

June 2009



Welcome to ACCION San Diego's June 2009 newsletter! We use this opportunity to keep our clients, partners, and friends informed about what we do and how we continue to serve our community in the best way possible. *Thank you for your support.*

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ⇒ **Featured Client: Robin Tabana**
- ⇒ **Insurance—What You Need to Know**
- ⇒ **Entrepreneur of 2009 Contest**
- ⇒ **Branding Tips for Small Businesses**

Robin Tabana: Proper Etiquette Art Dealer



On April 4, 2009, Robin trekked Cowles Mountain for the first time. "It was a life changing experience," he writes on his blog.

Custom, unique, fashion is a priceless beauty of our culture. Art surrounds us in nature, music, color, and clothing. As an artist and art dealer - this concept lives strong in Robin Tabana, owner of Proper Etiquette Art Dealer. Robin uses his artistic abilities to create one-of-a-kind clothing items for his customers. "Creations are made to lead and never follow," Robin says.

Proper Etiquette began in 2003 as a company that creates custom clothing from the color and type of fabric to the style pattern and cut. When Robin decided to start this business, he looked to guidance from a friend, Vicky Nixon. She gave him knowledge and training in refining his sewing skills.

In 2008, Robin came to ACCION San Diego for a loan in the amount of \$25,000 to purchase supplies and machinery. Robin started his business as the only employee with one sewing machine. At that time, he was only able to make 11 jackets a month. Now in 2009, Proper Etiquette has 10 employees who cut, sew, and finish the products Robin designs. The staff consists of highly skilled individuals who have years of experience. For example, one cutter, Mr. Enrique, has been cutting since he was 16 years old and now has 22 years of experience.

The products Robin produces range from t-shirts to hats. His customer base continues to grow daily by word of mouth and referrals. To this day, he still personally makes 11 custom jackets a month to select clientele on an invitation basis.

Not only is his business bringing income to Robin and his employees, but it is also impacting the local community. Proper Etiquette focuses on responsible business, giving a portion of its profit to a local elementary school and the Surfrider Foundation, a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to the protection of the world's waves and beaches. Additionally, as Robin expands his audience by finding stores to sell his items, he plans to eventually fund the building of a youth recreational center. "I always want to make sure I help others," Robin explains.

Above all, Robin thrives on the ability to use his love and passion for art to maintain a successful business. "Do what you love," is both his motto and his advice to others.

Visit <http://properetiquette.us/> to check out Proper Etiquette apparel and learn more about Robin's artwork and designs.



Community Workshop

[Insurance - What You Need to Know](#)

WHEN: Friday, June 12, 9:00am-12:00pm
WHERE: SCORE Entrepreneur Center—550 West "C" Street, Suite 550, San Diego
COST: \$49 Pre-Paid / \$59 On-Site

- * How do I get the most for my money?
- * What insurance is an absolute must to avoid great risk to my business?
- * Which Employee Benefits should I consider?
- * And more!

For more information or to register, please call **619-557-7272**.

Enter to Win a Trip to Miami!

[Entrepreneur of 2009 Contest](#)

Entrepreneurs are the force helping to rebuild this economy - one small business at a time. You know it and we know it. Now it's time for everyone else to know it!

That's why *Entrepreneur Magazine* and The UPS Store present the **Entrepreneur of 2009 Contest!**

Visit <http://www.entrepreneur.com/e2009/> to enter. You could win a trip to Miami, Florida!

Don't delay - deadline is June 15th!

[ARTICLE OF THE MONTH: Branding Tips for Small Businesses](#)

ARTICLE PROVIDED BY: www.score.org

Many entrepreneurs think of branding as something done by only very large companies, like Mercedes or Nike. However, branding is done by all companies, regardless of size - the only difference is how actively they do it. For small businesses, taking an active approach to branding is critical, and especially during a tight economy, says Gemini Babla, Director of Creative Services who oversees branding initiatives for Sony Electronics Inc. in the USA.

A brand is the set of impressions people have about a company that they may have gained through its advertisements and other communications, the experience of buying and using the company's products or services, and the interactions they have with the company itself. Companies manage their brand through careful presentation of an image to create a favorable perception and to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Babla, who oversees Sony's internal and external brand activities, offers seven easy and inexpensive strategies to help small business owners develop their brand - and I prove their bottom line.

Define your brand

If you haven't already, draft a one-page description of your business. It helps to get an outside perspective; ask people who interact with your company about their perceptions. How would they describe it? What do they think you do? What do they like about it? How do you compare to competitors? Are there things your company could I prove? Then, write down what your business stands for. "This is your value proposition. You need to make it your brand mantra," Babla says.

Coming from a family with several members who own businesses, Babla can relate to a small business owner's needs. Her father is a SCORE counselor, and her parents own an art gallery. "They're known for exceptional service and a specific style of art. Those things don't change. What defines your business shouldn't either."

Conduct a brand audit

Once you've defined your brand, examine every compo-

nent of your brand — for example, your logo, business cards, signage, website, on-hold messaging and email signature — and make sure they are consistent with what you want your image to be. "Sony places heavy emphasis on consistency, because that consistency creates credibility in the mind of the consumer."

Keep your brand top of mind A down economy is the time to re-affirm your value proposition with your customers and prospects. "Keep your company and brand top of mind.

The economy will turn around eventually, so you want to be the first choice when they're ready to buy," Babla says.

Live the brand

Your employees are the biggest stewards of your brand. "Branding is as much about your people as anything else. The best interactions come from one-on-one conversations between executives, employees, suppliers and customers," Babla says. "Employees who are engaged with your brand management philosophy will become brand ambassadors for your company."

Measure your performance

Brand measurement can be done, but it's tricky because brands are emotional and emotions/intangibles are hard to measure. "We have a number of tracking mechanisms at Sony Electronics," Babla says. "We measure our communications and track brand recall, but we also look at our brand health through perceived association and brand loyalty as part of our long term assessment. You can also talk to your customers and your employees to gain insight." Because branding is a long-term effort, it may take up to six months before a small business will see results from a concerted effort.

Don't stop

Don't abandon your branding efforts, even when times are tough. This way, you'll be ready when the economy bounds, and consumers will remember you were there.

To see this article in its entirety, please visit: <http://www.score.org>.