

Art of the slogan

The state's new branding effort gets off to a slow start ... and still faces skeptics

Lynn Peters prefers to take the long view when it comes to the state's new tourism slogan.

Given the debut of "live like you mean it," Peter's approach will be critical to its ultimate success.

"When I first heard it – in a closed room – I liked it," says Peters, executive director of the Fox Cities Visitors and Convention Bureau. She remembers thinking it did not fit the state's other motto, "Originality Rules," but certainly thought the slogan would work.

It didn't take long to realize others were having a more negative reaction.

"By the time we left the room that day, we were already hearing about it. Some folks got it right away on their

Blackberries," Peters says. "It's a very different world."

Reaction was swift and largely negative. At the top of the list of complaints was the fact the slogan was anything but original, having been used by Bacardi as recently as 2008. There are at least five active trademarks of the phrase, according to the U.S.

Trademark and Patent Office.

As the initial wave of criticism has subsided, its success may well be in the hands of folks like Peters, who will look to use the slogan in upcoming campaigns to attract visitors.

A veteran of many marketing campaigns, Peters says it takes time to measure the success of any effort. What matters now is how it is used. She already sees ways she can use it.

"It's a branding umbrella that a whole lot of communities can find a place under," she says. "We are the state's shopping destination. I can see using 'shop like you mean it' as part of a campaign."

The fact that marketers can find a way to use it does not assuage some of the critics.

Greg Linnemanstons' first reaction was a blog entry to the effect of why go with a theme that will make the state the butt of jokes. President and principal at the Appleton-based Weidert [continued]



"It sounds like it was aimed at inspiring those of us who already live here. As a tourism slogan, it does not do anything to attract people to come spend a week here. [However], if they can build a campaign around it where folks begin to get it, then they can make it work. There is always an opportunity for creative execution."

— Greg Linnemanstons, president and principal, Weidert Group

Group marketing and communications firm, Linnemanstons' position has not changed much in the intervening weeks. Among his concerns: Who is the slogan targeted to?

"It sounds like it was aimed at inspiring those of us who already live here," Linnemanstons says. "As a tourism slogan, it does not do anything to attract people to come spend a week here. People come to Wisconsin to relax, not for adventure vacations."

He also has a problem with the slogan's past links to Bacardi. Given the recent media attention regarding alcohol abuse in the state, linkage to alcohol seems careless at best.

Of course, Linnemanstons knows the state is not going to abandon the effort, though he suspects getting money from the legislature may be difficult at first. Yet, he concedes that redemption is possible.

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While the initial reaction was not what Sarah Klavas would have liked when the new slogan was announced, the state's brand manager is confident it will be more positive than critics predict.

The Department of Tourism spent about \$50,000 to develop the slogan and the logo. Part of that was spent on market research, legal reviews and trademark application. Klavas says the department would not have gone with the slogan had the research not shown a positive opportunity.

"It is very memorable language that captures the essence of the Wisconsin experience," Klavas says.

The fact the slogan has been used before is not a hurdle, and as she notes, no one has a monopoly on words. Still, the extent of the criticism surprised her.

The department's task now is to build ownership of the slogan and launch successful campaigns for the spring and summer tourism seasons. She says

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— Lynn Peters, Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau

An advertisement for the Oshkosh Convention Center. At the top, the name "OSHKOSH" is written in large, bold, yellow-outlined letters, with "convention center" in smaller white lowercase letters below it. Underneath is the website "www.oshkoshconventioncenter.com". The background features a photograph of the convention center building, a modern structure with large glass windows and a sign that reads "OSHKOSH CONVENTION CENTER". A large, stylized yellow graphic resembling a leaf or a speech bubble is overlaid on the bottom left, containing a list of adjectives: "Revisit", "Renewed", "Renovated", "Revitalized", "Refreshed", and "Reopened!". At the bottom left, the address "2 North Main Street", "Downtown Oshkosh", and phone number "920-424-1330" are listed. At the bottom right, a call to action reads: "Call today to book your next meeting or event at the Oshkosh Convention Center!".

OSHKOSH
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"You still have to go with what your background work and research tells you. The proof will be in the implementation."

— Susan Finco, Leonard & Finco Public Relations

building the brand will take time.

"This is one of many tools we will use to promote the state," Klavas says. "This is something that will work across all sections of the state."

Success will be the ultimate measure of whether the tourism officials made the right choice, says Susan Finco, owner and president of Leonard & Finco Public Relations in Green Bay.

The author of several articles on crisis management, Finco says tourism officials handled the initial reaction well – they did not try to duck the criticism – and can now focus on the task of making the slogan a success.

"You still have to go with what your background work and research tells you," Finco says. "The proof will be in the implementation and can it be used to promote tourism."

Jack Money Penny already sees opportunities to do just that.

From "live like you mean it," the president of the Door County Visitor Bureau can already derive variations such as "travel like you mean it" that can be used to benefit the communities his organization helps to market.

"The sooner those of us in the industry start to use it, the quicker we will get past the negatives and move forward," says Money Penny. **1**

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CLOSER LOOK



The Department of Tourism says the color selections for the "Live Like You Mean It" logo came from consumer research conducted in Wisconsin and neighboring states. According to the department, "the earthy organic green hue of the word 'Wisconsin' is reminiscent of the state's natural resources and stewardship of the land, while the rich red of the theme line and silhouette conveys the passion, energy, loyalty and pride that define the state's people."