

CONNECTED

Visual Media Alliance Quarterly Newsletter

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Good Things Happen, More to Come



Thanks to a vibrant media community, Northern California rocks. Here, Sebastien, age 7, who designed his car with a miniature version of himself in the driver's seat, took home the second place trophy in the Pimp My Pinewood Derby. The contest was part of 2010's AIGASF Fall Gala. For Spring, VMA takes center stage with Visual Media 2011 on May 12.

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**VISUAL MEDIA
ALLIANCE**

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Ring in the New Members Focus on Expanded Services

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by Noel Jeffrey

The bromide, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going,” may be old, but it fits nicely for what VMA members anticipate for the new year.

To assess tactics for the New Year from our different member segments, *Connected* talked to the heads of design firm Belding Associates, LLC, San Francisco; printer Casey Printing, King City; and publisher String Letter Publishing, San Anselmo. Patrick Belding, Rich Casey, and David Lusterman were kind enough to share thoughts, insights and strategies.

All three acknowledge that the current economy has presented challenges but each one plans to grow their businesses by evolving into appropriate new services using the latest technologies.

What do you anticipate for 2011?

A: “Volatility in the business community and more specialists needed in our workforce for a wide variety of deliverables from mobility, web, social media and other unknown areas,” says **Patrick Belding**. He explains that skill sets in the web design and programming world are becoming areas of individual expertise. As an example, Flash designers are now specialists. “Five years ago, anyone who could write HTML and do a little programming could handle a website. Today you need people who can create animation, program the back end and databases, and more graphically inclined people who can create the front end design,” he says.

Rich Casey says, “We’re excited about the future of our industry. We see a slight improvement in the business climate and an overall rebound in marketing emphasis.”

David Lusterman sees this year as one of continued development using the latest mobile technologies.



What technology do you find most interesting?

A: “Mobile publishing in tablet form is the most interesting technology to publishers these days,” says **Lusterman**. “We have five iPads in the office right now to ‘play’ with. We also have a mobile challenge team of eight people to come up with a mobile strategy for the Acoustic Guitar brand. We’re planning to release something in the spring.”

Variable data and launching campaigns using print and pURLs are the technologies that have intrigued **Casey**. “These can be tied into almost anything,” he says. “We’ve dabbled a bit in the past in limited ways but now we’re ready to take a more serious approach,” he says.

For **Belding**, the most interesting technology is “everything cloud based.” “If we are less dependent on our own servers, workstations and software purchases, upgrades and maintenance, it allows for more mobility, scalability and less infrastructure set up costs,” he says.

For example, Belding says they are now using Google Apps for collaborative work with clients and that has enabled him to avoid installing another server. He notes that while cloud computing does involve a monthly financial outlay; it also offers the flexibility to vary the number of users depending on workloads.

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Patrick Belding

» belding.com

From creating distinguished identities and award-winning campaigns to positioning companies for optimal success, Belding Associates LLC helps clients get where they want to go. They are efficient, experienced and on their website promise not to use a lot of marketing jargon like “front of mind” or “logical adjacencies.” They offer a wide range of services, from executing corporate communications to producing cutting-edge interactive projects.

What is the greatest challenge to your business?

A: “Like most businesses in this economy, our greatest challenge is to build revenues, but not at the risk of denigrating profits,” **Casey** says. “Commercial printing has always been a very competitive business, but the last couple of years have been brutal. One of the ways we are looking to improve the bottom line is to offer our customers value-added solutions that are based on helping them succeed, and not on who has the cheapest price for a print project.”

Both **Lusterman** and **Belding** cite business growth, attracting and keeping good employees as their greatest challenges. As Lusterman points out, there’s no question but that the magazine publishing business is in a state of flux. “Young people don’t necessarily see the value in our kind of business,” he says. “They are attracted to things purely digital. They consider print publications as legacy media.” His ideal employee is someone “who has their feet in both worlds,” that is someone who can value magazines in a tangible form as much as a website.

Since Belding’s work these days is roughly 5 percent print projects and 60 percent digital work like websites and the remaining work some form of electronic communications, he doesn’t have to defend legacy media. However, he does have to keep his creative specialists engaged and happy. “I have to be the gatekeeper for stress,” he notes.

What is going to be the most fun in 2011?

What changes, if any, are you going to make to your business?

A: All three execs wove what they believe will be fun into the new products and services they plan for 2011.

Belding says, “Producing more video and more multimedia deliverables and making many of our projects into programs where we and our clients can reap the many benefits of putting processes in place for the best overall results.”

He explains that videos are often excellent replacements for case studies in a folder that are soon outdated. He also believes that costly studio set ups are no longer necessary. “It’s OK to shoot things with a Flip camera and have well designed front end graphics,” he says. “It adds a personal touch. We’re seeing

companies in the Fortune 50 embracing it.”

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Members Focus on Expanded Services

CONTINUED



Jasper and Bill Casey

» caseymarketingservices.com

» caseyprinting.com

In 1901, Casey Printing founder, Fred Vivian started a weekly newspaper called "The Rustler" in the little country hamlet of King City. Today, four generations later, his great grandsons, together with a team of talented craftspeople, are putting more than a century of graphics knowledge and experience to work for print buyers. With a complete, modern production facility, including digital prepress, web and sheet fed presses, bindery and mailing, Casey provides high quality print marketing solutions. Casey has also opened Casey Marketing Services as a new division.

As an example, **Belding** tells how his company shot Cisco engineers in a space museum. The engineers were talking about themselves and future technology in a visually interesting setting of what was once future technology.



David Lusterman

» stringletter.com

String Letter Publishing is the source of information, instruction, and inspiration for guitar and string players of all ages and musical interests, from beginners to professionals. Their magazines, books, newsletters, and websites serve the practical needs and interests of musicians, teachers, and the music trade, keeping the members of this creative community in touch and up to date. The company also runs String Letter Music School in San Anselmo.



At Casey, the focus is marketing. The company has just launched a new division, Casey Marketing Services, and hired Jasper Casey, a recent Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Graphic Communications graduate to run it. And yes, keeping with the family's business tradition, he is Rich Casey's nephew and son of partner Bill Casey.

"We will continue to invest in technologies and processes that enable us to help out customers be successful and reach their marketing goals," **Rich Casey** says. "In addition to pURLs, we're looking into doing more with mobile and QR codes. It seems the younger generations use their mobile phones for everything from getting pizza to getting directions. We can help our customers reach them."

In addition to mobile apps, for **Lusterman**, reaching customers on multiple platforms is an ongoing development. "We're pretty deep into the business of creating and selling video and audio instructions. The download part of the business is really interesting. Our offerings are modest now but we're going to build that business out," he says. From the start, String Letter's magazines attracted readers because they wanted to be better musicians. Now **Lusterman** believes they can help people be better musicians by reaching their audience on different platforms.