

MindZoo Unleashes Marketing Creativity

By George Gill
05/19/2004

Leesburg-based MindZoo's name - subtitled "Marketing Animals Uncaged" - reflects company President Randy Jones' desire for the direct marketing firm to be fun, funky and different while still obtaining concrete results for clients.

"We are offering a turnkey solution where we work with a company to strategize what they want to do, develop that program creatively and do the graphic design," he explained.

"We arrange and manage the print process, and we have the piece distributed. It can be newspaper inserts, through the mail or even boxes of brochures being shipped to doctors' offices in California."

Services



Times-Mirror Staff Photo/Jason Hornick **MARKETING ANIMALS:** President Randy Jones and employees Gina Gabay, Claudia Kelly and Jean Yates work at MindZoo, a direct marketing services company in Leesburg focused on innovative approaches.

MindZoo's marketing services include direct mail, strategic planning, creative development, audience targeting, printing, production, analysis, acquisition, retention, winbacks, partner marketing and special projects.

The company aims to help clients aspire to reach lifestyle, life-event and cultural audiences - new homeowners, new parents, Hispanics, students and seniors. MindZoo also aims to help clients find fresh ideas for acquiring, retaining or winning back customers or subscribers.

"We are in business to create a higher-end product for mail," Jones said. "We're not creating a low-end product; we're creating a high-quality printed piece that happens to be distributed in the mail to a very specific person for a very specific reason."

Jones said the company especially enjoys doing special projects. "Sometimes what they need is a research or print-related product or something that's very unique and very different," he said. "That requires a lot of thought because it's something nobody else has necessarily done before." Clients often call with fun, interesting and unique needs and ideas.

"I don't think anything charges us up like that," he said. "No two programs we've ever done have been identical at all."

Profile

Name: Randy Jones, President

Business: MindZoo

Location: 3 ½ S. King St., 3rd Floor, Leesburg

Opened: April 2001; moved to current Leesburg location in November 2003; opened second office, in Chicago, IL

Web site: www.mindzoo.com

Phone: 703-771-2490

Guiding business philosophy:

"What we truly try to do is ask our clients, 'What do you need?' Then we evaluate how we can help fulfill that."

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Fun, respect

Jones said MindZoo is all about fun. "Work should be fun, and we have a lot of fun," he said. Claudia Kelly, client services manager at MindZoo, agreed, saying, "It's always fun to come to work here."

The company's credo is that clients, employees, affiliates and business partners are people first, and that people must be respected as individuals with individual goals, needs and desires.

"We really want people, when they hang up the phone after they talk to somebody at this organization, to feel good, to know they've been respected, that they talked to a real person and that they've been respected as individual and human being," Jones explained. "Courtesy is huge with us."

Other members of the MindZoo team include: Bobbi Kittner, Creative Director; Gina Gabay, Program Director; Claudia Kelly, Client Services Manager; Kelly Hill, Program Analyst; Jean Yates, Administrative Manager; Sam Kittner, Photographer; and Christopher Butterfield, Technical Services Manager.

The company recently opened an office in Chicago, which is being headed by Kelly Hill, formerly of Sears.

Jones hails from Columbia, Mo. He received his bachelor's degree in speech and dramatic art from the University of Missouri-Columbia, majoring in radio, television, film and theater. His career has been focused more on work in print, principally in direct mail.

Jones' 20-year career has been spent in sales and marketing positions almost exclusively in the direct marketing and newspaper publishing fields, notably with Gannett Marketing Services Group from 1987 to 1996. He has worked primarily on business-to-consumer direct marketing program development and creative development for clients in the retail, e-commerce and publishing industries.

Getting started

More recently Jones worked for a marketing agency for four years before deciding it was not the best environment for him.

"Philosophically, I was a different person than the person who ran that agency, and I had made a decision to leave," he said. "After leaving, he got in touch with friend Bobbi Kittner, whom he had worked with before."

"She really talked to me and encouraged me to do this on my own," Jones said. He wanted to start an agency that revolved around his own principles.

He said he wanted the principles to include feeling good about work, and treating clients and vendors with equal respect.

"I really have the handprints of Bobbi Kittner and Chris Butterfield all over my back," he said. "They really were there when I was deciding what my next move was. They were very much encouraging me to do this."

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Everyone who promised to help in some way if he started the business has come through, he said. "I am so lucky and so fortunate."

In a name

Jones said the MindZoo name came about early on during discussions. He didn't want to go with a plain name like Jones Marketing.

"I wanted something fun, funky and different and interesting, that was so unique to us," he explained. Chris Butterfield asked him why people work with Jones.

"I've got a funky, different and unique creativity about me," Jones said. "All these hysterical comments about what my mind comes up with came up then. Two minutes later we went through free-word association and had that name."

Bobbi Kittner designed a distinctive logo and branding imagery based around the name. The name also provided some promotional opportunities, such as stuffed animals. "The whole name has benefited us more than we would ever have thought," he said.

Clients have included *Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, and Walgreens Pharmacy, as well as *The Globe and Mail* and *The Toronto Sun*, both in Canada. Locally, MindZoo created a logo and brand image for Dodona Manor in Leesburg.

The firm has won a variety of awards over the years, including two Gold MAXI awards from the Direct Marketing Association of Washington this year, for *The Washington Post*/Washington Redskins New Mover Partnership and The Great Indoors New Homeowner Program.

MindZoo also received the Crystal Award of Excellence in The Communicator Awards - 2004 Print Media Competition; and an Award of Distinction for Jones' and Bobbi Kittner's article called "Michelangelo, Patsy Watt, Lizzie the Iguana and Ralph Lauren Walk into a Bar," which was on the importance of collaboration.

This year MindZoo also received recognition from Summit Creative Awards 2004 and the American Marketing Association/DC Chapter - 2004 M Awards.

Jones said he enjoys coming to work. "I feel so fortunate to be surrounded by such passionate, talented, hard-working people, and I'm not just saying that," he said. He said their clients have been amazing. "They are loyal beyond anything I've ever seen," he said.

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