



DESIGN FROM THE INSIDE OUT

INSIGHT



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May/June 2008

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Insight: The Branding of Butterfield's

by Robin Tooms

ESTABLISHED IN 1915, NEW YORK CITY'S BUTTERFIELD MARKET HAD A REPUTATION BUT NOT A BRAND. MUCCA DESIGN CREATED A NEW IDENTITY TO HELP THE BUSINESS GROW WHILE STAYING TRUE TO ITS HERITAGE.

The Butterfield Market calls Lexington Avenue on Manhattan's affluent Upper East Side home, and so do some of its partners. Not only did Evan Obsatz, a managing partner, grow up in the store's current building, his sister Joelle—who runs the catering side of the business—lives on one of the floors above the store. There is something unique about a market that is so ingrained into a neighborhood that, as Evan describes it, on recycling day the street is full of "Butterfield boxes"—evidence of market deliveries that week. The public display is proof of a loyal neighborhood clientele.



VAN Part vehicle, part moving billboard, the sage-colored van carries Butterfield Market's brand out into the streets of New York.

Why would a market with such a loyal following tamper with a good thing? Several reasons. One, Joelle was expanding the business with a catering division under the Butterfield name; and two, the store needed to secure its competitive edge over chain markets edging into the neighborhood. Besides, the partners had an eye toward expansion and were seeking an image that would serve them beyond the reputation they'd built in the immediate community.

Butterfield is a third-generation family-run business, and one of a dwindling number of specialty markets in New York City. With its strong history and an established name built on quality and service, it's best known for organic, locally grown produce and freshly prepared foods. The partners understand that while specialty markets can't compete on price, they can focus on customers—a clientele that appreciates the best in products and personalized service.

THE VALUE OF GOOD ADVICE

This journey started when the owners employed a freelance designer to create a logo. They'd never had one before, really, just a series of marks, none especially memorable. Butterfield's image wasn't exactly cohesive, and certainly not upscale. The partners were preparing to roll out the new logo when a neighbor with a graphic design background saw their proposed mark and asked questions—beginning with basics that anyone going through a logo refresh ought to ask, but extending beyond that to brand positioning. It became a soul-searching exercise for the owners, as they asked, “Who is Butterfield? What's our niche?” In fact, the more the partners questioned, the more they realized the direction they were about to take wasn't right for them. At the urging of his new “design advisor,” Evan sought inspiration. He visited Sant Ambroeus, a local restaurant, and liked the visual presence there so much he persuaded the owners to give him the name of the firm that designed all of their materials: Mucca Design. Evan appreciated Mucca's classic, graceful style; he felt it would align with the image he had in mind for Butterfield's. Although he worried that his budget might prevent him from working with a professional firm, he met with the designers. With the store's modest budget in mind, Mucca set out to refresh its brand image.

Mucca appreciated that Evan already understood the basic branding concepts and had a good advisor in his neighbor. The work actually started out as a branding project, with a goal of addressing the coexistence of the market and the new catering business. Roberta Ronsivalle at Mucca describes Evan as enthusiastic and passionate about the undertaking, but also cautious—the older generation of the family did not quite agree with the younger on the investment in branding. More than business success was riding on the outcome.



CARDS Suitable for both the catering division and the market, typography and layout for the business cards convey an image that's upscale and chic.

PERSONAL, UPSCALE & AUTHENTIC

Mucca first settled on key points the brand needed to convey: a sense of New York history and style; old-fashioned, family values; personalized service; and high-quality, sophisticated products. The visual solution was to use eclectic typography, symbols and images to evoke history. The “seal” Mucca developed not only implies credibility in its form, but the pattern, like an old stock certificate, speaks to heritage as well as to New York City (home of Wall Street, of course). Word choices in the materials are specific to New York—any respectable New Yorker would call Lexington Avenue “Lex.” Even the new brand colors—sage and eggplant—sound appetizing. The resulting identity encapsulated the brand’s legacy and key attributes without looking dated.

The inherent flexibility of the visual system can be seen across applications. The mark itself (the monogram) is seen in whole or in part on the various pieces. In stickers and on collateral, you see the whole seal, but it’s casually cropped on the van, and in the case of the shopping bag, magnified on one side so that only the *B* and the texture around it remain. This logo is identifiable, but not so rigid that it can’t be applied across many different media in fresh ways. The approach is very much in keeping with the overall identity developed for Butterfield: sophisticated, but not too formal; approachable, but not intrusive.



CONTAINERS Both functional and beautiful, delivery boxes and bags are almost keepsakes themselves. They’re reused, making them continual brand reminders.

APPROACHABLE ELEMENTS

Christine Celic Strohl, art director at Mucca, says early on she had a revelation about the approach: If they “super-sized” everything, they could really do something distinctive and new while maintaining the history inherent in the symbols. In each of the applications—stickers, collateral, bags, windows and van—oversized fresh produce, poultry and fish illustrations combine with equally potent typography.

The stickers are multipurpose and can be applied anywhere. Seen on packages and bags in lieu of custom packaging, they’re a budget-saving solution that keeps the mark front and center, even during the “cleansing” period when the store phased out old materials while awaiting the new.

Simple and elegant, the new bags have evoked the most comments. Evan relates an instance where a customer wanted to make a purchase just so she could get the bag—a kind of cachet that’s important in any upscale environment. A reusable canvas bag is a possibility for the future. Among the collateral, distinct cards for the market and catering businesses reinforce each side of the company through a careful choice of words around the *B* monogram.

As to the windows, while updated awnings are still in the works, typographic treatments on the windows add to the identity and portray key points without obscuring the view to and from inside the store. The signage is handled in a subtle way, conveying a layer of information without too much visual clutter. Finally, with its oversized logo and sage color, the delivery van is not just a vehicle but also a moving billboard. As Butterfield doesn’t really have an advertising budget, the vehicle graphics maximize visual impact and help draw awareness to both the market and catering businesses.

Summing up Mucca’s efforts on Butterfield’s behalf, Joelle emphasizes how the identity intersects with tradition. “As a third-generation, family-run business and possibly the only remaining original old-time market in New York City, it’s important to us that you know what sets our services apart from everybody else,” she says. “Butterfield Market has a long history of selling high-quality produce and providing personal service to our loyal clientele. Sophisticated products, old-fashioned values and a healthy dose of New York style are some of the ideas we’ve tried to encompass when considering ‘the branding of Butterfield’s.’”

Mucca Design

Creative Director: Matteo Bologna

Art Director: Christine Celic Strohl

Designers: Christine Celic Strohl, Lauren Sheldon

Typefaces: Bureau Grotesque, Jenson, Burin Sans, Rockwell, Zeppelin, Monoline Script, Custom

Butterfield Market Family: Evan, Alan & Joelle Obsatz