

PROPOSAL

City of Geneseo
Community Branding Project

Aug. 22, 2016

Dear Ms. Kotter,

You're searching for that something extra to take branding and marketing communication to the next level. You want smart communications that achieve measurable results.

Our gang of MindFire Arsonists can help you fire up your brand with creative and effective communications programs. We'll work together to develop a program specifically for your needs and collaborate with your team to implement. Specifically, we recommend a customized version of our five-step FireBrand™ branding process.

By first staying focused on the brand development efforts outlined in your proposal, we'll drive consistency and clarity in message and design. With a solid brand foundation in place, you can be confident your marketing tactics are implemented in a consistent manner that will ultimately strengthen your brand.

MindFire is a full-service agency offering brand management and marketing services including creative development, web and interactive, social media, public relations, media planning and research. Our proven track record makes us *the spark you've been looking for™*.

Many thanks for the opportunity to present this proposal.



Amy Behning

Brand Arsonist and Co-Owner

About MindFire

At MindFire Communications you'll find 16 smart, energized experts who fire up brands with strategic, creative, evidence-based communications ideas. We are a full-service agency that specializes in connecting the soul of a brand with the heart of the consumer. We offer brand development, creative development, web and interactive services, public relations, research, and media planning and buying.

MindFire Communications Inc. was founded in 2007 by industry veterans Erik Meade, Lynn Manternach and Mike Smith. Since the firehouse doors opened, our growth has been on fire.

- MindFire was included in *Inc. Magazine's* 500|5000 list of fastest-growing privately-held companies in America in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- MindFire has been recognized as one of the Fastest Growing Companies in the Corridor four of the past five years (2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015).
- MindFire has been honored in many ways for top-quality work, including:
 - Multiple 2016 American Advertising Federation (AAF) awards, including Judge's Choice.
 - Past AAF and Design, Advertising & Marketing (DAM) awards for local, regional and international clients, including additional AAF Best of Show honors in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and Quad Cities DAM Best of Show honors in 2012 and 2013.
 - In 2012, MindFire was recognized as the "Best Place to Work" by The Network: Young Professionals of the Quad Cities.

We are located in Cedar Rapids and Le Claire, Iowa. Your lead Arsonist, MindFire Co-Owner and Brand Arsonist Amy Behning, is based in beautiful downtown Le Claire, a historic and scenic town located in the Quad Cities area. We also have full-time employees living and working in Dubuque and Ames.

To learn more about MindFire Communications, please visit us at MindFireComm.com.

As you'll see in the case studies section below, MindFire recently completed the rebranding initiative for the Quad Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. We are also currently partnered with the City of East Moline on their branding initiative.

Scope of Work

The City of Geneseo is in search of a partner to enhance its brand with specified audiences, including:

- Employees of City Administration, Police, Public Works, Water, Electric and Wastewater departments
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Geneseo Park District
- Visitors who may be potential community members, business owners and developers

The request for proposal (RFP) seeking a brand partnership outlines several deliverables, including:

- Brand narrative
- Logo
- Tagline
- Style Guide
- Brand Toolkit (letterhead, business card, et cetera)
- Way-finding signage design

At MindFire Communications, we use a five-step method known as the FireBrand™ process to accomplish all the goals and the deliverables outlined in the City of Geneseo's RFP.

About The FireBrand™ Process

Each step of the process is detailed within this proposal to provide the insights you need to choose MindFire Communications for your branding and marketing initiatives.

The FireBrand™ process includes:

1. Brand Discovery
2. Brand Research
3. Brand Development
4. Brand Planning & Implementation
5. Brand Measurement



Step One: Brand Discovery

You know your brand better than anyone. That's why we start with a discovery-focused Brand Discovery Workshop. The Brand Discovery Workshop is typically a two-hour meeting, where our

MindFire team sits down with a group of 8 to 14 of your key stakeholders to have a conversation about your brand.

We begin the session with a brief and informative presentation on branding to assure we're starting the partnership from a collaborative space. Then, through a series of engaging questions and activities that we'll have prepared in advance, we dig into the heart of your brand. We'll ask about your strengths and weaknesses. We'll ask you to describe your City in every way possible. We'll ask you about your vision for the future.

