

Sure-fire success



GENE STAFFORD/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

Tanya Wiley, CEO of WCP Communications in Winston-Salem, heads up four other businesses, including WC Publishing & Printing, WC Consulting, Wiley Brown Cos. and Triad Business Network.

W-S entrepreneur's business approach can't be boxed in

By **MATT EVANS**

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

WINSTON-SALEM — Many hopeful entrepreneurs spend a lot of time — sometimes their whole lives — trying to come up with that one sure-fire, million-dollar idea. And to do it, they try to “think outside the box.”

That cliché makes Tanya Wiley cringe. “If you’re going to think outside the box, it means you had to have been in a box,” Wiley says. “I don’t want anybody thinking I’ve been in a box. I just try to be creative in my approach to doing business.”

That creativity has allowed the 39-year-old Wiley to launch a total of five companies in a small but growing empire. And her only box-shaped problem right now is on her rectangular business card, which doesn’t even have room to list her newest enterprise, WCP Communications, alongside her other businesses: WC Publishing & Printing, WC Consulting, Wiley Brown Cos. (for real estate development and property management) and Triad Business Network, a Christian B2B networking organization.

Each business is distinct, with its own mission and method, so Wiley has a lot to keep track of. But that doesn’t mean her focus is scattered, according to Joe Dudley Sr., CEO of Kernersville-based beauty products manufacturer Dudley Products, a longtime client of Wiley’s.

“Ideas flow constantly to her and she takes advantage of the good ones. And then when she gets into something, she gets really excited about it,” Dudley says. Then, as the ideas become businesses and the businesses mature, she empowers her staff and interns to take on responsibility for them.

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SMALL BUSINESS

SELL MORE: *Before you discount your product or service, consider other options to win sales*

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you get something in exchange for it — some type of consideration. A few great examples: ask for the names and numbers of (two) referrals; ask for a referral letter; and ask your new customer to send out a small advertisement for you to his database.

Instead of trying to convince a prospect to move forward by offering him a discount, smart companies and salespeople break down the cost of the product over the life of their product, they offer extended payment options when they can, offer discounts for larger or multiple purchases and one of my favorites, gifts with purchase.

If you're trying to think of a popular and proven industry that uses gift with purchase, think cosmetics.

Ask any women you know how many times she bought something that she was on the fence about because she wanted the neat little gift with purchase. All are proven and profitable strategies to boost business.

Countless people will create great wealth during this economy. Implementing these tips will help ensure that you're one of them.

LAURA LAAMAN is an award-winning sales, management and customer service trainer and consultant. For free sales tips and newsletter go to www.lauralaaman.com or call 1-888-SELL-MORE.

WCP COMMUNICATIONS: *Firm focuses more on matching the audience to the event*

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"She's a true people person, and she doesn't mind delegating to others and giving them the chance to do things themselves," Dudley says.

Working it out

WCP Communications, which Wiley founded last year, is giving her corporate portfolio a national profile, especially with the success of its latest division, a speakers bureau that can book talent to address any number of topics.

Among the speakers Wiley represents are Dudley, whose talks touch on entrepreneurship and philanthropy; Darryl Hunt, the Winston-Salem man who served 18 years in prison on a wrongful conviction and is now a social justice activist; and Raven Magwood, a teenage author, musician and youth advocate from South Carolina.

The speakers bureau, like Wiley's other endeavors, was the fruit of an opportunity recognized, and its lineage goes back to her entrepreneurial roots.

Wiley started her first business, WC Publishing & Printing, at the age of 23. After graduating from Winston-Salem State University, she had been working for the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. on track to become a lawyer when she realized her heart just wasn't in that work.

She moved out to Los Angeles to work for a record company and showed a flair for graphic design, even though that wasn't her job. She liked it, and started her own company so she could bill for her work, moving back to Winston-Salem to set up permanent shop.

That company soon diversified, and today WC Publishing and Printing does corporate printing jobs and custom book publishing. Other companies sprouted from that base, including her property management business which leased out extra space in the building that housed the printing business.

That growth has not been without challenges, including some severe ones. Most notably, last year Wiley lost the Trade Street Galleria building in downtown Winston-Salem that been her base to foreclosure when a major tenant, the Forsyth County Department of Social Services, moved out.

