits the Biggest, Most, Best, or Different categories, a creative twist needs to be employed so that the Tri-Cities will stand out from the crowd of indistinguishable advertising and marketing programs.

The very top priority is to give people in the major markets a reason to TRY the Tri-Cities. And it needs to be worth the three-plus hour drive and an extended stay. It needs to be newsworthy; it needs to make a bold statement (to set you apart); and it needs to be better or significantly different than what we can get closer to home.

For months we scoured, reviewed, and researched the marketing efforts of cities and counties in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and virtually all of the marketing efforts were carbon copies of each other. There were repetitive ads focused on wine or outdoor recreation. Some tried to be cute (Leavenworth's Woody Goomsba or Wenatchee's humorous television ads) but none have "closed the sale" in terms of setting their communities apart from everyone else. Leavenworth already owns the Bavarian brand, and their marketing was an attempt to attract a younger audience.

THE PRIMARY GOALS OF THIS EFFORT

1. To position the Tri-Cities to become THE destination of choice in the Northwest for business, as a place to raise a family, and to visit. To accomplish this will require differentiating the Tri-Cities from other communities in Eastern Washington, Idaho and Eastern Oregon.

2. To become THE premier destination in the Northwest for both local residents and visitors.
3. To create small home-grown business opportunities and to strengthen existing businesses.
4. To attract young professionals and families to the Tri-Cities: Creating jobs, business opportunities, fostering entrepreneurship, and by creating nightlife and gathering places that attract young families and singles.
5. To position the Tri-Cities as THE Northwest destination for business and industry investment, relocation, and sustainability.

THE TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BRANDING

1. DIFFERENTIATION

Branding is the art of setting yourself apart from everyone else. Being a place that has “something for everyone” can be found anywhere and doesn’t give people any reason to visit, or invest. The Tri-Cities is not the only place in Northwest with 300 days of sunshine a year or great investment opportunities.

2. PERCEPTION & A PROMISE

A brand is a perception – what people think of the Tri-Cities when they hear the name mentioned. When people hear the word “Hanford” the first thing that may come to mind is nuclear waste. That, of course, is not totally correct, but it’s the “brand” – the perception people have of Hanford. When you mention you’re from Kennewick, or Pasco, Richland or West Richland, what do people think? What’s the first thing that comes to mind? That is your brand right now.

A brand is also a promise that you will deliver on the perception, so brands have to be more than skin deep. This is why the process of branding is not an overnight exercise.

3. LOGOS & SLOGANS

Logos and slogans are not brands. They are just marketing messages and graphic images used to support and reinforce your ownership position. After all, brands are about owning your niche in the marketplace. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had a great logo or even a great tag line?

4. FOCUS GROUPS

Never use focus groups for brand development unless you want a watered down generic brand that can fit just about anyone, anywhere. The Tri-Cities Brand Development Team and subsequent Brand Leadership Team are not focus groups, but a group of local businesses and organizations whose primary purpose was to develop this plan that will reinforce and support the perception and promise being developed and marketed.

5. EMOTION - A FEELING

A great brand evokes emotion. It’s a feeling someone has about you. This is why you must focus on activities more than physical attributes such as historic buildings, parks, and other public facilities. When you evoke emotion, we remember you.

6. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

All successful brands are built on product, not marketing. You can develop new advertising, graphics, websites, mobile apps, signs, and posters, but if the product doesn’t change or improve, what have you accomplished? Any increase in sales will not be sustainable.

7. ROLLING OUT A BRAND

You never “roll out” a brand. It’s earned – good or bad. The good news for the Tri-Cities is that the area already has a strong foundation on which it can build its brand, meaning the efforts being undertaken by the wine industry, port districts, and individual cities will strengthen the area’s ability to attract new investment, jobs, and visitors.

8. GRASSROOTS

You cannot do branding by public consent. Yes, this process included asking local area residents to weigh in on the

brand direction, but in the end, the idea found to be most feasible is the brand direction being used and detailed in this plan. This has been a grassroots effort. The three regional organizations, with participation from the individual cities, port districts, and counties, have facilitated the process, but the business community has also played a vital role in the brand's development.

9. FEASIBILITY

You build the brand on feasibility, not just local sentiment. Typically, the most feasible brand direction is built on a foundation already there. In the case of the Tri-Cities, that foundation revolves around the Tri-Cities lifestyle.

10. PUBLICITY

Brands are built on public relations – advertising is used to maintain your ownership position. A brand is a feeling we have of you – and feelings are communicated by word of mouth, press coverage, articles and, these days, social media.

THE TRI-CITIES BRAND STORY

There are two primary segments to the brand story and the overall branding effort:

1. To elevate the desirability of the Tri-Cities over every other destination in Eastern Washington – and then beyond.
2. To convince people who aren't familiar with the Tri-Cities to try the "Try-Cities."

DESIRABILITY

If you look at print, television or any visual marketing of Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho or Eastern Oregon areas, you will see common themes: People sipping glasses of wine, scenic vineyards, river and lake boating and kayaking, people golfing, hiking trails, bird watching and a myriad of outdoor activities. Some try to be clever, but overall they just blend into the photography and messaging that could be used just about anywhere and could fit just about everyone.

The most successful brands have to answer the following questions:

- How do we make it different and if not different, clearly better?
- How do you make it memorable?
- How do get it to "evoke emotion"?
- How do you get potential "customers" to say "Oh my gosh! Yeah!"

There are two key ingredients to achieve a successful branding effort. The first are visuals – photography and videography – and the second are key marketing messages – the words you use. As the age-old saying goes, a picture really is worth a thousand words. So let's start with the visuals.

THE VISUAL BRANDING

The Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau has produced television spots that are good, but there is one short two- or three-second visual that captures the Tri-Cities brand: It's a woman twirling around, with hands in the air, while on the Badger Mountain Trail.

Every photograph or piece of video used to market the Tri-Cities should include people – all with their hands in the air in a celebratory fashion. Some might be doing a fist pump, others with faces turned to the sky, twirling around. They might include high-fives on the golf course or both hands in the air at a concert. Pictures of thumbs up can be used. Every single photograph should say, without words, "Yes! This is it! This is the perfect day!"

Virtually every wine area's marketing shows people in wineries. But none show visitors with their hands in the air or giving a fist pump. Nearly every community uses photos of families on bikes. But none show families full of excitement with their hands in the air. You'll see dozens of photos of people hiking trails, but none of hikers twirling around with hands in the air and faces to the sky. You'll see photos of sports teams and race competitions, but rarely do you see them with people with hands in the air.

It's the "exclamation point" and "fist pump" that elevates the Tri-Cities over every other Washington State community – not just Eastern Washington. Every photograph that shows hands reaching to the sky, or showcases an exuberant fist pump, is a third-party endorsement saying, "This is exceptional!" "The Tri-Cities is WORTH a special trip and an extended stay."

Showing a couple out on the back deck overlooking the rivers and wine-covered hills with glasses of wine, broad smiles, and their other hands raised to the sky says – without words, "This place is exceptional!" Yes! That image promotes quality of life in a special, unique way.

The golfer, kayaker, vintner, and office worker – all with hands in the air, a broad smile, or a fist pump – will showcase the Tri-Cities as vibrant, exciting, better than other locations, and a place where people are enthusiastic about life, work and the pursuit of happiness.

This is what this brand is all about:

- enthusiasm,
- exuberance,
- excitement,
- a festive lifestyle,
- exceptional opportunities, and an
- entrepreneurial spirit.