We'll also want to understand how you see the competitive landscape. Who are your key competitors and how is the competitive landscape changing? Remember, competition can be much more than other cities. You are competing for time, money and interest in a culture where people are bombarded with hundreds of marketing messages each day.

Step Two: Brand Research

Brand research provides a clear understanding of how the City of Geneseo is perceived by stakeholders. Often, we'll work with our clients to conduct robust primary quantitative and qualitative brand research that allows us to go even deeper into perceptions of your brand and create a measureable benchmark for branding efforts.

MindFire also realizes that in some circumstances budgets don't accommodate primary research. In those cases, we can work with your team to determine what secondary research may be possible to acquire from existing resources – such as city departments, or associations that include the Chamber of Commerce or other like-minded organizations.

Step Three: Brand Development (brand narrative, tagline and logo)

This is the step where we synthesize all of the information we've gathered and create the messaging foundation of your brand.

Brand narrative

Your brand narrative defines your position in the marketplace. It highlights the most compelling reason to choose Geneseo as a place to live, work and play; it provides your target audience with a story that resonates. Your narrative will consist of three key components:

- **Brand promise** – The brand position statement defines who your stakeholders are and the position in their minds you want to hold. In other words, it's *what* you want people to think.
- **Brand position** – The brand promise, on the other hand, is *how* you get your audience to think it. Everyone who represents your brand should be keeping the brand promise every day.
- **Brand pillars** – Your brand pillars are the key characteristics upon which your brand is built and typically include adverbs and adjectives that differentiate your community. They represent your brand foundation.

Your brand narrative will be delivered as a functional white sheet that can be used at all levels of city administration and government. Like all strategy-driven work provided by MindFire, it is presented with rationale.

Tagline

An effective tagline is a simple and succinct statement that conveys the essence of who you are and what you offer your audience. Why are taglines so important? It's simple:

- Short phrases that cut to the heart of your brand are imperative to reinforcing your message.
- A tagline helps differentiate; it can't be used by the competition. We'd like to help you develop a tagline or phrase that reflects the strongest differentiators possible.
- A tagline acts as an accountability tool because it reminds you of your own brand promise.

MindFire will present three tagline options with rationale for review.

Logo

Finally, we'll evaluate your current logo and determine if the visual identity reflects the emotional and engaging attributes of your brand derived from the brand position.

If it's deemed that the logo needs to be updated or completely reinvented, MindFire will provide your organization with three options to review. We'll always provide a rationale for the work, because a visual identity should never be subjective. It should reflect the position you want to hold with your audience.

When designing your logo, we'll adhere to simple, classic design approaches that allow the logo to be used successfully in multiple mediums.

Once approved, we'll provide you with a logo kit that contains standard variation of your logo, such as full color, black and white, reversed out and more. Finally, MindFire will help you ensure both your logo and tagline are eligible for copyright and/or trademark registration using a TESS search. TESS stands for Trademark Electronic Search System, and it searches for available trademark possibilities. Following the initial TESS search, MindFire can assist with trademarking; this service will be estimated once the final mark and tagline is confirmed.

Step Four: Implementation

Implementation

Step four of the FireBrand™ process focuses on implementation and strategic planning. The most important thing to know about our strategic planning process: we start at the end. Our belief is that all planning should start with goal setting. Next we seek to establish where you are in your journey toward measurable success by developing a simple and accurate situational analysis based in both primary and secondary research. We then draft the strategies that will get you from where you are (situational analysis) to where you want to be (goal). Although this process is systematic and sensible, it is often evolved substantially over time. We'll revisit the plan over and over; it won't be a dusty

document on shelf. We must be nimble – reacting to the ever-changing environment in which you operate.

You've Included a few key deliverables in your RFP. We touched on some of these items above. We've outlined how we would approach the others ones in this section of our response.

Brand identity guide

Once the visual elements of your brand campaign have been completed, we'll help you bring all the aspects of your brand together in a comprehensive brand identity guide.

The guide will outline how the graphic aspects of the brand should consistently be communicated across multiple platforms. We'll include the basics on color palettes, font families, guides for usage and more.

