

PROFILE

Seasoned Strategist



Advertising industry veteran Henrietta Pepper wins Louisville AdFed's 2009 Silver Medal Award

Every little girl likes to look at colorful ads in magazines, but how many are mesmerized by billboards? Perhaps Henrietta Pepper was strongly influenced by her father's career in marketing, but there was just something about those big, bold signs around her hometown of Nashville that always seemed to attract her attention.

Whatever the inspiration, she has parlayed her early interest in the communications side of business into a prestigious honor: the Advertising Federation of Louisville's 2009 Silver Medal Award, which she received at the organization's 35th annual Louie Awards Gala on March 4. The award recognizes men and women who have made outstanding contributions to advertising, and have been active in furthering the industry's standards, creative excellence and responsibility in areas of social concern.

Pepper founded the pepper group ltd. (2910 Frankfort Ave.) in 2005 after 23 years in the advertising industry. A University of Kentucky alumna whose degree is in advertising and business administration, she worked at PriceWeber for several years before accepting a position at Doe-Anderson. She spent her final four years there as executive vice president and director of client sales before opening her own firm, which specializes in brand-strategy development.

"I realized that there is a niche for companies that want to establish a brand and put a framework around it in terms of communicating their identity," Pepper said. "We focus on the strategic planning needed to tell their 'story,' and then use our strategic alliance network of Web site companies, design firms and ad agencies to bring that plan to life. It's a big-picture approach."

The firm's diverse client roster includes Norton Healthcare, Concor-



MARY ALAN WOODWARD
Profile

dus, Cobalt Ventures and UBS Financial Services.

Pepper could have set up shop in a downtown skyscraper, but she chose a Crescent Hill storefront instead. Behind the unpretentious front door, a stone fireplace and overstuffed easy chairs invite clients to make themselves at home during brainstorming sessions. Visitors find the cozy atmosphere especially soothing during these days of corporate belt-tightening.

"Today, a company needs to have a results-driven approach in order to justify every dollar it spends. Businesses are taking notice of the equity in their brands," Pepper said. "Gone are the days when a company could start out thinking what a great ad campaign they could come up with, because it's difficult to see an immediate connection to return in dollars. As a result, we're seeing a lot more emphasis on Internet communications, which enable businesses to track consumer visits to their Web sites. It's all part of an increased emphasis on connecting the dots between spending money and seeing results."

Number-crunching aside, Pepper relishes the "people part" of her business, and is proud to have maintained personal relationships with some clients for more than 20 years.

Her most important relationship, however, is with spouse Larry Profancik, a partner at PriceWeber, who won the Silver Medal Award in 2005. The couple is the only husband and wife to have received that honor.

"It would be easy for us to talk about work all the time at home; but with three kids, we make it a policy not to discuss the nuts and bolts of what we do, except to share good news about our clients," Pepper said. "We've been married almost 20 years, and I think that's a big part of why we've lasted."

Q&A WITH HENRIETTA PEPPER

FAVORITE BOOK: Since I started this company, I've gone from fiction to non-fiction. Right now, I'm digging into "The First Billion is the Hardest" (T. Boone Pickens).

FAVORITE MOVIES: "The Big Chill," "Meet the Parents," "Legends of the Fall" and "Forrest Gump."

FAVORITE TV SHOWS: When I have time to watch, it's usually the news.

HOBBIES: My husband and I live vicariously through our kids (Grace Ann, 16; Christen, 15; and Joseph, 12), so our hobbies now are things that they do – soccer, track, field hockey and music.

FINAL MEAL: I'm pretty much obsessed with sushi. I'll eat any kind except blow fish (fugu) because it can kill you – I guess that really would make it my final meal. Louisville is getting more and more good Japanese restaurants; I like the sushi at Fuji and at Caviar.

PERSONAL HEROES: I was very close to the grandmother I was named after, and always wanted to be like her. And if I can ever be half the mom my mother is, and half the person my dad is, I'll be very happy.

BEST THING ABOUT LOUISVILLE: There is a lot of strong connectivity among businesses, even when they are competitors. It may sound strange, but companies here are happy to see other companies succeed.