

INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE:**MARLA TERRANOVA, DIRECTOR OF SPONSORSHIPS AND MARKETING MONTGOMERY BISCUITS, TAMPA BAY DEVIL RAYS AA AFFILIATE****BY: JASON W. LEE, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA**

JL: Please identify your position, as well as the various roles in which you are involved in with your company?

MT: I am the Director of Sponsorships and Marketing. They are two separate departments, but they work very closely together, so it makes sense to be involved in both. On the sponsorship side, I work with ownership to develop all-inclusive, objective based packages for clients, and then oversee the execution of them by our sponsorship staff. On the marketing front, the department has a variety of different areas, such as advertising, community relations, in-game entertainment, customer service and sales support. I am involved in all of them-- some more heavily than others.

JL: Please identify the origins of the Montgomery Biscuits. How did they end up in Montgomery?

MT: In 2003, Professional Sports Marketing, owned by Sherrie Myers and Tom Dickson, purchased the AA Orlando Rays franchise. At the time, Montgomery was the largest city without any type of professional sports team and [was] looking for one. Sherrie and Tom worked hand-in-hand with the City of Montgomery to build a new \$26 million stadium in downtown Montgomery and moved the team there in time for the 2004 season.

JL: Could you detail the development of the name "Biscuits" how was it selected?

MT: In February of 2003, we held a Name-the-Team contest in Montgomery and encouraged everybody to submit their ideas. Our sister team, The Lansing Lugnuts, is pretty unique and has worked hard for that brand, so we knew we were looking for something fun. A native of Montgomery, Tripp Vickers, submitted the name "Biscuits" and we fell in love with it. Not only was it representative of the region, but it was campy, quirky, and playful and it could be used in a variety of ways. After having some preliminary logos done, we knew it could work.

JL: What advantages has your organization experienced due to its unique name? What negative feedback did you receive initially? What if any do you currently receive?

MT: Knowing that the name was going to catch people by surprise, and after going through a similar reaction in Lansing, we were prepared to answer some questions. Some people initially didn't like the name because they are so used to the more traditional names--The Senators, the Tigers, etc. Some people thought it was making fun of the South, as opposed to celebrating it. While we initially received quite a few negative reactions (roughly 200 per day), once people saw the logo, saw the retail merchandise and understood how much fun it could be, they turned pretty quickly.

MT: As far as advantages of having such a unique name—it does get recognized. Walking through an airport, having visitors to Montgomery stop in to check it out, our website--people see Montgomery Biscuits and want to know what it is. It is also a fun brand to work with. The puns are never ending, and all of the fun marketing campaigns we can create around it have been interesting.

Examples: History in the Baking (theme for our inaugural season), Biscuits Ala Carte (single game ticket campaign), Whole Lotta' Biscuits—Very Little Dough (season ticket campaign), The Biscuit Basket (our retail store).

JL: Aside from the unique name, what else allows your team to distinguish itself from your competitors?

MT: Minor League Baseball is a different type of business. Though we are a baseball team, we don't consider ourselves to be in the sports business—we are in the entertainment business. We cannot control what happens on the field, but we can guarantee what goes on around it. We care about our customers and look to provide them with positively outrageous customer service. I think that sets us apart. We are constantly seeking feedback, use a variety of research techniques, and make decisions based on what we hear.

JL: The Biscuits are one of the highest selling brands in the Minor Leagues. Can you detail the success of merchandise sales and so forth? Where do you place in overall sales in Minor League baseball?

MT: Because of the uniqueness of the name, people get excited about the merchandise, placing us in the top 10 in retail sales among all Minor League Baseball teams. We have filled Internet orders for merchandise in all 50 states and 11 different countries. It has been exciting to see people embrace the Biscuits. A lot of the credit for merchandise has to be given to our buyer, Pam Hastalis and our retail manager, Monte Myers. The Biscuit Basket is about more than just t-shirts and hats—they really do have something for everybody there, and they get new merchandise constantly, keeping fans coming back.