The style guide is very important because it creates a baseline for all continuing work and empowers the City of Geneseo to implement the brand independently.

Brand Toolkit: develop collateral assets

Your brand toolkit requested in the RFP included a Word template and a business card template. We'd like to suggest an extra step: the development of a PowerPoint template and a print ad concept. Both these additional templates will help you to consistently communicate with your stakeholders and truly solidify your visual identity.

Way-finding signage

The development of way-finding signage that resonates is very important. First, we'll look at the opportunities available for placement and the sizes available. Then, we'll create not just a sign – but a strategy for their implementation that ties directly to your messaging and visual identity.

Step Five: Brand Measurement

The most meaningful way to include measurement in your branding and marketing efforts is to start with goals and work your way down to key indicators that will tell you if you're meeting those goals.

Measurement is always part of the planning step of the FireBrand™ process, because our working plans start with measurable goals. MindFire will meet with you to discuss the goals that are most important to the short- and long-term success of the City of Geneseo, and help identify the right indicators and ways to measure progress on those indicators.

We will monitor progress over time and continually fine-tune the marketing programs to reach your goals.

Case Studies and Testimonials

We've included a few samples of our work. Please visit MindFireComm.com for more samples.

Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau |
www.visitquadcities.com

While the Quad Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau attracts one million visitors to the Quad Cities every year, the organization was ready to strengthen its marketing efforts by updating its brand. MindFire was tasked with developing a stronger identity for the Quad Cities as a destination by creating a consistent brand message.

The Quad Cities destination brand is complex, with multiple audiences and segments to consider. We developed a strategically-focused research plan to closely examine who was visiting the Quad Cities, why they visit and what they love about the area. The hybrid of quantitative and qualitative methodologies revealed critical insights about the consumers we needed to connect with and what would draw them to the Quad Cities area.

Based on the research, we developed a brand position and promise statement. We then created the tagline "Marvels on the Mississippi" for the campaign. The tagline boils down the brand position, focusing on the emotional drivers of the brand. No matter what the "marvel" – from value to hospitality to natural wonders and great events – visitors "marvel" at the experience.

We also broke the brand message down to specific audiences – boomers, families and young professionals. All ads have the same overarching brand integrity but clearly drive home what's relevant to each of those audiences based on research.

While the marketing team leans on MindFire for many pieces, the strong brand foundation has empowered the QCCVB marketing team and given them the flexibility to manage and execute many marketing tactics on their own while maintaining brand consistency. What's best – they are now leveraging every ad dollar they spend!

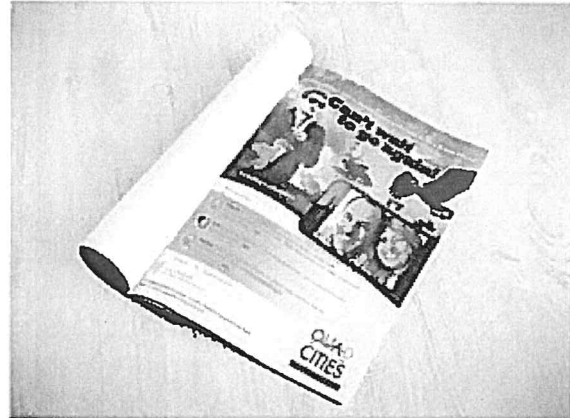
The organization launched the campaign at its 2013 annual meeting to rave reviews. We have sustained the relationship past the initial scope of work and have become a valued branding partner.

Client testimonial

"Through a robust research plan and by taking the time to understand our organization, MindFire was able to boil down to the most important messages that describe our community as a whole, and capture what the Quad Cities is all about. The MindFire team created a visually appealing, consistent and top-notch brand we are extremely happy with."

-Joe Taylor, President & CEO, Quad Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau

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APQS | www.apqs.com

As a manufacturer of longarm quilting machines, APQS operates in a very competitive consumer market. While the quilting audience is very engaged, only a portion of the target audience will become longarm quilters. In addition, longarm quilting machines are considered a luxury item, and as a result, there is a long buying cycle. While APQS had been running traditional print ads in common consumer publications for a long time, the company's sales and programs weren't aligned. As a result, they needed outside expertise to help them connect to customers in a meaningful way.

