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Portfolio

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***Note:** The following pieces are selected writing samples from Andrew Whytock's portfolio of previous work for either past or ongoing clients. The work represented here showcases a variety of clients with the need for writing services in several formats regarding various topics. This material is used with permission from the clients listed and is not intended to be copied or reproduced in any way.*

Client: Sea Monster Marketing
Tulsa, OK

Title: “How To Elevate Packaging Without a Full Rebranding”

Type: Blog post

When was the last time your packaging changed? Maybe it was recently, or maybe it wasn't. For some brands, never ever changing their packaging is what makes them stand out, but those are exceptions to the general rule. The general rule is that every now and then, a product's packaging needs a refresh. Consumers who are used to the product should do a slight double take when they see it because it is different enough to catch their eye and yet still unmistakably remains the product they've come to know.

The common misconception

So, if you haven't changed your packaging in a while, why? Is there something stopping you? Because what's stopping a lot of people is that when they think “elevate packaging” they also think “rebrand”. The two aren't synonymous, yet a lot of people seem to think they are. Yes, rebranding is a big job and it isn't to be taken lightly, but it's a totally different thing from elevating your packaging. Rebranding means you keep the product but send the entire brand back to the drawing board. You change your image, your tone, your message, and just about any other thing that could be changed. It isn't change for change's sake; it's usually prompted by a lack of success with the existing brand or a need for a more relevant approach. Elevating your packaging is when you work with the equity of the brand you have established to create better packaging for your goods. There are a few simple ways that this can be done.

Make your packaging more functional

For one thing, increasing functionality is a simple but effective way to elevate your packaging. Say you sell perishable fresh vegetables in a plastic bag, and then come out with the same product in a resealable plastic bag. Elevation accomplished! Your customers can now buy the product they know in a bag that conveniently maintains its freshness. The added functionality of the packaging solves a problem for your customers and takes you up a notch in their perception. The logo and packaging design can even stay the same; all that's required is a different order from the bag manufacturer.

Create visual cues

Another way to elevate your packaging is by enhancing the design on the package. Maybe add more colors or images, or a slogan beneath your logo. While packaging should never be loud for the sake of being loud, it doesn't hurt to have something sharp that stands out just a little more than it used to. Michael DiFranco, VP of Marketing at John Byrne Company, says, “You can achieve strong visual cues through deliberate printing and finishing elements... By focusing on these strong visual elements of your packaging, you create a focal point of consumers,

making your brand, product and packaging easy to remember” (packagingoftheworld.com). Make changes that have a noticeable visual impact, and you will elevate your packaging.

A simple way to make a difference

So, before you take the easy way out and opt not to elevate your packaging, think about what it actually means. You don't have to rebrand. Rebranding is a lot of work, and it should only be done if your current brand is failing. If you've got a great brand, don't give up on it. Get together with some design experts and elevate your packaging. It's easier than you think!

Client: Cylinders & Valves Inc.

Strongsville, OH

Title: “The Purpose of Small Hydraulic Cylinders”

Type: Short blog post

Although hydraulic cylinders are used in large, heavy duty machines and industrial equipment, the same technology is also employed in much smaller applications. We may be used to thinking of hydraulic cylinders as powerful lifting tools (which they can be) but sometimes they are used for very small and basic operations. The interesting thing about small hydraulic cylinders is that they operate on the very same principles as large ones, but the size of the cylinder and the piston limits the strength, making it possible to manufacture cylinders for literally hundreds of different uses based on the necessary force.

One very common example of this is found in the trunk of almost every car. Two small hydraulic cylinders fixed to the frame allow you to smoothly open and close the trunk without it falling. The pressure of someone pushing down on the door is enough to compress the cylinders, but they are strong enough that the trunk won't slam shut when it is left open. The diameter of these particular cylinders is less than an inch, but they exert all the force that is necessary for their function.