And each one of these is shown with an exclamation point!

Because we're promoting a lifestyle brand (versus physical asset-based branding), the photography and videography must carry the message. They must evoke emotion, which few other communities anywhere in the Northwest do successfully. Even for economic development, the trick is to evoke emotion – and then back it up with solid facts.

For instance, showing an office worker or a researcher (or research team) doing a fist pump, and then backing it up with a fact such as "Is it any wonder the Tri-Cities is the fastest growing area in the Northwest?" adds the exclamation point to the photograph.

It doesn't matter whether they are on bikes, jogging down a trail, on horseback, walking through a vineyard, on a SeaDo, on a golf course, at work (in an office, a factory floor, in the fields), at school, in a local library, at a conference, trade show or convention. It can showcase a





resident sitting on the back deck overlooking one of the rivers with hands raised in the air saying, “This is the life,” but without the written words.

This type of imagery says, without printed messaging, “This place is exceptional.” “I love it here.” “I’m having a great time!” “I love working here.”

And every photo will showcase one of your activities: your golf courses, wineries, trails, water-related boating, wildlife viewing (imagine a person, hand in the air pointing to an eagle’s nest), schools, libraries, convention center, sporting facilities (high fives please), concerts, and major events (crowds with hands in the air at the Water Follies). Even the new home owner standing in front of a beautiful home leaping off the ground with hands in air, as the agent, in the background, is putting the SOLD banner on the For Sale sign. Even small children can get in on the act – this is certainly not limited to adults.

Every photo should be authentic, taken with emotional impact, and embody the famous Ralph Waldo Emerson quote, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” And best of all, enthusiasm grows. It pumps people up. It sets you apart from everyone else. It “evokes emotion.” We remember photographs and images like that. And because no one else is doing it, it will set the Tri-Cities apart and it elevates you above the rest.

Just the photo of a couple on a back deck, overlooking a golf course or the Columbia River (or either of the other two), working at a barbecue, dancing as the sun sets (hands together in the air) will make potential customers think, “Wow, what a nice place to live,” or “That’s in the Tri-Cities?” Perfect.

As noted earlier, quality of life is now leading economic development. Site selectors will ask, “Is this a place my customer will want to live? Her employees will want to be? The spouses will love relocating to?” And that quality of life needs to show kids, with hands in air, in a modern, technologically advanced classroom (all in the background – a subliminal message), in a nice library, at an excellent sports facility.

In a nutshell, the foreground of every image shows people with broad smiles, hands in the air, often jumping off the ground, in exuberant fashion. The background will be a “sales pitch” for the Tri-Cities, showcasing your golf courses, schools, libraries, parks, trails, sporting facilities, conference facilities, special events, wineries, the new Wine Center, WSU campus, office buildings, car dealerships, restaurants, and just about everything you can imagine.

One important element is to keep your photographic subjects young. The primary target audience in terms of demographics is young people: single and young families (in particular the latter) looking for a lower cost of living, with an exceptional quality of life, and the ability to





“try something new” – a very entrepreneurial atmosphere. When we interviewed members of the “Tri-Cities Young Professionals,” nearly every one chose the Tri-Cities because of cost of living, exceptional recreational facilities, and they all had a better chance of starting a new business in a fast-growing area, where the chances for success were far higher than in more established, built-out cities like those of Western Washington.

Showcasing young families, with kids, young professional couples, singles and – in general – people in their late 20s, 30s and 40s, is key to the marketing effort. However, this does not mean that you can’t use boomers in your marketing efforts as well.

In tourism, the fastest growing trend is for multi-generational travel, so there are going to be many opportunities to show three generations all with hands in the air celebrating a boating experience or a bike ride together.

Boomers, particularly couples, are going to be the primary market for wineries, so a mix of generations will be beneficial in marketing the wine experience. One challenge has been finding a way to market the Tri-Cities’ wineries so that the wine experience fits in with this branding direction. We will address that issue below.

Accompanying text and marketing messages are broken into three categories: The “header,” or the primary words geared to pulling people into the ad and reinforcing the image; the “sub-head” or secondary message; and then the “body text” – the meat and potatoes that is geared to closing the sale or prompting a call to action.

THE BRAND PROMISE

That's the way we do things here. Louder. Bolder. Brighter. Better.

MARKETING MESSAGES

The key words to accompany video and print marketing materials and ads will include the following words and phrases:

- Exclamation point:
 - o Everything we do is with an exclamation point.
 - o Business as usual is not in our DNA.
 - o Exuberant, exciting, fist pumping fun.
 - o Put an exclamation point on your weekend.
 - o Add an exclamation point to your next getaway.
- Fist pump:
 - o We wake up each day with a fist pump, and head to bed having earned another exclamation point. This is how we face life and live each day.
- This is the way we do things here.
 - o (To accompany photographs with hands in the air.)
- Brighter:
 - o We attract the brightest minds in the business.
 - o Our 300 days of sunshine each year help us live a much brighter, sunnier life.
 - o We love the color of our distinct four seasons.
- Bolder:
 - o We make bold choices, we invent new technologies, we're famous for making bold moves, for going where no one has gone before (building a mind-blowing nuclear reactor in a matter of months dating back to World War II).
 - o We are not afraid to try new things, we are extraordinarily entrepreneurial – making bold choices and always challenging the status quo.
 - o Stand for something big. Something extraordinary.
- Louder:
 - o We sing louder, we celebrate louder, we cheer our teams louder than anywhere – perhaps it's the Tri-Cities fans that make Century Link Field the loudest in the world.
 - o This can include high fashion with bold, loud color.



- o The golfer yelling at the top of his or her lungs after a hole in one.
- o Fans at a sporting event.
- o Attendees at a conference, trade show, or networking event.
- o Crank up the volume on your life. Live it to the fullest.
- o Live life a whole lot louder. Make a bold statement with your life.
- Faster:
 - o The fastest boats on earth can be seen right here at the famous Water Follies.
 - o The fastest runners at a great marathon.
 - o People just run faster here. Perhaps it the sunshine, the clean air, the spectacular setting. It helps us reach our peak.
 - o We're faster at getting you through the permitting process for new business.
 - o You can get here faster than you can get to the Willamette Valley, Bend, or even the Oregon Coast.
- Better:
 - o There is simply no better place to call home.
 - o A place where you can live a whole lot better for a whole lot less.
 - o Everything we do here is better. It's elevated above the rest. It's just what we do every day.
 - o We make things better here. In work and in life.
 - o There's no place better for an incredible golfing (or biking...) vacation.
- Word combinations
 - o When we celebrate, we do it a whole lot brighter, bolder, louder and, quite frankly, a whole lot better.
 - o The inspiration here is so amazing that sporting event participants can jump higher, run faster, and the audience roars louder. Why? Because we host sporting events better than anywhere else in the Northwest. It's just the way we do things here.
 - o When it comes to business, we offer better locations, faster permitting, all in a fist-pumping environment. The header on an ad like this might include "Better. Faster."
 - o On occasion you might use "Bolder. Brighter. Better." as the header.
 - o On occasion, and where appropriate, consider using the word "Smarter" in the header.

In all of the marketing, the "er" words can be mixed and matched. Sometimes you might just use "Bolder, Brighter, Better" or any other "er" word. The word louder is a fantastic word to use to promote sporting events, concerts, that hole in one, or even sales training sessions at the conference center. But "louder" may not be appropriate when promoting your schools, library and performing arts events.