Recognizing this, APQS asked MindFire to partner with them to fire up the APQS brand. We started where we always start – research.

To identify what APQS product attributes and features were most important to the target market, MindFire deployed a national consumer research study to better understand quilter behavior and perceptions – especially about longarm quilting machines.

The research provided powerful insights about purchase drivers, emotional hot-buttons and consumer segments. We used advanced analytics to determine what machine attributes were most important to the target audience. This analysis gave us the insights we needed to fine-tune the APQS brand position and ensure all external communications incorporated the key messages that would most resonate with their audience.

With a revised brand position in place, MindFire got to work. We refined the APQS marketing strategy and began to increasingly utilize social media platforms in addition to their traditional consumer print advertising to reach the target audience. This included a combination of content marketing and sponsored posts/ads. We also helped bridge the gap between sales and marketing by helping the company integrate a new CRM system that incorporates automated email marketing and lead capturing in one place.

One tactical element of the new program is an innovative bi-annual longarm giveaway sweepstakes that is designed as a lead generation tool. This contest resulted in more than 509,000 entries and the addition of 7,178 new contacts last cycle and has become an essential first step in the APQS sales funnel.

In July 2016 we launched a new website for APQS that incorporates what we learned from the consumer research and truly serves as the hub for all marketing efforts. The responsive site is a lead-generation tool that provides countless ways for APQS to further grow its business.

The results have been tremendous! By connecting consumer insights with targeted communications, the research ultimately delivered an impressive 20% sales growth for APQS.

In August 2016, the Facebook page surpassed 120,000 followers, and has become one of the main referrers to the APQS website. The impressive engagement results on Facebook led APQS to strengthen its presence on other social media platforms, including Pinterest and Instagram, among others.

Using sophisticated tracking and metrics analysis, MindFire is constantly working on refining the tactical elements of the APQS brand, shifting the budget to those outlets that have the highest ROI and provide the most conversions.

By using consumer-based research and monthly analytics to quickly react to shifting preferences among the target audience, MindFire has been able to help APQS connect its sales and marketing teams and strengthen its brand to position itself as a key player in the longarm quilting industry.



Client Testimonial

"The MindFire team took our Facebook page and transformed it into a vibrant online community of more than 100,000 people, where our customers and quilters from around the world come together to share the joys of quilting. It has become one of the biggest referrers to our website and now plays a pivotal role in our ongoing marketing program. They've done a fantastic job."

— Jim Langland, President and Partner, APQS

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MidWestOne Bank | www.midwestone.com

As one of the largest financial institutions in the region, MidWestOne operates in a competitive environment where branding is everything. When the bank asked MindFire to help re-ignite its brand and strike a stronger connection with its customers, we turned to research to give us the answers we needed.

We started by deploying an online survey to current MidWestOne customers to help us better understand their perceptions of the brand and determine how we could connect with them on an emotional level.

Using the insights from the in-depth research, we helped MidWestOne Bank identify its brand position and brand promise. Next, we developed a new tagline, "You're the One," that communicates the brand position and promise to the bank's target audiences.

With the brand foundation in place, we were ready to communicate it to the public. We developed an engaging brand campaign (TV, radio and print) that utilized Orlean's popular "Still the One" song and

highlighted the new tagline. We also refreshed the bank's homepage and developed a series of banner ads.

The campaign was a huge success. Since the brand launch in 2010, MidWestOne has continued to build on this brand foundation and has seen the positive benefits of a strong brand both internally and externally.

Key to this success was the internal brand launch. MidWestOne's employees have truly embraced the "You're the One" brand promise. In 2012, MidWestOne Bank was named the "Coolest Place to Work in the Corridor" by the *Corridor Business Journal*. MidWestOne also made the "Coolest Place to Work in the Corridor" list in 2014. The ranking was based on the results of an employee survey.

Externally, MidWestOne has seen consistent financial success and growth. In 2013, the Independent Community Bankers of America® (ICBA) named MidWestOne as one of the nation's Top 50 Community Bank Leaders in Social Media – the only Iowa bank to be included.



