

GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE



Less is more for virtual marketing agency Legato.

Collaboration of specialists provides variety of solutions to clients.

BY RICHARD RYMAN

Press Gazette correspondent

Legato Marketing and Communications works on the theory that less is more. Less overhead means less cost and more services for the customer.

Legato is a virtual agency, a collaboration of specialists under a single nameplate coming together as needed to provide solutions to clients.

Mike Milligan, who worked for Jacobson Rost in Sheboygan and Prevea Health System and Aurora Health Care, among others, is the principal and point man for the company. Milligan said the idea grew from his own experiences working with advertising and marketing agencies.

Milligan assembled a team he mostly worked with when he was the one looking for services as a client.

"I knew these folks when I was on the other side of the desk. I was their client," Milligan said.

Judy Keneklis of Keneklis Business Writing, Legato's marketing communications special-

ist, said clients can view the company as an extension of their marketing departments.

"We are offering collectively the scope of services of a full-service agency without the overhead of a full-service agency," she said.

"Another benefit is that we are all individual business owners. We have had to make smart business decisions as business owners ourselves. And we all collectively worked for large corporations and bring that professionalism to clients."

Everyone participates in selling services. Each can work on their own projects, as long as they are not poaching on the specialties of one another, and if they bring work to the group they get a commission in addition to the fees for the work they do.

"They have incentive to bring business to the entire group," Milligan said.

Milligan and Maribeth Conard of Conard Creative Group have offices in Advance Business Assistance Center at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Keneklis works from her home.

Milligan said the team makeup is meant to cover the services customers are most likely to need. They will subcontract for other services, such as media buying, not covered by their collective expertise.

"We've covered the key areas we think are the primary needs for our clients," he said.

Customers come from health care, manufacturing, retail and e-commerce, and range from 30 to 28,000 employees.

"What we strive on is personal relationships. I love to help a customer grow their business," he said.

Milligan said a down economy is the wrong time for businesses to cut costs by cutting marketing.

"It might be a time to focus on marketing. It

means more than ever that you have to focus, scrutinize everything you're doing," he said.

"It comes down to having a sound business plan with a clear-cut objective. If it doesn't support the objective, either change the objective or stop what you are doing."

The company launched in June, though Keneklis said most of the specialists had worked together on various projects over the years.

Milligan oversees clients, making sure that elements of projects remain coordinated. Clients get one bill, as they would for a bricks-and-mortar agency.

"Our big focus is on setting goals and getting demonstrated return on development. It's early in the process, but I'm encouraged by the success we've had so far," he said.

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Legato Marketing and Communications

Address: Advance Business Assistance Center, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College

Web site: www.golegato.com

Telephone: (920) 544-4068

Legato consists of:

- Mike Milligan, Principal, Legato Marketing & Communications
- Maribeth Conard of Conard Creative Group - creative design
- Judy Keneklis of Keneklis Business Writing - marketing communications
- Mike Pulvermacher of eBizResults - internet marketing
- Marc Stevens of Spot Productions - broadcast media