

Small BUSINESS

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL
NOVEMBER 26, 2004
PAGE 17



Telling a marketing story over dinner

BY SHELLY STROM

Business Journal staff writer

To grow business, companies need only to look in the mirror, according to Portland culinary marketing diva Lisa Donoughe.

Donoughe's LAD Communications uses that concept as a foundation for a growing number of successful marketing campaigns for her clients.

"There are a lot of people doing good things here and they don't even see the potential they have in telling their stories," said Donoughe, who founded LAD five years ago after moving to Portland from New York City.

"Narrative marketing is different than event-based public relations in that the idea is to form personal collaborative relationships with writers and editors and to allow consumers to form authentic relationships with brands they can believe in," she said. "It is not PR by the pound. It is a strategic long-term approach to building a sustainable brand."

Donoughe wouldn't disclose revenue

but said the firm grew at a rate of about 36 percent from 2002 to 2003 and is on a similar pace from 2003 into this year. She works with a team of two employees out of an office in downtown Portland and from an office in Manhattan. In the Big Apple, LAD's accounts are serviced by a part-time media relations expert who is an instructor of strategic communications at Columbia University.

In Oregon, some of the state's highest-profile culinary pros have built reputations with Donoughe's assistance.

For instance, local celebrity chef Cory Schreiber of Wildwood Restaurant & Bar gave a tour of Portland Farmer's Market that ended up as an eight-minute segment on "Martha Stewart Living."

When Schreiber wanted to get in front

of national food publications earlier this year, Donoughe took him and one of his up-and-coming chefs to New York for a lunchtime gathering of more than a dozen editors and writers.

Schreiber and his chef packed in their suitcases ingredients grown in their backyards and items purchased from local producers. The plan was for the duo to prepare a meal in New York in the style of local and fresh for which Wildwood is known.

While the meal was being prepared Donoughe and her clients had a chance to tell not only the

story of Wildwood but that of Portland and the rest of the state as well.

"We just talked about Oregon and what is going on here, then kicked off a roundtable discussion so the editors and writers could ask questions about whatever

they wanted," Donoughe said.

The idea was to let editors and writers take away a plethora of information that could be used for a variety of stories. Or one big story.

The September issue of *Wine Spectator*, whose writer Owen Dugan attended Donoughe's lunch, included a five-page feature on Portland. The article included a photo of Schreiber and referred to Wildwood as "one of the city's best restaurants."

Donoughe has sent other clients on countrywide storytelling tours as well.

Donoughe helped Dundee-based Erath Vineyards Winery conceive of a concept to put the winery's best asset — founder Dick Erath, who pioneered pinot noir wine making in Oregon — front and center. The idea, which Erath's Sales and Marketing Manager Steve Vuylsteke helped devise, called for touting Erath in Oregon and throughout the rest of the country as the pioneer that he is, he said.

But Erath, nearing 70 years of age, has

LAD Communications

■ **Owner:** Lisa Donoughe, pictured.

■ **What we do:** Launch marketing campaigns for Willamette Valley food industry.

■ **Locations:** Offices in Portland, New York and New Zealand. Go to www.ladcommunications.com.

Food: *Setting Nancy's off from rest of yogurt pack*

FROM PAGE 17

spent the better part of three decades schlepping his wares around the country in a suitcase.

Instead of sending the man, as best a facsimile of his personality as possible has been put in front of wine arbiters nationwide. Donoughe worked with the winery to produce two digital video disks that attempt to convey to food writers Erath's personality and present him as Oregon's wine ambassador.

"That put him in a place where he deserves to be and it's been a tool that's been quite effective," Vuylsteke said.

The vineyards and winery since have been the subject of articles or at least mentioned in a variety of places, including *Gourmet*, the Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *Wine & Spirits*, *The Wall Street Journal* and others.

Vuylsteke said he and Erath are a happy client. "Lisa helped us devise some strategies that really paid off great dividends for Erath in increased sales and in visibility," he said.

"We always want to remind people that even though Erath is a larger Oregon winery, we are certainly not and can't pretend to compete with the country's larger wineries. We have to be very smart and savvy in how we present our brand," Vuylsteke said.

Another pioneering company hired LAD without being convinced it needed help with public relations and marketing.

"We had no intention of ever bringing a

PR firm on board," said Sheryl Thompson Kesey of Nancy's Yogurt, whose parents Sue and Chuck Kesey founded the Eugene-based business in 1960 and were the first producers to include live culture in their yogurt.

The concept of hiring an outside marketer seemed foreign, Kesey said. On the cusp of launching its Nancy's Yogurt brand about two years ago, the company hired LAD.

"We went into it kicking and screaming, asking, 'Why in the world would we ever need this?' But almost every other source we talked to said, 'Hmm, this might be helpful for you,'" she said.

As a result, Donoughe and her team worked to raise the company's profile in the new markets included in its national launch.

LAD created a kit intended to help get the story behind Nancy's Yogurt out to the media, assisted in a packaging redesign and coordinated a media tour that brought about a dozen food writers to the company's operations. Nancy's since has been the subject of a feature in *Woman's Day* magazine and *Natural Products Business Magazine*, *Supermarket News* and got recommendations from *Organic Style*.

"We didn't think we needed public relations help. But Lisa is very food savvy and has lots of connections and she gets the big picture. We barely look up to see the big picture," Kesey said.

Contact Shelly Strom at sstrom@bizjournals.com □