

A Newsworthy Rebranding Effort

The CNN Tower in Los Angeles, California houses one of the largest news networks in the country, but its exterior didn't always reflect this fact. When a new owner took over the building, it was decided that a major rebranding was necessary if CNN was to remain a tenant, and Selbert Perkins Design (SPD) (www.selbertperkins.com) was called in to spearhead the effort.

"We were really in charge of re-imaging the entire site, including the overall facades, the ground-level, the pedestrian area, and the lobby, as well as the garage," says Robin Perkins, partner and co-founder of Selbert Perkins Design. "They had a lot of VIP individuals coming in for interviews with Larry King and such so we really needed kind of a red carpet re-imaging."

SPD's first ideas were a bit too oversized. "We really wanted it to be like a little mini Times Square," says Perkins. "Our first thought was to cover the entire building façade in LEDs and create real, live animated images of whatever was being broadcast on CNN at the time. But that turned into, for obvious reasons, a smaller effort."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SELBERT PERKINS DESIGN

Instead of covering the entire building façade, SPD started by refurbishing the four acrylic-faced CNN signs atop the tower. It brought in Ad Art Sign Company (www.adart.com) to replace the original fluorescent lighting with LED strips and to add animation across the three letters. The animation starts at the top of the “C” and moves all the way over to the second “N.”

SPD was able to avoid using a crane to reach the signs for this retrofit. “Instead of getting a crane up there we used window washing equipment to install it from the roof. So that presented quite a bit of cost savings,” says Perkins.

SPD went on to add animation and movement to the building’s ground level, as well. They installed LCDs and an LED ticker displaying CNN broadcasts and information from the network, as well as eye-catching vinyl graphics. “We came up with a hybrid solution,” says Perkins. “We have some static elements, but the pattern on those graphics is very animated. Then that combined with the LCD screens and the [LED] ticker really brings to life that whole lower level and that whole lobby area, and [it] really energizes the street.”

To accomplish the branding of the lower level, SPD designed, specified, and developed a design intent for all of the elements. Then the company turned to CNN and a few fabricators to carry out the plans. Ad Art fabricated the ticker tape along the lower level, and CNN handled the installation of the LCD screens. Fluoresco Lighting & Signs (www.fluoresco.com) installed the vinyl graphics and oversaw the incorporation of the LCDs into the lobby’s glass wall. (Note: Imagic (www.imagicla.com) printed the vinyl graphics.)

In addition, SPD decided to expand the branding to the parking garage. With the help of



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A photograph of a billboard for "Dynamic Plaza". The billboard is a large, rectangular LED display showing a red car. Below the main display, there are smaller signs for "SUBWAY" and "M&M'S". The billboard is mounted on a building.



Fluoresco, the company added blue, flag-mounted signs to the garage's exterior and used metal wayfinding signs painted blue within the garage. "In Los Angeles in general, the garage entry experience is very important," says Perkins. "It's almost like the lobby of your building. We turn that into a special room whenever we can."

Upon completion of the rebranding, CNN signed a long-term lease with the building. "[The rebranding] opened up the CNN Tower to the rest of the community," says Perkins. "Now it really acts like an outdoor living room for people, so when there's breaking news, crowds actually gather there and watch TV with their cup of coffee. It's exactly what we wanted to have happen."

For sign companies hoping to tackle a similar project, Perkins suggests starting out by assessing your goals and the brand you will be working with. Then consider some simple options that will go a long way in sprucing up the brand. "Look at how you can get [the client's] identity to read a little bit more clearly. Can we repaint the building? Can we add some banners?" she says. "All of these things can make a big impact for less dollars than say other, bigger capital improvements."

Sometimes simplicity goes a long way, especially in these trying economic times. "I think that's the trend these days with this economy," Perkins says. "We were very efficient with the owner's budget, and by some simple changes it's really repositioned and rebranded these properties in the middle of a recession. So I think that we've all accomplished the goals that we set out." ■

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