

Bringing It All Together



Long-term brand building and strong partnerships are the driving forces behind this leading licensing company.

Long term is the name of the game at Lisa Marks Associates. This exclusive licensing agency made a name for itself by representing some of the most iconic American brands in food and candy and by creating turnkey programs and strategic brand-building techniques. LMA has since branched out into other sectors but remains dedicated to a discerning strategy fueled by a passion for the industry.

“Our initial objective, and what continues to drive us today, is to partner with brands and properties that we have a passion for,” said Lisa Marks, president. “We take great pride in extending the relevance of our clients’ brands in meaningful ways that increase brand equity and revenue for the long term.”

Before founding LMA in 2001, Lisa worked for more than 15 years as a licensing executive at Disney and Nickelodeon. Her experience with these leading licensors enabled the entrepreneur to apply her expertise to LMA, creating a higher level of service through the company and fervor for long-term brand building.

Her partner Mickey joined the company in 2004 after 20 years working at advertising and media agencies where he was most recently president and CEO of Creative Media, an operating company within the Omnicom Group. Mickey is well known in the media community for his creative and non-traditional uses of media in brand communications.

“I am energized about using licensing as a strategic brand building mechanism in close collaboration with all elements in the brand marketing arsenal,” said Mickey, managing director. “For 20 years, Lisa and I were like the yin and yang of brand marketing, and it was time to have some fun and bring it all together.”

Working together, Lisa, Mickey, and the LMA team built a diverse portfolio of client brands and properties. “Mickey and I come from backgrounds in large corporate organizations as well as more nimble entrepreneurial enterprises,” Lisa said. “We value working with talented people in a collaborative environment. At LMA, we focus on building brands for the long term, and our creative, non-formulaic licensing solutions do just that.”

Sustainable success

While most retailers pine for new programs and product categories, Mickey said it’s a brand’s ability to withstand time that helps the investment process and, ultimately, the consumer takeaway.

“Take Martin Guitar for example,” he said. “This is a legendary global brand that was established in 1833. It’s clear that the brand will be around 100-plus years from now, and that’s important to retailers—to know the brand equity has been around for so long and is being managed in a way that ensures its long-term viability and success.”

In terms of identifying manufacturing and retail partners for LMA’s programs, Lisa said, “We’re always looking to find the right partnerships and to work with companies that share our enthusiasm and vision. It’s also important that they have the marketing, distribution, and creative capabilities to develop successful programs.”

After partnering with a particular brand, LMA ensures programs developed are in alignment with the brand’s marketing objectives. “Everything we do builds on the brand’s core equity,” she said. “First and foremost, it’s about the programs and the partners, not just the agreements and deal terms.”

Bold branding

LMA’s brand portfolio includes some of the most beloved brands in candy and food. Heavy-hitters such as Campbell

PROFILE



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Soup signed with LMA early on in 2001 when the company began. LMA continued to attract strong brands such as Peeps, Hot Tamales, Mike and Ike, and Peanut Chews. Warheads, Smarties, and Dum Dums round out LMA's roster of brand-name treats.

Lisa said the Peeps licensing program is one example of LMA's ability to creatively blend a classic brand into contemporary pop culture. "Strategically launching the program with hip fashions for a trendy young adult consumer, and incorporating the Peeps brand into the popular vernacular, the program quickly established success in the market," she said. "Today, the Peeps program spans across all categories and appeals to multi-generational audiences."

CF Martin & Co. and its industry-leading Martin Guitar brand is an example of a company within LMA's portfolio that has a rich American heritage story. The agency saw this partnership as a rare opportunity, as CF Martin & Co. entered the licensing arena with a clean slate after nearly two centuries of success. LMA is extending this equity's reach into lifestyle categories and products that share the same qualities found in this brand's unique attributes.

"We've seen terrific growth in the last few years, which comes from extending our portfolio with other strong brands and properties," said Lisa. "We have some very interesting lifestyle programs we've taken on, such as Martin Guitar, that are great additions to the portfolio we have and are continually expanding."

Companies looking to develop character and lifestyle properties have also come to LMA in part because of Lisa's background in the entertainment industry. As a result, LMA is currently rolling out the North American introduction of Scarlett & Crimson, a lifestyle brand targeting the key market segment of teens and tweens.

Looking to lifestyle

With original music, great stories, a vibrant interactive web community, and a product assortment that includes beauty, fashion, accessories, crafts, and activities, LMA is developing a program for Scarlett & Crimson that celebrates teens' individuality and self-confidence.

Also on the lifestyle front, LMA recently began collaborating with Two Town Studios on the development of its My Friend Ronnie franchise. "My Friend Ronnie is a positive, playful brand that resonates with any woman who has a family, job, friends, and all the expectations that go along with them," said Lisa. "Its creator, Ronnie Walter, has a unique way of expressing these common themes in a fresh and inviting way, and we are thrilled to be carrying her message into new products and new channels."

LMA has also developed unique programs with artist Bill Attinger, targeting a variety of demographics. For infants and toddlers, inspirational brands Angel Babies, and From the Crib have new animation projects in development: "Palitos Locos" connects with the important and growing Hispanic market, and "Stick World," a modern classic with strong appeal, crosses ages and gender with a variety of charismatic characters and messages.



Lisa and Mickey's expertise and track record have made LMA a leader in licensing. As the company looks to the future, Lisa references a simple but vital recipe for success.

"We've been in this business a long time and have a genuine love for it," she said. "We value our strong industry and client relationships and get tremendous gratification bringing them together to create successful programs for all." 🍌