Specialized technology companies who are in the process of developing and manufacturing robotic equipment often use small hydraulic cylinders to add greater functionality to their units. On a small moving robot, miniature hydraulic cylinders can power legs that lift the unit up and down or move it from side to side in some fashion. For a stationary piece of robotic machinery, hydraulic cylinders can be very good at accomplishing linear movement if and when necessary. Although hydraulic technology is not new or complex like some emerging technology, it is still highly useful for advanced equipment that is currently being developed. You can imagine that small hydraulic cylinders could even be useful in drone technology as companies continue to explore the functional possibilities of drones.

At Cylinders & Valves Inc., we offer cylinders of all sizes for a wide variety of industrial clients. From small hydraulic cylinders to large heavy duty ones, we can provide you with whatever you need for your equipment.

Client: Industrial Quick Search Directory
Grand Rapids, MI

Title: “Transportation Capabilities Make Georgia a Strategic Hub for Foreign Companies”

Type: News article

The state of Georgia continues to successfully attract and retain major companies in the automotive, pharmaceutical and renewable energy industries by maintaining an infrastructure that complements these manufacturers. Georgia has excellent road and rail transportation networks to access surrounding states, and it also has the strategic advantage of being located on the Eastern Seaboard. The government of Georgia has made every effort to develop a skilled workforce so that global corporations are encouraged to move to the area permanently. Major highly respected colleges like Georgia Tech equip people with the skills they need to enter the workforce and become leaders in their respective industries.

Because most manufacturers in the state compensate their workers so competitively, Georgia has the third lowest manufacturing unionization rate in the U.S. This means that employers are benefiting from a motivated workforce where hard work and talent are rewarded fairly. Within the government, the state Department of Economic Development identifies areas for growth and proposes legislation to help manufacturers establish a strong presence in Georgia and connect with the local workforce.

Atlanta – Georgia’s largest city – is a strategic location for many manufacturers because of its large industrial rail yards and commercial airports. Many new manufacturers chose to build their sites on the outskirts of the city where land is cheaper but access to hubs of national and international shipping are very close by.

In 2006, the Korean auto company Kia announced the opening of its first automotive manufacturing facility in North America. The facility was constructed at West Point, not far from Atlanta. By 2009, Kia had recruited and trained all of the necessary employees for the site and they began mass producing the then upcoming 2011 Kia Sorento. By March of 2016, the Kia Motors Manufacturing Group plant in West Point had produced 2 million vehicles. Kia is just one great example of a foreign company choosing to manufacture in the state of Georgia on a large scale because of the numerous economic benefits.

Client: Interviewed

San Francisco, CA

Title: “Why Does Anyone Still Drive a Taxi?”

Type: Special interest article

I hop into the back of an Uber and - as one does in these situations - I begin making small talk with the driver. I quickly discover that my driver, Fernando, used to be a taxi driver. Now I'm intrigued. I bring up a question that's been on my mind recently, “In an era where services like Lyft and Uber exist, why does anyone still drive a taxi?” I ask Fernando why anyone would possibly want to be a taxi driver when they could drive an Uber and make more money for less hassle. His response is fascinating.

The life of a taxi driver

When I ask him what being a cabby was like, he lets out a groan and begins to describe a typical day at Yellow Cab. Apparently there is a bit of a hierarchy among Taxi drivers, and if you're at the bottom of it like Fernando was, life sucks, to say the least.

Every morning, 120 taxi drivers would arrive to the Yellow Cab dispatch center and line up to get the keys to their taxi from a cashier. “Did you have assigned taxis that belong exclusively to you?” I ask Fernando. He laughs as we weave through rush hour traffic, “Not exactly”. The drivers who had been with Yellow Cab the longest had enough seniority that they usually drove the same car every day, and these were among the best cars that the taxi company owned. However, that meant that the newbies like Fernando got the shitty leftover cars that rattled and clanked and smelled like someone had left takeout in the backseat for a month. This meant that the new guys would spend the first hour of their day cleaning their car just so that it was presentable enough to accommodate passengers. That's a whole hour of the day wasted while the drivers at the top of the totem pole were racking up their metres with people commuting to work.

