

October 2018 Column

In light of all the false information that's been tossed around in social media lately about our city brand, I think it would be helpful to reprint my column from June of 2016.

The first thing out of Steve Chandler's mouth was "We will design a great logo and tagline for you, but that is a very, very small part of what branding is all about. If that's all you want, you're paying me way too much."

Well, yeah...

That was about a year ago (2015), when I, Councilmembers Fonda Mathis and Donna Dodgen, and several members of city staff had our first meeting with the owner of "Chandlerthinks", the consulting firm that helped us form our new brand.

By the way, the decision to hire Chandlerthinks was made in open session by City Council. Kyle Kramm, our Main Street Director, conducted the nation-wide search over several months. He made regular reports in open public session that included competitive bids, how the consulting fees would be budgeted, and specific talents of the various firms vying for the business. Yes, this was all done in the open, folks.

But I digress... Over the past year, Chandlerthinks has interviewed hundreds of people about their perception of Seguin. Not just here, but in the surrounding communities including San Antonio, New Braunfels, San Marcos, and others.

For a brand to be successful, a community must find out what it thinks of itself - good or bad. We need to know what is unique and desirable here - what should be preserved and promoted, what needs to be abandoned or minimized. People in our community also need to know how surrounding communities perceive us. Presenting and displaying all these perceived values, or truths in our promotions and products is really the heart of what "branding" is all about. It's not just the logo and tagline.

Here are some truths that we learned - Seguin is a community that values its history, traditions, family values and work ethic very highly. Call it true Texas Grit. We make the things here that help America go, grow and take on the world. We are a genuine, true Texas stand-alone city with our own unique identity. We have a "Norman Rockwell" style central park and downtown that most city planners would kill for. We are not attached at the hip to a giant metropolis, but we can get to one easily, should the need arise.

Yes, we work hard, and we have some dirt under our fingernails. But we are not a bunch of bumpkins who care nothing about education and culture. We are home to a real, accredited 4-year university, a new high school under construction, and a spectacular new public library on the banks of Walnut Branch. We have historic theatres that produce their own entertainment, and active arts community, and even a symphony orchestra. Culture and the arts abound.

We work hard and celebrate big. We've got a real nutty side too, with our relationship with pecans. Pecans are something nearly everyone relates to when thinking of Seguin, and we need to play it up to the max and have fun! Speaking of fun, don't forget ZDT's, Park West, and our linear park that borders the beautiful Walnut Branch and leads to the Guadalupe River.

Mankind has been drawn to the clear, reliable flow of Walnut Springs and the beauty of the Guadalupe River for thousands of years, and people are still coming. They are coming to swim, picnic, kayak, canoe, play golf and catch the beautiful view of the waterfall from the deck of the Power Plant Restaurant.

We have real historic roots going back to the Texas Revolution and beyond. Our namesake is a real Texas hero of both the Alamo and San Jacinto.

These truths are just a small portion of all the truths that we came up with about Seguin. I don't have the space to put them all in this column, but every one of these truths is unique to Seguin - nothing contrived, fake, phony, or fabricated. They are all REAL.

In the branding process, the stories about all these truths will be told proudly and loudly here in Seguin and all over the world, and each of these stories will be tagged with "It's Real" ...because they are! As these stories are told, many more truths will emerge and be tagged "It's Real". The brand is universal and can apply to virtually every story one can tell about Seguin and the many unique truths that exist here. It is an exponential expansion of "There's a Story Here", and has no limits. The logo and tagline can be attached using stickers and labels to most everything made or sold in Seguin. It can be placed on virtually every piece of advertising.

The logo and tag line are meant to catch the eye, to impart a quick ID in the mind of the beholder. The real brand of Seguin will be in the REAL stories we will tell about REAL people, places and events that make Seguin the best place in the world to live.

Gosh, I REALLY love this town!