In body text, all the pieces come together. Here's a sample of what might be said in your messaging:

"Everything we do here is bolder, bigger, brighter, and yes, flat out better.

You see, we don't believe in doing anything halfway. It's all or nothing. No compromises. We go for the gusto. And that's why we call the Tri-Cities home.

Where adventurous thrill-seeking spirits flock to some of the best golfing, wineries, festivals, and sporting events in the Northwestern States. That's just the way we do things here. In business, and in life.

Is it any wonder we're one of the fastest growing areas in America? Come try us for a fist-pumping great time here in the Try-Cities.

Isn't it time to add an exclamation point to your resume? To learn how, visit us right now at BolderBrighterTriCities.com."





In a nutshell, a huge component of branding is positioning. All of this is geared to positioning the Tri-Cities above all other Eastern Washington, Idaho and Oregon – and even Western Washington, for that matter.

The vast majority of people who live in Western Washington (more than 4.5 million) have never been to the Tri-Cities. All they know of the area is the same stuff they know about the rest of Eastern Washington: the usual collection of sunshine, golf, sports, rivers, lakes, outdoor recreation. You might add one: The Hanford nuclear waste stories. To overcome this, you tell a different story. Or you play it up, tongue and cheek, like Atomic Ale does. “Brighter takes on a whole new meaning when visiting the Hanford site.”

While we don’t suggest or recommend you use a line like this – the idea is to tell a different story – there may be an occasion where you have to poke a little fun, and you can still do so using the key marketing messages.

With this in mind it needs to be more than skin deep. If you talk the talk, you must walk the walk. This means you **MUST** get the communities involved. Hands in the air with a fist pump needs to be on resident Facebook pages, on posters in schools, even high school photos should be fist-pumping or thumbs up photos. The same with group photos. Sporting event photos. On bikes. During morning jogs. Everywhere.

If a major or local emcee is in front of a crowd at a convention, conference or trade show, they should make sure the audience in the Tri-Cities, where every photo and every speaker ends with a fist pump or hands in the air, and the audience must respond in kind. After all, that’s what the Tri-Cities is all about.

WINE CHARM!



Home of the famous Red Mountain wines.



www.VisitTri-Cities.com

Wedding receptions and family reunions need to show photos with hands in the air. Imagine having signs placed throughout the Tri-Cities, with quotes and encouragement, “Take your fist pumping photo right here. And post it right now.”

- “Hands in the air for your next photo.”
- “As you cross the finish line, put your hands in the air.”
- “When you graduate and get your diploma, we want to see a fist pump or hands in the air.”
- “As you celebrate the good things in life, do it with a fist pump, thumbs up, or with hands in the air.”

Imagine passing a city ordinance that says all photography must have hands in the air, show a fist pump, or have thumbs up. Sure the local police department will have fun with “hands in the air,” but all it does is reinforce the brand. Ninety-nine percent of the photos will showcase something great.

As an example, the City of South Padre Island, Texas, passed a city ordinance that does not allow the use of ties except for weddings, churches and funerals. Every time the mayor comes on stage to welcome a convention audience, he’ll be wearing suit and tie and a police officer will come up on stage and will literally cut off the tie – much to the approval of conference attendees. This practice has made them an exceptional convention destination, and they’ve received world-wide exposure as a result of that city ordinance. Of course, there is no penalty for violating the law, but officers will pull people over and ask them to remove their ties – all in fun. And when a visitor posts, “I got pulled over in South Padre Island and was nearly arrested for wearing a tie,” it’s great exposure and fun to boot.

Once again, you must walk the walk. That means starting with kids in grade school. Have them paint fire hydrants, making sure what they do is bolder and brighter. In fact, perhaps they would actually have to use one of the “er” words on each hydrant they paint. Or on posters they design.

WINE TOURISM

There’s no reason why the wine industry, or individual wineries, can’t tap into the “Bolder. Brighter. Better” word-play. “Our Red Mountain Wines are Bolder and Brighter and simply Better. No wonder they’re international award winning wines.”

When it comes to wine visuals, rather than showing people sipping wine at a winery counter, perhaps the visuals show visitors walking through the vineyards as part of a trail system wearing shorts and hiking shoes. See the samples here for the recommendation on how to position the Tri-Cities wine experience.

Play up the great outdoors. Make it a casual, but an extraordinarily rewarding, “wine adventure.” Showcase picnics among the vineyards. Host a 10K walk along the Badger and Red Mountain Trail (when completed and linked) ending at one of the wineries. Show casual patio dining in season. Rather than play up the somewhat “stuffy” wine experience, make it more casual, a recreational experience, where getting fit, being treated to great healthy food and good wine all combine for the exceptional Tri-Cities Wine Experience. It’s a bolder, brighter choice.

DELIVERING ON THE PROMISE

To reiterate, this branding plan presents an excellent way to position the Tri-Cities as THE best destination in the Northwest for establishing, growing, or relocating a business, as the “Better Choice” for raising a family, and as one of the Northwest’s best places to visit. But once visitors arrive in the Tri-Cities to check it out, you MUST deliver on the promise.

You are, in essence, promising people that they will have a fist-pumping, thumbs-up experience in the Tri-Cities. It doesn’t matter why they visit, this is the promise you are putting out there. Disney’s employees are all “cast members,” and every one of them is empowered to make decisions, on the spot, if it will help the guest experience the brand promise of “the happiest place on earth.”

WINE CARRIER!



Home of the famous Red Mountain wines.



www.VisitTri-Cities.com

Roger Brooks shares this story: “We were in Disneyland with our kids and grandkids and a father came out of a restaurant with several trays of food, set them on a table, and as his daughter picked up a barbecue skewer, it fell out of her hands on the ground. She started to get a little upset, but instantly, a park worker busy sweeping the walking areas, rushed over, picked up the fallen skewer, rushed it to a restaurant worker and had it replaced in minutes – at no charge – making the girl, and her dad, very happy. Disaster averted. Happiness restored.”

Some of the recommendations in this plan will detail ways to deliver on the promise. While this example was tied to tourism, the same goes for business and industry. Are you delivering on the promise of a fist-pumping business deal? That people working in the Tri-Cities love BEING in the Tri-Cities?

Getting first-hand quotes, statements, and business endorsements reinforcing the brand promise will be key to success. So seek these people out: business owners, workers, school teachers, golf course pros, park department employees, kids, college students – nothing is more powerful than third-party quotes reinforcing your marketing efforts.

In your marketing use phrases like, “Don’t take our word for it. Here’s what Dave Mason at Cold Stone Creamery has to say about opening his business in Kennewick.”

The bottom line:

If messages like “faster permitting” aren’t a reality, then don’t use it until you can deliver on that promise. Then work overtime to make sure you take away that obstacle. If you can’t deliver on the promise, then don’t promise it.

GETTING PEOPLE TO TRY THE TRY-CITIES

While we’ve elevated the Tri-Cities as the “premier” destination, we still haven’t created a call to action that will give them a reason to visit the Tri-Cities THIS WEEKEND – as a potential resident, investor or a leisure traveler.

The primary effort of the brand is to get visitors – leisure, business, conference, economic development and industry visitors – to TRY the Tri-Cities. In marketing, “Try-Cities” might be used.

