

## Heralding the new *Herald*

### Mock publication targets newspaper client.

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Correspondent

It is said that imitation is the most sincere form of flattery. When the *Boston Herald*, the venerable Beantown newspaper, announced that they would be relocating their operations to a leased location, **Margulies Perruzzi Architects** (Boston, MA) wanted to make sure they were on the request for proposals list to redesign their new facilities. They decided the best way to express their interest was to publish their own version of the *Herald*.

#### The idea

“Many architecture firms submit a qualifications package in this situation, or send an introductory e-mail or phone call. However, given our target audience, we knew we needed to do something that stood out. We took the information we wanted them to know about us, and instead molded it into articles to describe what we are like as a firm,” says Barbara Hicks, MPA’s director of marketing and media.

The articles appear in a four-page replica of the *Herald’s* familiar tabloid format. Splashed across the front page is the headline, “Herald The Day, It’s MPA,” over a picture of the firm’s two principals, Marc Margulies and Daniel Perruzzi, Jr.

Hicks conceived the newspaper concept, then came up with the design and visual layout by studying several issues of the *Herald*. She noted article and advertising placement, along with fonts, colors, and the overall feel of the layout so that she could produce a piece that was instantly recognizable to the newspaper administrators who would receive it.

#### DETAILS

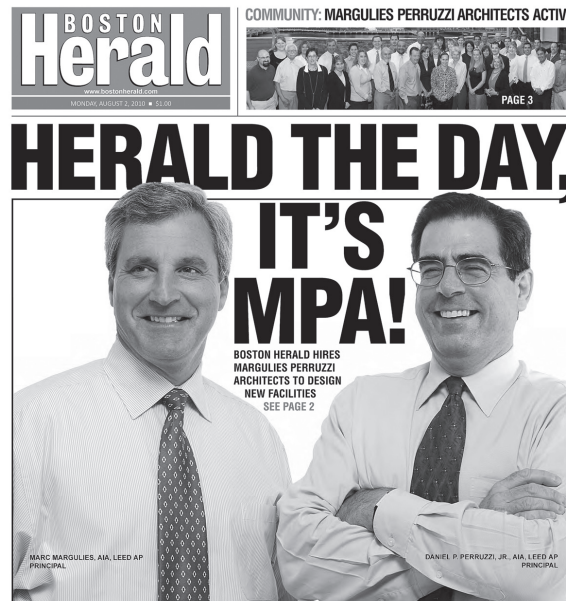
**FIRM SIZE:** 32 employees

**MARKETING TACTIC:** A mock newspaper targeted to a potential newspaper client.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Targeted to potential client.

**COSTS:** Undisclosed.

**RESULTS:** First place in the Target Market category and Best in Show in the 2011 SMPS Communication Awards.



A mock version of the *Boston Herald* Margulies Perruzzi Architects submitted as part of a RFP for a new location.

The piece’s main article introduces MPA to readers. It provides a brief history of the firm, along with its experience and expertise—the standard information that can be found in a qualifications package, but presented in an unconventional format. A sub-story provides their green credentials in terms of LEED-accredited staff members and a list of possibly sustainable solutions that could be incorporated into the *Herald’s* new quarters.

Since newspapers are traditionally strong advocates for supporting local concerns, the piece also promotes MPA’s community involvement. Side stories highlight their involvement with a local arts project, and a building that the firm designed and built for an agency that provides support services to the homeless. Logos of the various nonprofits that the firm supports provide a snapshot of their widespread involvement.

MPA even managed to publicize some bragging rights. In the sports section of the piece, there is a story recapping their win in a softball game against a competing architecture firm.

It was decided that a budget would not be assigned to the project. Because it was a highly sought-after client and they were determined to pull out all of the stops in

creating the piece, they did not want to feel the constraints of a budget as they proceeded. In the final accounting, however, it ended up costing less than putting together a qualification package because it was created and produced entirely in-house.

#### The results

The marketing piece achieved its primary goal. After mailing the piece, MPA received an e-mail from the *Herald’s* chief operating officer who called it, “the most creative pitch I have received in a while.” He also requested further correspondence with the firm. Although MPA was ultimately not selected for the project, they have developed an ongoing relationship with the newspaper.

The firm’s peers in the marketing arena also thought highly of the piece. Not only did it take first place in the target market category of the Society for Marketing Professional Services’ (SMPS) 2011 Marketing Communication Awards, it was also selected as “Best in Show.”

#### Want to try it?

Producing a piece such as this requires perfect execution and must strike just the right tone, lest it come off as parody. Although it certainly must be light-hearted, perhaps even playful, it can’t be seen as a joke, or the message will be lost. In a worst case scenario, it could offend the people you are trying to impress.

Although there is risk in thinking so far outside of the box, there is also a tremendous upside if everything comes together. Cutting through the clutter of the thousands of marketing messages that people are exposed to each day isn’t easy, and taking a non-conventional approach is one way to make it happen.

The key to making it work is knowing the target audience. “I would always advise putting yourself in the shoes of your lead. What is their situation? What circumstances would cause them to pay attention to your piece?” Hicks says. ■▲