

SMALL BUSINESS

Virtual business opens doors for small agency

Smaller businesses, non-profits are focus of marketing efforts

By EMILY MEIN

After working at other marketing agencies, Timothy Cook decided he could improve his service if he worked on his own, and in 2005 that's just what he did.

"By creating a small firm, it allows me to be more agile for clients and serve them much better," Cook says.

The flexibility of choosing clients drove Cook to open Cook Communications LLC, a full-service marketing agency located in Rochester.

Cook, 50, offers public relations, advertising and marketing communications services as well as political consulting to best suit the needs of his clients. Sometimes this means being an organization's marketing agency or serving as an extension of its staff.

"Whether that's news releases and news conferences to brochures, print and broadcast," Cook says.

Since technology has advanced, more doors have opened for Cook Communications. Virtual work has allowed the agency to continue to serve its clients.

"Thanks to the Internet and email, much of the business is done through email and phone," Cook says.

On average, Cook says he has 10 to 12 clients at a time. His passion is to help non-profits and small-to-mid-size businesses. Current non-profit clients are the Child Care Council, Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency and the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative. Business clients include HCR Home Care and Faraci Lange LLP in Rochester and Mascia Development LLC in New York City.

The Rochester City School District's More and Better Learning Time program has been one of Cook's clients for more than a year now. He has made brochures and a video for the expanded school day initiative.

Since non-profits are always looking to maximize their budgets, Cook Communications gives these customers what they would expect from bigger firms but at reasonable rates, Cook says.

"They get a better return on investment," he says. "Because it's mostly just me with some subcontractors, I'm able to serve them really well so they get personal attention that they may not get at larger firms."

Cook is the only full-time employee at Cook Communications; the business also uses freelancers. The number of subcontractors he employs varies depending on the projects Cook Communica-

PROFILE

Cook Communications LLC



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Timothy Cook, left, helps non-profits and small businesses with marketing communications.

tions is working on.

Since projects come and go, depending on them is tricky.

"The nature of the business is challenging," Cook says. "The unpredictability is certainly a challenge, but that's a challenge for agencies of all sizes."

Similarly, Cook finds it difficult to explain exactly what he does. "Sometimes it's difficult explaining to people what exactly marketing and communications is," Cook says. "Especially public relations. I think there's still a confusion about what it is."

Despite the challenges Cook has endured in the 10 years since opening, Cook Communications has seen steady growth every year. Last year the business grew 30 percent, he says, due to multiple new clients and new projects from existing clients.

Owning his own agency has reinforced the importance of marketing and communications for Cook. Getting a message to target audiences is something organizations must do every day, he says.

"I think this is critically important," Cook says. "And that's where I can help."

Emily Mein is a former Rochester Business Journal intern.

Small Business is a biweekly feature focusing on entrepreneurs. Send suggestions for future Small Business stories to Associate Editor Lisa Granite at lgranite@rbj.net.