One of the very best ways to make the Tri-Cities “Better, Bolder, Brighter” is by making sure exciting things are happening regularly. Exciting, frequent festivals and events are the best way to make this a reality.

To this end, we are recommending that the “Visit Tri-Cities” organization (Visitor & Convention Bureau) employ a full-time position that would be dedicated to attracting large-scale events, one each month of the year, to the Tri-Cities. While the Tri-Cities is home to the annual Water Follies, adding eleven more events to the calendar – many attracting new audiences – will provide a call to action – a reason to make the trip to the Tri-Cities.

Each of these events would be “Northwest” events – not just Tri-Cities, Eastern Washington – but big enough to be labeled as “The Northwest Show & Shine Show” for a major classic car show, for example.

Imagine hosting events such as:

- The Northwest Hot Air Balloon Festival with hundreds of hot air balloons
- The Three Rivers Triathlon, which might include swimming in one, kayaking on one, and canoeing on the third – something unusual, but fun.
- The 5K Glow Run – a night run through streets with black lights – Google it!
- Northwest Cycling Championships
- The Northwest Paddle Sports Festival
- The Northwest Water Follies (instead of Tri-Cities)
- Northwest Color Festival – along the lines of the one held in Provo, Utah
- Northwest All Iron Road Rally
- Northwest International Showcase – a food, entertainment, and cultural showcase
- The Northwest Wild & Wet Festival – a water balloon “fight” like no other!

- The Northwest Health & Wellness Expo
- The Northwest Open Air Film Festival
- Northwest Food & Wine Festival
- The Northwest Festival of Lights
- Northwest Storytelling Festival – the storytelling festival in little Jonesborough, Tennessee draws more than 10,000 people over its two days.
- The Northwest Fringe Festival

The Tri-Cities would not produce these events, but would work with sponsoring companies, fund-raising organizations, event producers, clubs and associations to help them produce the biggest event of its kind in the Northwest – and the Tri-Cities will roll-out the red carpet. Many of these events would take place throughout the Tri-Cities while buses and rubber-wheel trolleys would provide transportation between venues.

Each one of these “signature” events would be newsworthy in all major market areas of Western Washington, Portland, Boise, Spokane, and then throughout the Northwestern five states. By making these the biggest events of their kind, the stature of the Tri-Cities is elevated above the rest. The annual Bloomsday Run in Spokane is known across the United States, and even draws international runners. There’s no reason why, over a few years, the Tri-Cities cannot be known for its “Tri-Fecta” of events.

Take a look at the sample “Chasing the Sun” event compilation the Roger Brooks Team produced to illustrate events that could gain national and international exposure and position the Tri-Cities as a “must visit” destination. In this sample video (using copyrighted materials – so it can’t be used publicly), 20 events are shown, and, ultimately, that would be the goal. But for the first three to five years of this program, the goal is to host a dozen such events – one each month of the year. Imagine hosting an event in traditionally slow January, The Northwest Health & Wellness Exposition. Perhaps with some major sponsors like Weight Watchers, Whole Foods, and others, the Expo would take place in every hotel lobby, at the convention center, at Pasco’s TRAC and other venues. Right when people are making New Years resolutions, the timing would be perfect. People would pay a ticket price for all venues, and one might offer healthy living cooking classes with world-renowned chefs, while another has a fitness guru helping people set up a regimen for the new year that is sustainable. Another might offer better sleep solutions; doctors and nutritionists would be on hand to help people (free of charge) set up programs that will help them remain – or become – healthier. It could include motivational speakers from television shows like The Biggest Loser, perhaps Jared from Subway (which might be a major sponsor). And, of course, there would be dozens of trade-show booths with books, products, authors, and others, all geared to helping people with their efforts to live more active, healthier lives. Having speakers (and sponsors) like Jean Enerson, the long-time KING 5 NBC news anchor, now retired from the news desk but still at the station, (the news broadcast is seen throughout the five Northwestern states and in Western Canada) would really make this a signature event that no one else is doing. It would really put the Tri-Cities “on the map” as an incredible place to spend time.

Hosting events like this example would also promote the Tri-Cities as a place known for its health, wellness, recreational opportunities, culture, and entertainment.

This could be a dream job – putting together the partners to create the biggest and best events in the Northwest, with a Northwest focus – that anyone would LOVE to have. This is a very important element to the total branding effort and a way to “prove” that the “earn your exclamation point” brand is for real.

Naturally, the photography would be chock full of people with hands in air – crossing a finish line, dancing at a concert, a standing ovation of a storyteller, etc.

One more note about the use of Northwest: We recommend that the Tri-Cities use “Northwest” in ALL of its marketing efforts. Not “Eastern Washington,” or “SE Washington State” but “Northwest.” For business it might be “The Northwest’s premier destination for research and development.” Of course when marketing around the United States and internationally, you’ll need to tell people where the Tri-Cities is located, and using lines such as “located in the stunning tri-river and wine region of Southeast Washington State,” would be perfect.

Using “Better, Brighter, Bolder” as the mantra – or tag line – makes a solid statement of who the people are who live, work and play in the Tri-Cities. After extensive research, we couldn’t find any other community in the U.S. using this approach.

Finally, the major festivals (you already have one – the Water Follies) you produce and/or promote must be worth a three, four, five or even six-hour drive and an extended stay. To promote those you can – and should – use “The Try-Cities.”

Key marketing messaging, in this case might include:

- “Try it, you’ll love it. Only in the Try-Cities.”
- “Better, Brighter, Bolder. Try it for a change of pace – Only in the Try-Cities.”
- “Step up your game. Yell a whole lot louder. Play a whole lot bolder. Try it, you’ll love it. Welcome to the Try-Cities.”

This type of campaign is geared to reach out to first-time visitors.

IN A NUTSHELL

This is an amazing opportunity to elevate the Tri-Cities above everyone else in Eastern Washington – in fact, everyone else in Washington and even throughout the Pacific Northwest.

This is the brand story, the brand promise and the positioning statement, all rolled up into the introduction to the Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan.

THE BRANDING PROCESS

This Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan has been developed over a seven-month period, beginning in late January of 2014, using a 13-step process that has been developed by the team at Roger Brooks International, based in Seattle. This process has seen a 100% success rate when fully implemented with the right champions in place to push it forward.

The following is a recap of that process.

1. Creation of the Brand Development Committee (BDC)

With the Brand Development Committee, an outside facilitator is brought in to guide the community through the process. Included on the BDC were the following people (in alphabetical order):

- Carl Adrian – TRIDEC
- John Bookwalter – J Bookwalter Winery
- John Crook – Paragon Corporate Housing
- Colin Hastings – Pasco Chamber of Commerce
- May Hays – West Richland Chamber of Commerce
- Suzanne Heaston – Bechtel National Inc.
- Jerry Holloway – Washington River Protection Solutions
- Barbara Johnson – Columbia Center
- Cindy Johnson – City of Richland
- Lori Mattson – Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Kim Shugart – Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau
- Gretchen Strother-Guerrero – Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau
- Tony Umek, Fluor Federal Services
- Martin Valadez – Tri-Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Kris Watkins – Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau

Roger Brooks International was retained to facilitate the process, led by Roger Brooks, Jordan Pogue and Creative Director, Greg Forsell. Competitive analysis, research and feasibility work was a team effort between the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce, TRIDEC, and the Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau, and the Roger Brooks team.

