

GrayMatterz

THE ZIMMERMAN GROUP, INC.

Marketing/Consulting

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VALUE OF RETAINERS

Okay. We admit it. In the early years of business, we didn't really understand the huge value to our clients of retainer relationships. When we were a new agency in the late '80s, we asked lots of other agencies about retainers.

Generally, they responded that the steady income was good for them. Or that, with a retainer, they could save enough bandwidth to meet their customers' needs. Both are valid points. But now we see the advantages *to our clients* so much more clearly.

Currently, we have monthly service allocations — similar to, but better than, retainers — with most companies. The result? Stronger relationships with our clients that have translated to more powerful marketing programs.

BEING THERE

It's not just about creating a better direct mail program or a more effective advertising campaign. The value is that we are now intimately involved with most of these accounts. So we're there to help discover solutions that can optimize new opportunities. We're also there to help identify fixes when problems arise. Most important, because we're watching the client's business and markets so closely, we can flag the client before there's a problem or a missed opportunity.

This is perhaps even more true in tough economic times. Recently, for instance, we had to slash a client's once impressive ad budget. Business environments had changed. Sales were down. That's when we can be most creative. We help answer the tough questions: How do you keep



Brains for hire.

awareness of your products and services high, even with a more limited budget? How do you maintain customer relationships? How do you maintain a presence with your various publics?

LITTLE IDEAS

By being closely involved with our accounts, we are in position to offer a whole range of ideas — the big ones on which campaigns are built and the little ones that yield value far beyond their cost.

Recently, a client was preparing for a trade show. Their scientists were presenting research findings using a format common at scientific meetings: posters. Generally, they thumbtack these posters to what are essentially huge bulletin boards. There are no tables, no chairs, no surfaces at all. Yet our client recognized that here was a great place to gather leads. Our solution involved a little thought, a few envelopes, a mini-sign, and thumbtacks. But it worked: they gathered lots of important leads, while taking the opportunity to brand their organization.

We'll confess. While we like chocolate as much as the next agency (in fact, perhaps even more), our real soft spot is having clients thank us for our good ideas — good ideas that have made a difference for them.

Here, for example, is the kind of quote we like to get; this one is from an executive who is joining the staff of one of our clients: "I saw the square fold-out brochure. I was so impressed, and even more so when I saw it was for my new company! I haven't seen the launch mailing yet, but I heard that it was fabulous."

SAY "HELLO"

Have you called our offices in the last several months? If so, you may have spoken with Kate Collins, our new Project Coordinator. If not, please introduce yourself the next time you call. A Duke University graduate with a major in psychology and a minor in English, Kate is a whiz with both creative and organizational assignments. We're delighted to have her on our team.