About Working Images

Founded in 1985, Working Images is an award-winning PR agency in the San Francisco Bay Area. Working Images fuses the best of breed in traditional and new media to establish credibility for its clients. It delivers core messages in clear and compelling language that resonate with the clients' target audience.

Working Images' founder, Mary Lou Thiercof, has more than 25 years experience in corporate communications, marketing and public affairs. Mary Lou has successfully designed and executed communications strategies and campaigns for companies in a variety of industries including pharmaceuticals, energy and environmental technology. Mary Lou also has extensive experience in the public sector through her work with city governments, public works and educational institutions.

Mary Lou began her communications career at Chevron Corporation, in corporate communications and public affairs. Prior to working for Chevron, Mary Lou restored Victorian Houses in the SF Bay Area. She has a bachelors from the University of California, Berkeley and is on the board of the SF chapter of PRSA and the Emeryville Chamber of Commerce. (www.workingimages.com)

Working Images' communications programs include:

Strategic Communications Planning & Counsel
across all communications platforms – traditional & new media
Enduring Brand Building
logos ● image change ● video ● websites ● communication pieces
Creative PR Campaigns
event-driven ● public awareness ● consumer education ● social media
Innovative Marketing
business development ● B2B ● product/service launches

Sample of Public Agency clients:
Association of Bay Area Governments
City of Emeryville
City of Solana Beach
City of Manhattan Beach
Integrated Waste Management Board

Publisher, emeryville.news: For six years Working Images produced a tabloid size newspaper for the City of Emeryville as a communication and tourism piece for both the City and Chamber, highlighting evolving businesses, commercial development, green tech, the technology & biotech communities, city programs and the Emeryville Schools - 1999-2006.

Mary Lou Thiercof

Mary Lou Thiercof designs strategic communications programs for a variety of private and public sector clients. She specializes in integrated marketing and public relations campaigns and has a passion for consumer education programs.

Mary Lou's expertise is based on over 20 years of experience beginning with her position as a writer and lexicographer for Chevron USA's major lawsuits and then in *Public Affairs* – in Communications producing in-house and external publications as well as in Community Relations executing programs targeted for environmentalists and schools.

Following in the footsteps of her father's entrepreneurial spirit, Mary Lou founded Working Images and has created and executed communication programs for industries such as education, environmental, gas & oil, healthcare, nonprofits, professional services and retail. Programs included strategic public awareness campaigns, event-driven programs and community outreach in creative communication venues.

According to Mary Lou, ***"An important element of any outreach campaign is really knowing who you are trying to reach and how they like to receive information."*** With her strong research skills and keen sensitivity to audience needs, she fine tunes your message and tells your story in creative and effective ways.

Mary Lou can help position your organization properly among your competition and seize the spotlight. She's a 24/7 advocate for her clients, and has a great eye for style plus a special sensitivity to target audiences. Let her expertise in brand management, marketing and public relations work for you.

Mary Lou is a past president of the Public Relations Society of America, Oakland/East Bay Chapter and is vice president of PRSA, San Francisco chapter. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley and is a horticulturalist on the side.

the east bay's creative pr team

CASE STUDY: The Greening of Evergreen Oil

Background

- Evergreen Oil built a $15 million refinery in Newark, CA
- Although Newark is a town with light industrial manufacturing, it is also home to families, schools and businesses
- When they built the refinery, they had no strategic communications plan in place
- Before the official ribbon cutting & opening, there were fires, explosions, and odors. Community hated this refinery being in its town – "Not In My Backyard (NIMBY)."

Challenges

- TV crews swarmed to Newark & interviewed NIMBY neighbors
- Newspapers exploited the mishaps of this start-up. It was bad and it smelled bad. Everyone thought so.

- The mayor threatened to throw them out of town if there was one more incident.
- No one knew that Evergreen Oil (EO) actually recycled used oil. The perception was they were like a Chevron Refinery.

Objectives

- Articulate the recycling story of EO to employees first
- Communicate the positive environmental story of EO to the community
- Convince the mayor to let them stay in Newark
- Change perception of the company
- Become an accepted member of the community

Strategies

- Maximize use of local media to communicate to all audiences
- Involve CEO to communicate strategic communications plan to employees
- Develop and deploy messaging to employees, the community, government agencies and the media
- Create a fun mascot to deliver the messages

Results

- Outreach resulted in positive media coverage, including TV
- Children drove the message home to parents from Tin Man recycling classes
- Mayor personally asked Working Images to provide the mascot, The Tin Man and his friends from OZ as a central component to the annual Newark Days Fair, three years in a row. Mascot was adopted by the city.
- Surveys showed acceptance of EO by community, govt. agencies, the mayor

CASE STUDY: Helping Bay Area Communities Prevent Costly Sewer Backups

Background

- Sewer backups represented a major cause of loss for communities around the San Francisco Bay. Hundreds of homes were damaged by such events every year.
- Essentially internal actions – training, maintenance and infrastructure investment – and limited public outreach such as bill stuffers were not reducing the problem.
- Both the frequency and cost associated with sewer backups were skyrocketing – a multi-million dollar problem.
- Research revealed that homeowners – the last line of defense in backup prevention – were not engaged in combating the problem.

Challenges

- Research revealed that homeowners were largely unaware of the risk of sewer backups and what they might be doing to prevent them and protect their homes.
- Most homeowners had a "flush it and forget it" attitude regarding their sewer systems.
- Sewer backup prevention was a complex and somewhat foreign subject that needed to be communicated to diverse audiences

Goal and Objectives

- Reduce the frequency and severity of sewer backups by:
    - Making risk-diagnosis and back-up protection info available to target homeowners.
    - Generating awareness of homeowner responsibilities related to backup prevention.
    - Achieving installation of backup prevention devices on at-risk connections.
    - Attracting the participation of one partner or sponsor to the public service campaign.
    - Setting the stage for an ongoing, phased public awareness program.

Strategies

- Build the campaign around a smart and cost-effective Website, www.sewersmart.org.
- Offer homeowners easily understood information about their sewer connections, their responsibilities related to them and tips for maintaining a problem-free connection.
- Engage homeowners through an interactive Web-component, a five-question risk assessment test -- or Sewer R.A.T. -- to evaluate their need for taking preventive measures.
- Drive target audiences to the Website by integrated components including a kick-off proclamation and demonstration, extensive media outreach, a television PSA and an internal information program.

Results

- ABAG launched the campaign by proclaiming November "*Be Sewer Smart -- Prevent Sewer Backups this Rainy Season*" month in the Bay Area. (2005-2010 ongoing)
- Campaign reached thousands of target-audience homeowners prompting them to take the risk assessment test and request, and install, free backup prevention devices.
- Sewer backup claims decreased by 75% over the first three years for ABAG PLAN members