JL: What impact have the Biscuits had on the city of Montgomery?

MT: When Sherrie and Tom brought the Biscuits to Montgomery, they wanted to provide affordable, family entertainment, and be a part of downtown economic development. On the entertainment front, we provide a venue for not only families to come, but also churches, businesses and other groups. It is a setting that works for all ages and backgrounds.

The city of Montgomery is also making great strides in revitalizing the downtown area around the ballpark. A riverwalk is currently under construction, as well as condos and a new hotel. The ballpark was the first project to bring people downtown and it has shown people that the area is safe and growing.

JL: Could you explain some of your more successful marketing and promotional endeavors?

MT: This season we hosted the MAX 2006 Southern League All-Star game. This event took a lot of work for all members of our staff. We spent a little over a year preparing for it, and in the end, it was a great experience for our fans and we were proud of what we accomplished. In addition to the game, we held the Baptist Health Fan Fest all day long, a High School Home Run Derby in addition to the Southern League Derby both presented by Alfa Insurance. The All Star Game broke our single game attendance record and really gave us the chance to showcase the city.

JL: What is the organizational philosophy that drives Biscuits?

MT: Our mission statement is pretty simple but serves as the backbone of our operation. Everybody has a framed copy on [his/her] desk, and most can probably recite it to you—The Mission of the Montgomery Biscuits is to provide affordable, innovative entertainment and positively outrageous service while building a lasting relationship with our community.

This is the focus [of] everything we do, and we constantly re-check to make sure everything we do comes back to that objective.

JL: What community relations initiatives do you enact for the Montgomery area?

MT: In addition to standard donation packages, we have a separate arm of our operation set up—Biscuit Charities. Through Biscuit Charities, we partner with five non-profit organizations for each season. We treat these organizations like paying customers and work closely with them to find out what objectives they have as an organization and how we can help them achieve success. We then put together customized sponsorship packages for them and implement them throughout the season and even the off-season, depending on their needs. The total package [has] a value of over \$125,000 and we really enjoy being able to help.

As a staff, the Biscuits also works together on community events such as the March of Dimes Walk—A—Thon, The Chili Cook Off for the Lions Club, and by becoming certified speakers on Domestic Violence Awareness to assist the Family Sunshine Center.

JL: What five words do you feel best describe the image of the Biscuits?

MT: Family
Entertainment
Community
Value
Professional

JL: What is the primary branding focus for the Biscuits?

MT: Family—Fun—Entertainment

JL: Additionally, what would you say are the three most important keys to your success and growth?

MT: Team Work—We are a small business (30 full-time employees) and though we are very departmentalized as far as day—to—day responsibilities, we are constantly depending on each other, especially during the course of the 70—game season. Whether it is pulling tarp (yes, we actually do that), moving tables, or handling customer service issues, I really think it is important to be there with a smile.

[Being] Strategic—Fully understanding objectives and purpose increases the learning curve tenfold. I try to do this by asking “why.” It is a simple question, but [it] forces people to take time and explain. Thinking through the impact of what you are doing (or not doing) leads you in the

right direction. This has helped me grow because I have been able to learn from so many other people-- ownership, peers, and even clients.

[Having] Fun--If you don't like what you are doing you are going to be miserable. Enjoying the company I work for energizes me and just makes me want to grow. What we do here is not brain surgery-- our goal is to provide a fun experience for families. Though it is a business and we do have a lot of details to oversee, it is important to take a step back and realize that what we get to do is pretty neat.

JL: What impact will being the defending champions of the Southern League have on the popularity of the Biscuits?

MT: Though we typically do not focus on wins and losses, winning the Southern League was a great experience. The fans really got behind the team and made for a great environment. I don't know if it will necessarily make us more popular, but it generated a lot of buzz and hopefully encouraged some more people to come out to the ballpark.

You can find out more about the Montgomery Biscuits by going to the team's website www.biscuitsbaseball.com.