That loss of space was a major logistical challenge, but Wiley kept the printing business running by moving the bulky equipment into her own garage. And keeping that business alive provided the opportunity to launch WCP Communications.

Wiley says she got a lot of printing business from clients who needed flyers and other materials to promote events. Those clients would frequently ask for advice or assistance in other aspects of promotion, and she and her staff would always try to accommodate them.

"Eventually I thought, 'We need to be getting paid for this,'" Wiley says, and



Tanya Wiley, left, chairman and CEO of WCP Communications in Winston-Salem, leads a meeting with employees Brandon Murphy, center, executive assistant to the CEO, and Christy Abram, the company's marketing executive.

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COMPANY PROFILE

Name: WCP Communications
Address: PO Box 16496, Winston-Salem 27115
Phone: (336) 794-4058
Web site: www.wcpcommunications.com
No. of employees: Five
Year established: 2007
Annual revenues/profits: Declined to disclose
Biggest problem: Securing startup capital
Solution: Choosing a business model with limited new overhead so the start-up could be self-funded

WCP Communications was born.

Persistence pays

Wiley describes WCP Communications as more a strategic consulting firm than an events planner. Her firm's role is less about logistics — securing a location, getting chairs rented and so on — than about designing a marketing strategy that targets the right potential audience for that event.

That strategy can take the form of advertising, direct mail or e-mail campaigns, and some jobs are easier than others. A recent high-profile event for her firm, she recalls, was a fundraiser for presidential candidate Barack Obama held at Winston-Salem State University in early April.

The candidate's wife Michelle Obama was the featured speaker, and Wiley said it didn't take too much strategizing to fill seats.

"No, that wasn't too tough," she laughs.

The speakers bureau was born when

WHO'S IN CHARGE

Name/Title: Tanya Wiley, Chairman and CEO
Education: Bachelors degrees in English and Political Science; Paralegal certification from George Washington University
Best business decision: Creating partnerships with church-based and nonprofit organizations to promote appropriate projects
Goal yet to be achieved: Buying a hotel and starting a bank
Family: Husband Dorrell Brown and daughter Taliyah Ziona
Hobbies: water sports and travel

Wiley secured the book publishing rights for "Life Interrupted: The Trials of Darryl Hunt," and began serving as Hunt's publicist.

As her staff began making calls to book Hunt for speaking engagements, she says they would frequently hear "No, but..." from organizations holding events not quite right for Hunt's specific topic.

"A workshop about financial literacy isn't right for Darryl Hunt, but they would tell us, if you get somebody who can talk finances, call us," Wiley says. "Now, I have a friend who would often get on me to get her booked. I saw that it only made sense to start a bureau, to address as many different issues as we can."

Hunt became a celebrity when he was released from prison in 2005 after serving 18 years for the murder of Deborah Sykes, after DNA evidence proved his innocence and identified another man as the killer. His story already has been made into a movie and he could have chosen from any

number of eager publicists, but Hunt says he wanted to work with Wiley because she demonstrated the kind of bulldog tenacity he knew would be important.

"She's definitely persistent," Hunt says, noting that she keeps his schedule full, often home no more than one weekend a month. "Also, she's someone local, which matters to me."

Currently, the WCP Communications Speakers Bureau has about two dozen speakers, who all work as contractors, splitting their booking fees with Wiley. Most of the firm's other strategic marketing work is fee-based, she says.

Finding strong talent hasn't been an issue, Wiley says, and she thinks it will continue to grow. The sputtering economy has chased many talented people with stories to tell out of the traditional work force and inspired others to look at a potentially lucrative sideline.

For the moment WCP Communications is getting the bulk of Wiley's personal attention, but she says she relies heavily on her staff and on a stable of young interns who work for a stipend and college credit. If her past pattern repeats, as her newest business grows she'll turn over more responsibility as time goes on, and seek new focus herself.

One goal, she says, is establishing more satellite offices like the one she already has in Nassau, Bahamas. She also has her eyes on the hotel and banking businesses.

She says she probably won't ever be able to pick out one particular business as her favorite, or the one she thinks will go furthest, though.

"That's like asking which of your children you love most," she says.

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