2. Education and outreach

In November of 2013, Roger Brooks introduced the concept of Place Branding and the beginning of this effort at the Tri-Cities Visitor & Convention Bureau's Annual Meeting and conducted the first meeting with the Brand Development Committee. January of 2014, Roger Brooks met with more than 70 individuals and local organizations, offering them the opportunity to voice their opinions and share information about the future of the Tri-Cities in terms of its brand and positioning. Roger also met with the Brand Development Committee at that time to talk about their assignments over the following several months.

It's important to note that this plan has been created WITH the Brand Development Committee, not for them as in typical consulting contracts. This is for a very important reason: Brands that come from within the community are far more powerful and create lasting "ownership" than those plopped on a community by outside consultants. The Roger Brooks Team has facilitated the process.

An online survey was produced, promoted, and launched in December of 2013, asking a series of questions, enabling local, regional and out-of-the-area people to comment on how they would like to see the Tri-Cities promoted. They also were able to weigh in on challenges, opportunities, and assets as well.

Using the questionnaire, over a month-long period, more than 1,250 people weighed in on nine questions, including what they thought the Tri-Cities should be known for – its brand. They also provided feedback on what they saw as major challenges and best assets. They answered other questions including what thought was missing from the Tri-Cities mix that would get them to spend more time (and money) in the community. The responses were exceptionally enlightening.

When it came to product development, four core areas were at the top of the “we need” list, including:

- The need for local gathering places – a central “downtown” that is alive after 6:00 and is a central gathering spot.
- Something more than chain eateries, stores, and franchises.
- Bringing some culture to the surface: a performing arts center, more galleries, artist live/work spaces, street musicians, etc.
- Things to do after work, after school, and during evening hours.

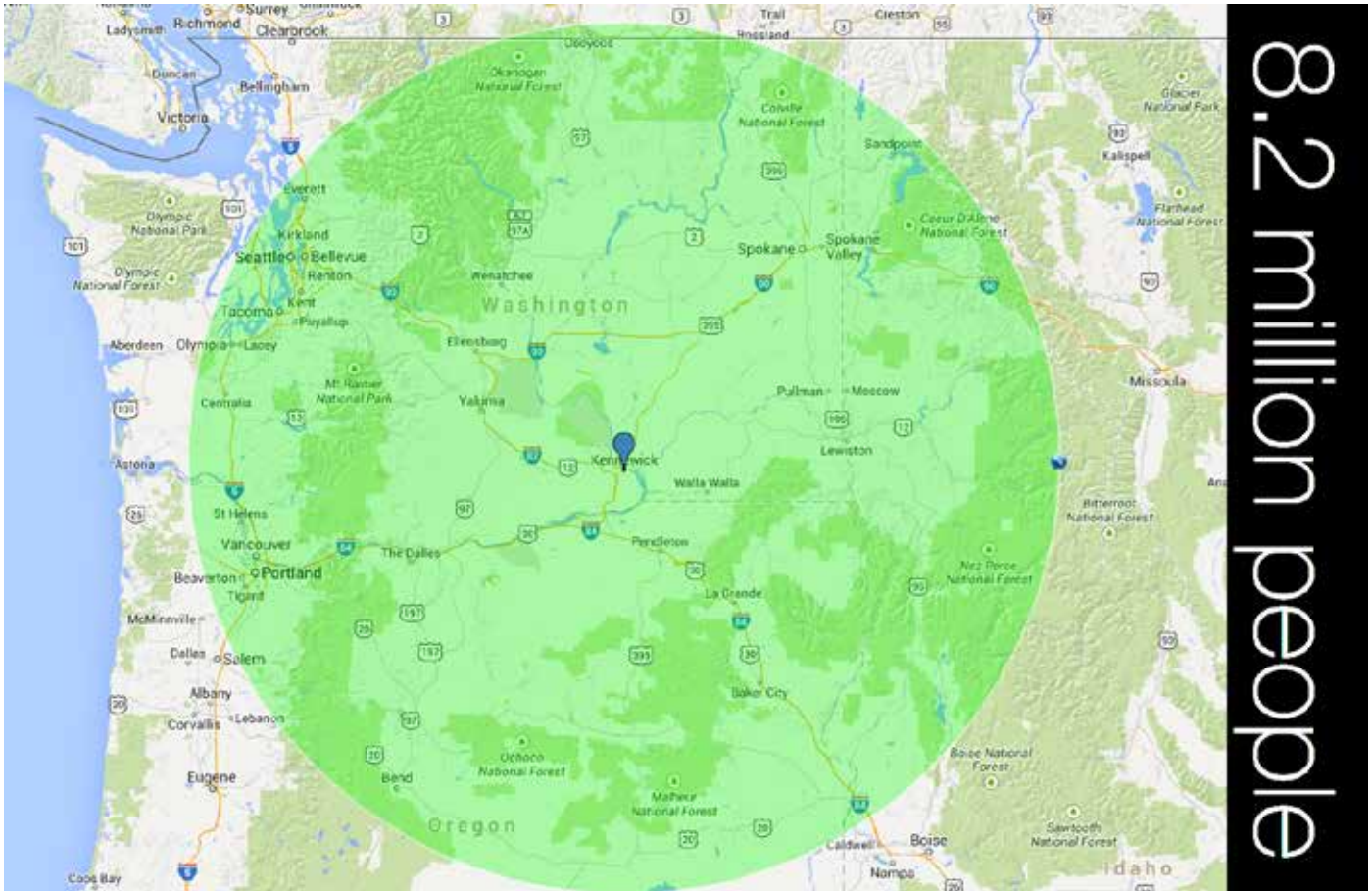
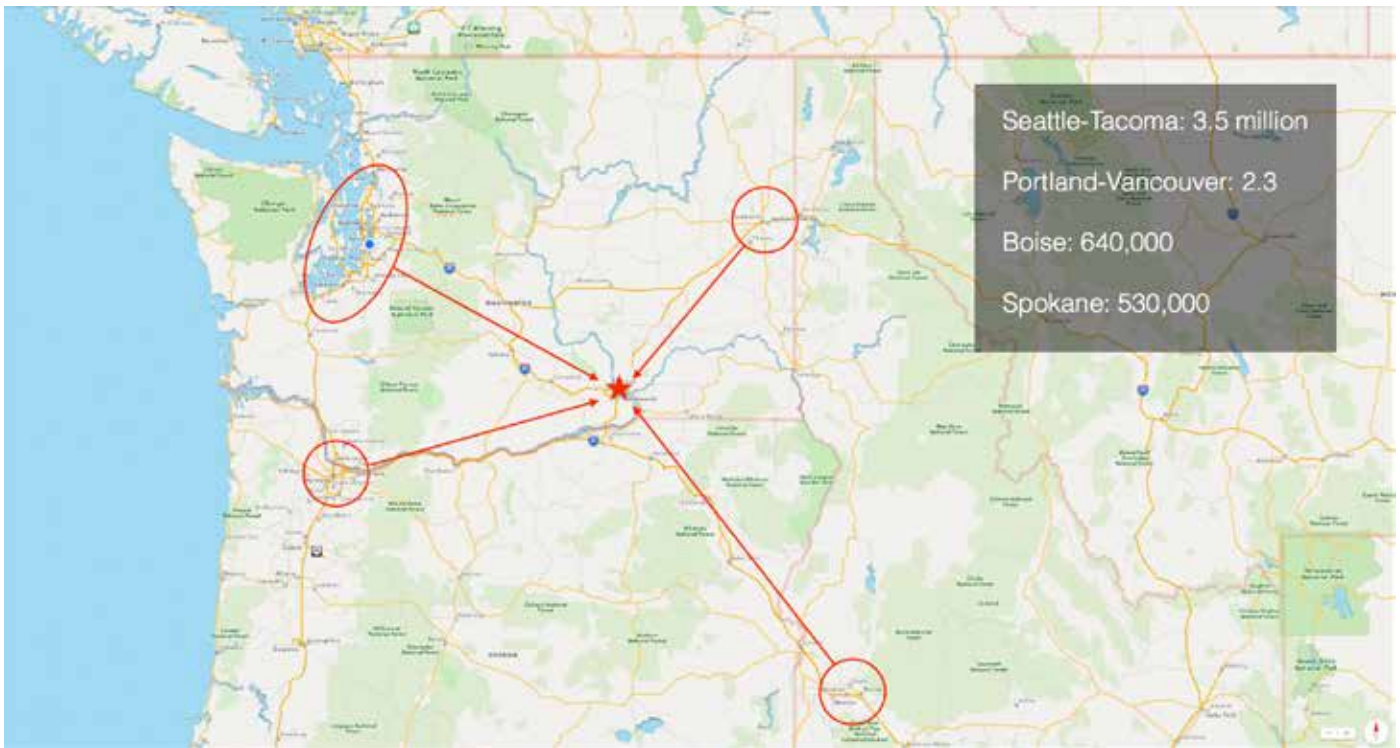
While the survey results are not attached to this plan, they are available for anyone who would like to go through them. There were no multiple-choice answers, and so each respondent was able to simply say what they thought without limitations on space or choices.