But it gets worse. The cashier who handed out the keys also collected a \$10 tip from every driver - every day of the week. So here's a guy who's getting paid \$12 an hour but making over a thousand dollars in off-the-book tips every single day just to sit behind a cash register. Of course, drivers could refuse to tip him, but Fernando tells me that was a dead end. “If you didn't tip the guy, he tell you to go to the back of the line. He would give you the very last set of keys, or he might not give you a taxi at all. Then your whole day is just gone.” \$10 might seem like a small amount of money to part with, but if you're driving a taxi 5 days a week, that's \$200 that you are shelling out every month just get behind the wheel.

A different crowd

These details line up with a similar picture that I was presented with by a former Bay Area cabby named Jeff who switched to driving for Uber after 8 years with Yellow Cab. I interviewed Jeff to see if what Fernando was telling me was more than anomaly. The details were eerily similar;

dirty cars, \$5-10 tips to a cashier each day, bald tires, and time consuming vehicle logs that ate into the daily profitability of each shift.

This misanthropic description of a taxi driver's life brought me back to my original question - except now it seemed even more obvious. Why on earth wouldn't every taxi driver just become an Uber driver? Jeff helped to shed some light here.

He noticed a difference in the type of passengers that he was driving around when he switched to Uber. Instead of professionals and older folks who would dial the cab company on a flip phone when they needed a ride, he was mostly driving around millennials who were comfortable with smartphones and rides from anonymous drivers.

A cabby's advantage

There is a downside to this. "I'm not sure why, but a lot of parties seem to use Uber, so they can be rowdy." While an Uber driver does have the right to refuse passengers, it will directly affect their rating. This could be very bad for business and end up making their venture less profitable. "A taxi driver can refuse to let people into their car."

Jeff believes that the answer to our initial question lies in this distinction between the type of people who are using Uber vs. they type who are using Taxis. "Uber drivers are not [necessarily] professional drivers. A cab driver is a seasoned professional driver." He says professionals still tend to use Taxis, especially when they are travelling since you need a taxi medallion to wait for passengers at an airport.

The pros and cons

Uber drivers do experience many benefits, not the least of which is getting to be their own boss. No one tells an Uber driver when to show up for work or what car they can drive; that's up to them. Uber drivers receive better compensation as rates go up with time and distance. If a driver works during hours when demand is high in their area, they'll make even more money.

An interesting study that Uber conducted with the help of Benenson Strategy Group compared the per-hour earnings of Taxi drivers and Uber drivers across the U.S. The study revealed two important pieces of information: (1) Uber drivers work less hours than Taxi drivers, partly because they make more money and partly because it's just a part-time gig for many drivers, and (2) the average Uber driver makes \$19 an hour, while the average cab driver makes only \$12.90 an hour. But this isn't necessarily true. As Jeff told me, "I made the same about of money and sometimes more after becoming an Uber driver, but I had to work more hours." This could be accounted for by Uber's rule against tipping. Traditional cab drivers depend on tips to boost their daily earnings.

Coexisting drivers

Fernando tells me that there is a bit of a rift between the Taxi community and the Uber network. Uber doesn't even want its drivers to be taxi drivers, because a commercial driver may be expected to follow different licensing regulations. The whole idea of the app is that anyone could

be an Uber driver. While it takes hard work and the right certifications to become a taxi driver, becoming an Uber driver is easy. Perhaps this explains the animosity you can see in viral videos of taxi drivers protesting and threatening people who use Uber. After all, if you worked your tail off to stand in line every morning and tip a cashier who hands you keys to a shitty car you don't own so that you can drive people around all day for a pay grade that just keeps your head above water, wouldn't you be a little pissed when some 20 year-old with a Honda Civic fills out an online application and pulls up next to you at a red light with paying customers in his backseat?

For Jeff, it seems impossible to believe that Uber and other driving services will outlast or transcend the taxi business. "It's gonna take some kind of scandal. It's unrealistic to think it will go on forever." But, for the time being, he doesn't mind being able to use his own vehicle to drive people around.