



RISDALL STIMULUS VALUE PACKAGE

Ad agencies, clients catch stimulus fever

While it remains to be seen whether the Obama administration's economic stimulus plan will pull the nation out of recession, the phrase "stimulus package" has already become a linguistic success.

Or so it would seem, given that two Twin Cities marketing firms are already attempting to win new clients by offering their own "stimulus packages."

New Brighton-based Risdall Marketing Group (RMG) is offering a package of five marketing services for \$6,999 – about half the normal cost – that's loaded with such terms as "Shovel-ready strategic planning" and "No pork public relations." and "No-more-market-speculation social media monitoring."

"We're offering it because we think there are people out there who can use these tools to get their marketing tipped right-side up. We want people to know that there's something out there," said John Risdall, chairman and chief executive officer of RMG.

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Marketing: Ad agencies use 'economic stimulus' message to woo new clients

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Minneapolis branding firm LaBreche, meanwhile, is offering up to \$25,000 worth of free services for clients who sign on during the first half of 2009.

Founded as a public relations firm in 1990, LaBreche has expanded its services to include brand development, interactive and design services.

"We believe so much in the companies in our community," said Beth LaBreche, chief executive officer of the firm. "It's agonizing to see some of them hesitating and putting their marketing plans on hold when you know they could be taking advantage of the lull to really get their messages out there."

"Our new package gives companies a powerful argument for investing in their brands in 2009," LaBreche said in a news release. "It's our way of co-investing with businesses that are tentatively moving into the New Year."

RMG's discount package is "pretty much aimed at small- to mid-sized businesses," Risdall said. "But we'd be pretty happy to take on a division of a Fortune 500 company and help them get their toe in the water and

then, hopefully, a whole foot."

The 80-employee firm is promoting the stimulus package with moving banner ads on the websites of Finance and Commerce, MinnPost and Upsize magazine.

Two banner ads – "From the office of marketing, business growth and insanely outrageous revenue" and "Got a shovel ready project with a shoveled under budget?" – precede a Risdall Stimulus Value Package Web banner with click-through access to stimulus details.

The agency includes client examples in each of the five service categories, including a new business strategy for Calypso Systems, an audio-visual firm that sells its services to schools, and website creation and pay-per-click marketing

from for Restoration Professionals, a construction firm that specializes in disaster restoration.

Referring to the increasingly Web-based world of marketing, Risdall said, "The cool thing is that it's going to tell you what's going on out there in the real world. If you know what you're doing in social media you can be pretty cost-effective."

The underlying motive for RMG and its clients riding

out the recession is developing sales leads for companies to capitalize on in the future, he said.

At LaBreche, services included in the \$25,000 of free billable hours clients can qualify for are brand communications strategy, positioning, messaging, PR, graphic design, interactive and social media strategy.

Some ad clients have taken it on themselves to make recessionary moves as the economy tanks.

For example, the Minnesota Timberwolves this week introduced its 2009-10 NBA season ticket prices, with 95 percent of season ticket prices lowered as part of the campaign, which was announced by team owner Glen Taylor.

"The economy right now is uncertain and we've listened to our fans' concerns and responded by providing reduced ticket pricing, new payment plan options and protection against job loss," Taylor said in prepared remarks.

Included in the Wolves' 2009-10 ticket pricing plan is a "no-risk pledge" to refund the value of all unused game tickets to season ticket holders who lose their jobs; lower-level season ticket prices that are 11.4 percent lower than this year; upper-level season ticket prices 44.3 percent lower than 2008-09; and a no-interest payment plan that spreads the cost of season tickets over a nine-month period.

How low will they go? For a limited time, more than 4,700 upper-level season tickets are priced at \$5 per game.

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—Beth LaBreche, CEO, LaBreche