3. Identify the markets we’re trying to attract

It’s important to know whom the Tri-Cities (its communities and port districts) hopes to attract as a result of the branding process in terms of location, demographic and lifestyle. Working with the Brand Development Committee and using ESRI research (included in the Appendix of this plan) the markets were identified as follows:

Geographic markets:

- The 250,000 residents that live within a 25-mile radius of the Tri-Cities (we used the offices of the partnering organizations as the central point). The first rule in any planning effort is to make sure you have what will help your local residents spend more time and money IN the Tri-Cities, rather than elsewhere. When it comes to tourism, if you don’t hang out in your own town, neither will visitors. In fact, in the survey, when asked “where do you take friends and family when they visit?” we were surprised by the number of people who noted Walla Walla as the place they take their visitors.
- Visitors passing through the area on various highways and freeways. In tourism, the first goal is to get people to stop. Then if you can get them to stay for two hours, spending will double. The ultimate goal, of course, is to get visitors to spend the night, where they spend more than four times that of day visitors. It is estimated that more than 15 million “visitors” travel through the area every year.
- The 453,000 residents within a 50-mile radius. For tourism, these are “day trip” visitors, and they are also your core “service” market area.
- The 900,000 people that live within 100 miles of the Tri-Cities. This includes another 450,000 people that would be typically overnight visitors – those traveling 50 miles or more to spend time in the Tri-Cities. This is your “core” audience for the larger events – although the events will easily draw big numbers from throughout the Northwest.
- The 8.2 million people that live within a 200-mile radius of the Tri-Cities. This is an extraordinary number of people, and the goal is to make sure they all know about the Tri-Cities as a premier place to live, work and visit.
- The United States – particularly in the economic development recruitment efforts.
- And then beyond.



Demographic markets include:

- People looking for something different from what they can already find throughout Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho and Eastern Oregon.
- People with an entrepreneurial spirit.
- Young professionals and young families wanting a better and more affordable way of life. (Looking for better weather, less traffic congestions, away from the urban “nightmare.”)
- Attracting America’s “brain trust” – the brightest minds in America.

This means the brand will be geared to attract young people and young families in their late 20s, 30s and 40s. The messaging needs to be modern, colorful, and must appeal to this audience.

Psychographic markets include:

- People looking for a recreationally and sports-oriented outdoor lifestyle in a small-town atmosphere, yet with all the urban amenities you’d find in the major market areas such as Spokane, Seattle or Portland.

Most importantly, the branding effort will be geared to putting the Tri-Cities “on the map” for something other than Hanford, which the general public sees as the “leaking nuclear waste site.”

4. Compilation of the feedback and market research

The Brand Development Committee spent several weeks reading through the local feedback and applying it to the “Feasibility Testing” process. Here are the ten questions we asked for each idea that came from local and area residents:

1. Is this something the people we are hoping to attract can’t get or do closer to home? If it isn’t, we didn’t toss it aside, but put it in the “complementary activity” category rather than as a primary brand candidate.
2. Is this something the private sector can invest in? The very best brands are built on private-sector investment, not public amenities and attractions. Think Napa Valley, Orlando, Anaheim, Branson, Missouri and its 49 music theaters, Nashville and country music, Memphis and Graceland, the River Walk in San Antonio, etc. Where is the investment opportunity? This branding effort is geared towards finding ways to import more cash into the Tri-Cities.
3. Can we make it obvious what the Tri-Cities is about when people come into the area?
4. Is it experiential – based on things to do, not just things to look at? Both locals and visitors are looking for immersive or active opportunities. Things to look at become “been there, done that” activities – they are not sustainable draws.
5. Is this something local residents can buy into? If we were to suggest branding the Tri-Cities as Washington’s version of “Sin City” we probably wouldn’t get much buy in locally.
6. How much will it cost and when will we see a return on investment? Both for public projects and privately developed opportunities.
7. How wide an audience will it attract? We want a narrow focus or niche, but not one that’s too narrow.
8. Will it extend our seasons? The challenge with outdoor-oriented brands (parks, lakes, sports fields) is that they are not typically sustainable during some months of the year.

9. Are there residents, businesses and local organizations that will tirelessly champion the cause? Without true champions no branding effort can succeed. Will the four cities, two counties and three port districts become strong branding partners? Will they work together to make this plan happen?
10. Does the brand have legs? Can we start with a niche, and then expand it? Because the Tri-Cities brand is more of a lifestyle brand (hands in the air, earning that daily exclamation point) the niche is in the events – that initial draw to “try” the Tri-Cities.

Using the major events as a catalyst, can the Tri-Cities become a hub of activity 250 days of the year, solidifying the area as THE place to hang out?

As Richland develops its waterfront, the Port Districts begin their development projects, and as Vista Field becomes a central gathering place, the cities will also promote and recruit outside events bring in car shows, biking events, jazz festivals, and other activities, gradually making the Tri-Cities the hub where “something is always happening.”

The initial list of options included:

- Leveraging sports facilities to become a sports destination
- Playing up the parks for reunions and weekend events
- Festivals
- Equestrian focus (think TRAC)
- Fishing and hunting with the Tri-Cities as the hub
- Art
- Wellness
- Education
- Country living in an urban atmosphere
- Music
- The friendly city (and other more generic themes such as outdoor recreation)

They broke the ideas into three categories:

1. Those that evoked a feeling: hills, rivers and valley in a scenic setting, small town feeling, even though an urban area, etc.
2. Those that were not unique to the Tri-Cities: dozens of parks, historic downtown, riverside and other trails, sports fields and amenities, “unique” shops and restaurants, golf courses, wineries, etc.
3. Ideas that can differentiate the Tri-Cities from other communities in the Northwest.