Client testimonial

"MidWestOne Bank was in a bit of an identity crisis when we approached MindFire to help tell us who we are. Through succinct research of our management, employees and customers, MindFire provided reliable data to support their creative approach. MidWestOne Bank now has a consistent identity that our company is proud to display in everything we do."

– Nick Pfeiffer, Second Vice President, Marketing Officer

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City of East Moline | www.eastmoline.com

MindFire Communications is currently in the brand development process for the City of East Moline. After a robust proposal process that included regional agencies, we were selected primarily based on our experience with branding and the niche of city communications.

While we'd love to show you the work done to date, it's still under wraps. Stay tuned for its launch later this year! However, you can reach out to Tim Knanishu, our client contact, to ask about details at tknanishu@mediacombb.net.

Understanding the City of Geneseo

MindFire spent a bit of time reviewing information about the City of Geneseo online. (We also have Arsonists who visit your city often!) Below are a few key points about the City:

- Located just 20 miles east of the Quad Cities, Geneseo is known for its Victorian homes, historic architecture, charming ambiance and Midwestern work ethic.
- The city is home to franchises, as well as unique proprietors. (A few of our staff favorites include Sweet Peas and Urban Farmhouse!) MindFire has worked with with Lionstone Brewery on their branding efforts, supporting unique additions to the community.
- Geneseo, Illinois is served by three interstate highways, two state highways, an international airport, an excellent school system, abundant recreational facilities and an aggressive retail district.
- Geneseo is home to the famous gun manufacturing company, Springfield Armory, Inc., which is located on Main Street. It employs many of the town's citizens and is a vital part of the economy. Springfield Armory, Inc. is currently operated by the Reese family.
- The city government is organized under an Aldermanic form. The Mayor is elected at large for a two-year term. The Mayor (Kathy Carroll-Duda) serves as Chief Executive Officer and also Presiding Officer over the City Council of Geneseo. The City Council consists of eight aldermen representing four individual wards.

Timeline

When the proposal has been accepted MindFire will work with your team to develop a timeline that will guide the brand development process.

We've included a sample timeline below. These timeframes have been established based on our experiences working with clients on these types of projects in the past. This can be adjusted as needed, but as you can see it allows for ample time to complete the project by Feb. 2017.

Task	Timeframe
Brand discovery	1 day for session, 1 week for MindFire analysis
Brand research	TBD
Brand narrative	3 weeks
Tagline	2 weeks
Logo	2 weeks
Brand toolkit	3 weeks

Way-finding signage	2 weeks
Brand measurement	Ongoing

Ability to Handle Workload

MindFire is a nimble and efficiency-focused agency. We currently have 16 full-time employees and are confident we can integrate your workload into the agency without increasing our staffing levels.

In addition, MindFire is a fast-growing agency and we anticipate further growth in the years ahead. This will likely lead to more employees in the near future.

Budget & Working with MindFire

The use of funds will ultimately be determined by the FireBrand™ process and plan development. To get us started, we've outlined costs for each stage of the FireBrand™ process.

Deliverable	Budget
Conduct a Brand Discovery Workshop to learn more about your brand and competitive landscape. The workshop includes a brief educational presentation to make sure we're all working from the same assumptions about what branding is and why it's important.	\$2,100
Conduct primary research with key stakeholders to collect top-of-mind perceptions, perceived strengths, weaknesses and differentiators for the City of Geneseo.	TBD
Creation of brand narrative including brand promise, position, and pillars presented to the City of Geneseo with rationale.	\$3,300
Development of a tagline . MindFire will present three tagline options with rationale as it relates to the brand.	\$3,000
Design of a new and/or enhanced City of Geneseo logo . MindFire will present three options with rationale as it relates to the brand.	\$3,450
Development of a brand identity guide that includes guidance for color palettes, font families, guides for usage and more.	\$4,000
Development of a brand toolkit , including Word, PowerPoint, business card and print ad templates.	\$5,000
Development of way-finding signage , presented with a rationale for its ongoing use.	\$3,000