

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR 03.03

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To The Editors:

Congratulations on 40 years of publishing, a great achievement in any field! As I finished reading the anniversary issue of *Graphic Design usa*, something bothered me that I couldn't put my finger on. Then it hit me: Missing from your People to Watch issue was any representation of inhouse graphics departments. Most of my professional design life (roughly 20 years) has been spent inhouse, working at publishing houses, entertainment, advertising and public relations companies. The people I've worked with have been extremely creative and won numerous awards, but how often do you see articles devoted to inhouse designers or creative directors who have to navigate client waters, or sometimes — even worse! — inhouse staff/ceo approvals? The challenges and rewards of working at a firm whose primary purpose is not design is worth examining.

**Rick Penn-Kraus, Hill & Knowlton,  
Los Angeles, CA**

*Mr. Penn-Kraus is design director at the international public relations firm Hill & Knowlton/Los Angeles, one of the few public relations firms with a full time inhouse graphics department.*

To The Editors:

The news that Philip Morris has officially changed its name to the Altria Group hit the air recently like, well, like second-hand smoke. There are those who are decrying the name change as a patently obvious, shallow PR move intended to hide its evil activities. Others are commenting on the wisdom of the strategy, the finer points of the real intention and even the sound of the name itself. There are plenty of pundits on both sides betting on the eventual outcome of the move. "We'll just have to wait and see," a financial analyst cautiously advises.

But from the perspective of someone in the business of branding, there is no need to wait another minute to make the following prediction: the change from Philip Morris to Altria will not make

one iota of difference — to the consumer, to the street or to the legal community circling like sharks waiting to file their latest class action law suits. Why? Because a change of name, just as a change of packaging or logo or jingle or theme line, is no more effective than a shot of botox on a chronically angry woman whose behavior will always be deeper than the lines she's attempting to erase. The only lasting effect of Philip Morris' decision will be to add ammunition to the cynics who believe that branding is nothing more than the surface "spin" companies put on their products to make us believe they are something they are not. Bill Bernbach once said that nothing hurts a bad product more than good advertising. Get the consumer to buy a product on false pretenses and they are doubly furious at the product's eventual poor performance. The same logic holds for cosmetic changes passed off as branding.

True branding, and rebranding, must, if it ever hopes to be even mildly effective, grow directly from the brand's true essence: its equity, its current values, its mission, its fundamental vision and of course, its behavior. Nowhere is this more important than in the

name. A brand name should be judged against one criterion only — does it accurately, creatively and persuasively express the brand's true nature?

**Julie Newton-Cucchi, Director, 98pt6  
New York NY**

*98pt6 is a branding company. Before founding it, Newton-Cucchi was head of strategy at The WAY Group, a brand strategy company. Prior to that, she was the creative director and chief strategist at Faith Popcorn's BrainReserve from 1997 to March 1999.*

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