The initial list of refined and narrowed brand candidates included:

- Washington Wine country, Wine Mecca
- Food
- Farm to Table
- Art
- Columbia River
- Fishing
- Agri-tourism
- Technology
- Wildlife
- Water recreation
- Outdoor sports
- Biking
- Hanford history/Atomic history
- Three Rivers
- Alternative, clean energy

- Energy Crossroads
- Boating
- Education
- Hollywood 2.0
- Health and wellness
- Beer brewing
- Massive waterfront venue
- River boardwalk full of shops, dining, etc.
- Indoor water park
- Theme park
- Native American History
- Hub for outdoor entertainment
- Scientific and Innovation Capital of Washington
- Center of Cultural Activities Region
- International diversity
- Taco trucks
- Hydro races
- Resort & spa
- Family resort
- Water Park Capital of Washington
- Sports
- Geology

The winning brand direction was that described earlier in the introduction to the plan. As it turned out, the truly “unique” aspects of the Tri-Cities were difficult to leverage such as being the home to the historic Hanford site (a great attraction, but a “been there, done that” activity), the confluence of three rivers (so, how does that make the activities on them so much different or better?), etc.

In a nutshell:

- Skew the brand younger.
- Position the Tri-Cities as urban but with a home-town feel.
- Promote the incredible quality of life (showcase specifics like neighborhoods, libraries, trail systems, schools, shopping, dining options, wineries).
- Elevate the desirability of the Tri-Cities over every other destination in Eastern Washington – and then beyond.

Putting it into words: “To start each day with a fist pump and end it having earned another exclamation point. That’s the way we do things here: Louder. Bolder. Brighter. Better. Bigger.”

5. Creation of the Brand Leadership Team

Once the brand direction was finalized, the BDC set about creating the Brand Leadership Team, which is detailed in the following recommendations.

The Brand Development Committee’s primary job was to determine the brand direction. The Brand Leadership Team (BLT) is charged with leading the effort – making something happen. This is the group that will implement the plan. These will be the pioneers and champions who will make it all happen. They never take no for an answer and will move mountains to make a difference for the Tri-Cities.

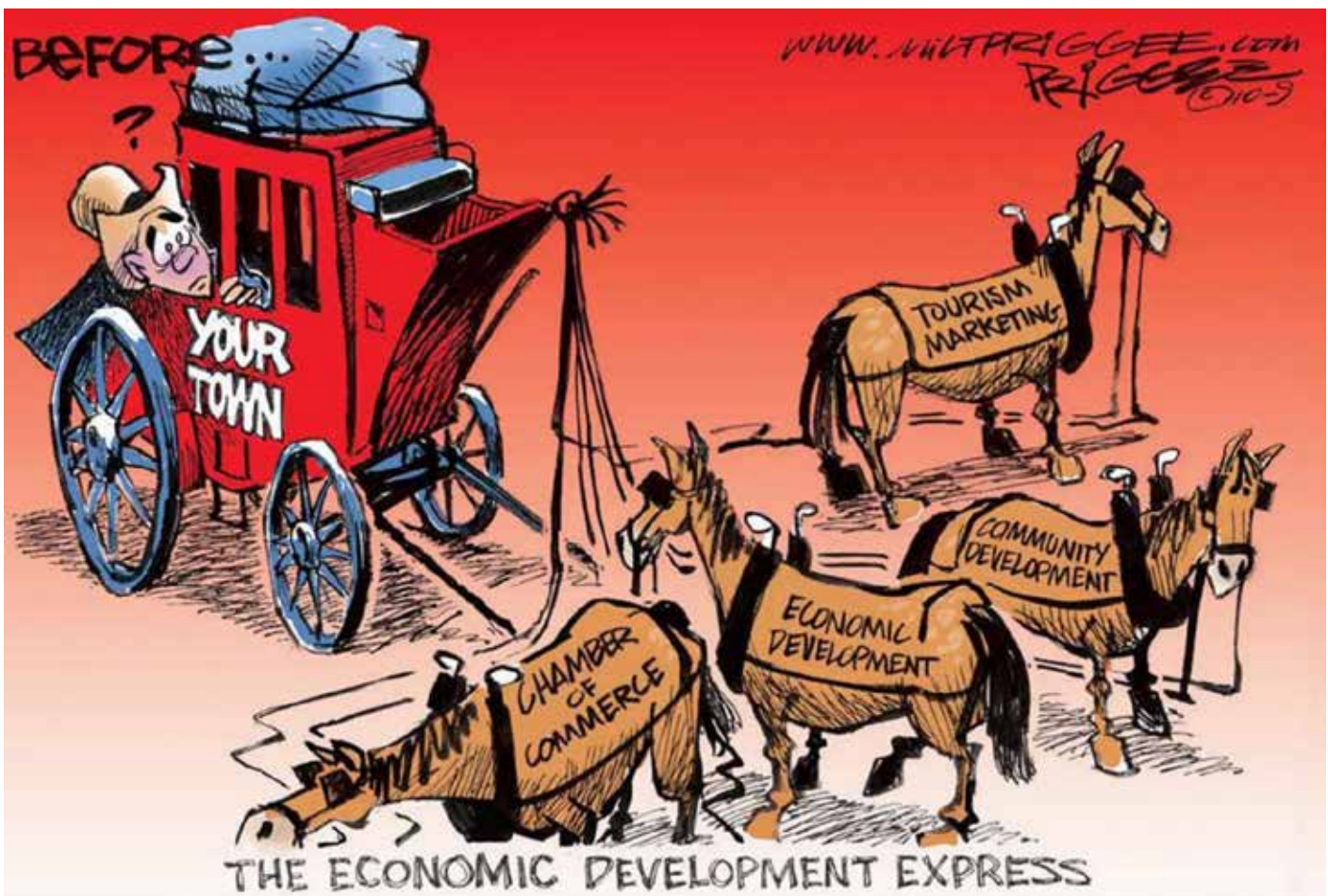
6. Development of the Product BrandBank

Next was developing the list of product development initiatives to give the brand a solid foundation: What needs to be developed, improved, added to, or changed to reinforce the brand direction.

Brands are built on product, not just marketing. In fact, product sells itself. The bulk of the recommendations in this plan are product development initiatives. All are an INVESTMENT, not just an expense. Every recommendation was included ONLY if it would help achieve the goals of reducing leakage (locally earned money spent elsewhere), increasing tourism spending, and making the Tri-Cities a more desirable place to live, work, invest in, and visit.

Summary – the top of the product development list:

- A regional wayfinding signage system
- A year round public market
- Showcase gathering places (each city should have one)
- Creative office space
- A true arts district (performing, visual, culinary)
- Downtown core districts focused on being the place to go after work and on weekends with unique (non-franchise and chain) shops, restaurants, entertainment venues
- An aquatic center
- A signature performing arts venue



7. Write the brand promise

Once we knew what the brand would be, and defined the product that will reinforce and support it – leading to ownership of the brand – the brand promise was created. This is the guiding principle for everything the communities and partnering organizations will focus on for the next three to five years.

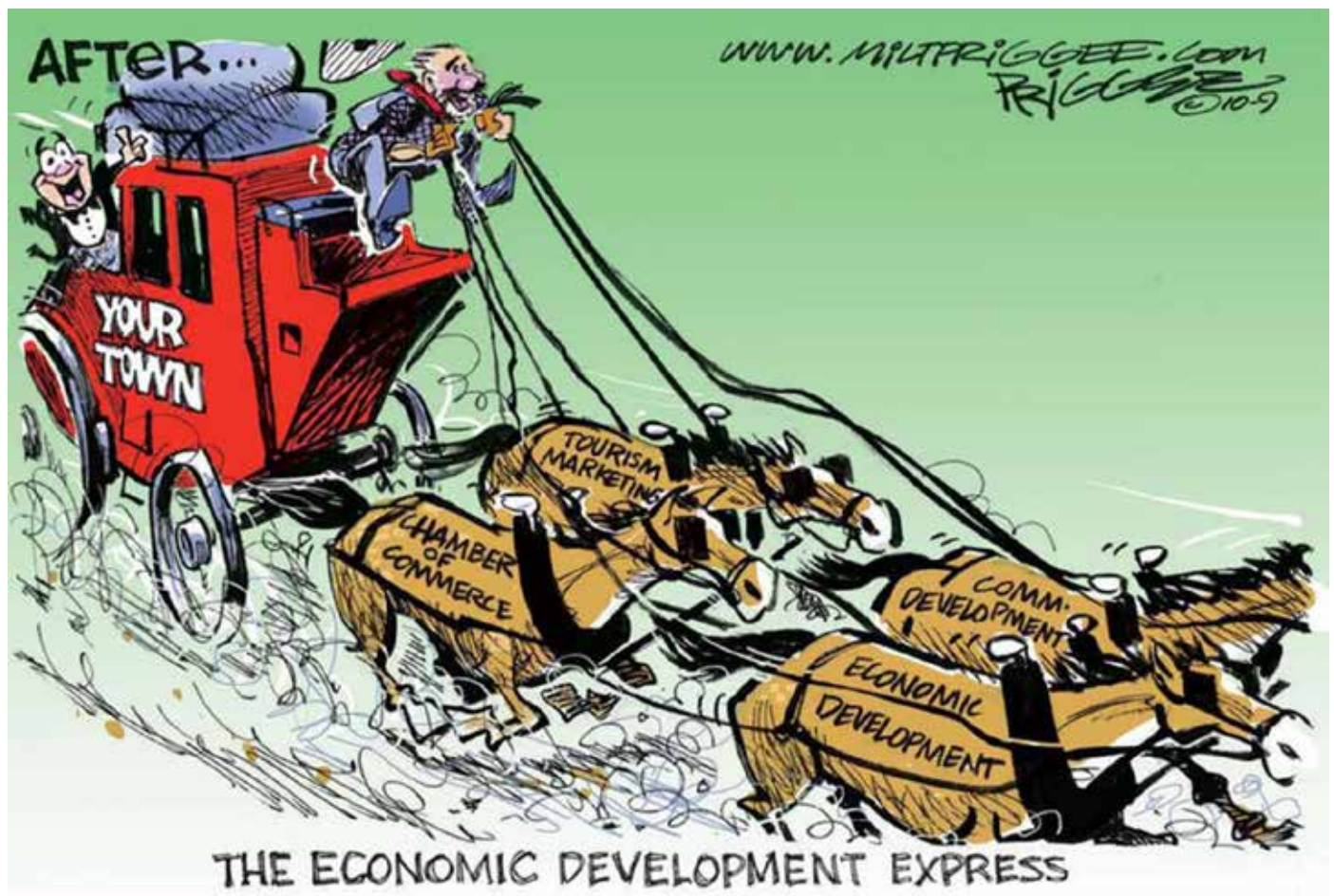
8. Create the look and feel of the brand

This is where the logo, tag lines, concept print ads, pole banners, posters, and other graphic elements come into play. They must portray the feeling that supports the brand promise. Successful brands evoke emotion – they are what we think of you when you mention you're from the Tri-Cities – or any of its communities. They are more than just what you have to offer.

9. Develop the Action Plan

During the third week of March, the Brand Development Committee donated many hours of their time to meet as a group to discuss the major initiatives that will drive the brand forward. After all, a brand is something that lasts for generations. The Action Plan is how you get everyone on the same page, pulling in the same direction.

Look no further than Walla Walla to see a good example of a rebranding effort that will be a lasting brand as one



of Washington's favorite escapes. The recommendations outlined in this plan came as a result of meetings during the week in March along with follow-up research. This is not a Strategic Plan outlining general goals, strategies and objectives. It is, in essence, a to-do list that details specific assignments, by organization, approximate costs where and when available, and they are placed in chronological order of when they would be implemented. It's important to point out that an Action Plan is like a jigsaw puzzle – there are many pieces, and you cannot reshape them, toss some aside or alter them without ending up with a worthless puzzle or plan. Branding, product development and marketing recommendations are all intermingled in this plan making it easy to work your way, by organization, down the list.

10. Make something happen

As you read through the recommendations, you'll see that this is an aggressive plan. It requires digging deep to make some very specific things happen over the next three to five years. The work has already begun but won't end for perhaps a decade. In fact, you can never rest on your laurels, so the brand (including this plan) must always progress and grow. Once you cement ownership of the brand positioning, other communities will try to emulate the success, as they did with the phrase "300 days of sunshine a year" – they will be gunning for you. Once the regional organizations and its partners (the communities, local chambers, port districts) have implemented most, if not all, of the recommendations in this plan, they will come back together and develop the next list – always with the same goals and the same brand promise as a guiding light. Product development is an ongoing process – not a one-time thing.

11. Keep the energy high

This is why true champions must lead the effort. Their unbounded enthusiasm will push the agenda forward. There are ONLY three killers of any branding effort:

1. Local politics, which are typically worse with membership organizations than with elected officials.
2. Lack of champions who push the agenda forward.
3. Lack of money (both private and public).

The bottom line: If you have true champions, they will ALWAYS get through the politics and they will find the money. ALWAYS.

12. Tell the world

2014 is the "getting ready year," which includes securing funding for several projects, adding staff, where needed, to help implement the plan, gradually reworking all marketing materials from business cards to websites, etc. Let the fun begin!

One word of caution: As you start to implement the new brand graphics and key marketing messages, make sure you are able to "deliver on the promise" they represent. A brand is a promise, and if you don't live up to that promise, the branding effort will fall flat.

13. Revisit the plan every three months – at least

This Action Plan is a to do list. Not a plan you read once and then it sits on a shelf. Start working down the list. Write notes in the margins; check off items that have been accomplished; put peer pressure on your partnering organizations; "How are you doing with your list?"

Once a year go through the plan and update it at an annual "Brand Retreat." Plans that are built around brands must be fluid, and some things may need to be rearranged or may alter the timeline, and so it's very important to update the plan once a year. That can easily be done in-house. All you are doing is adding to it, or rearranging certain items.

Never, ever give up!

On October 29th, 1941 Winston Churchill spoke to the boys at Harrow School and made this famous statement, “Never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

While this may be a little overly dramatic for the Tri-Cities branding project, it sets the stage for persistence and perseverance. Where there’s a will, there’s a way. It will be impossible to make everyone happy, so just keep pushing forward.

Dr. Robert Anthony once said, “Forget all the reasons why something may not work. You only need to find one reason why it will.”

MARKETING MATERIALS

The recommendations in this plan include creation of the following printed marketing materials:

- The Very Best of the Tri-Cities (tourism, relocation packets, economic development)
- Community Profile (real estate, economic development)
- Opportunities Brochure (economic development)
- Brand posters (four to six different posters)
- Activities Guide (tourism)
- The Tri-Cities Event Guide

All of these would also be available as PDF downloads from local websites.





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