

SARA KIES

MARKETING DIRECTOR // BRAND STRATEGIST

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Award-winning marketing professional with a 20-year track record of providing marketing vision, strategy, and leadership for various clients in the higher education and financial industries. In-depth experience in brand strategy; multi-channel marketing; analytics; budget development and oversight; and team building in decentralized organizations.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Brand strategy in decentralized organizations
- Campaign development and measurement
- Market segmentation, persona development
- Data analytics and interpretation
- Advertising management
- Budget development and oversight
- CRM integration
- Content marketing strategy
- SEO/SEM
- Agency relations

EDUCATION

12/1999 - BA; Communications; Electronic Media - University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA

12/2020 - MS; MIS/Marketing; Digital Marketing - Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

EXPERIENCE

Assistant Director of Marketing and Brand Strategy (2/2021 – Present)

University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA

Strategic development, implementation, and management of marketing and branding activities that serve to advance awareness of the university brand and recruit prospective students into the recruitment funnel

- Develops and executes annual university-wide marketing and communications plan
- Ensures brand consistency in all institutional marketing and communications
- Partners with campus marketing partners to ensure strategic cohesion of marketing and communications
- Utilizes Google Analytics to collect and interpret data to inform appropriate marketing direction
- Coordinates and manages all digital and traditional advertising placements
- Provides primary leadership to the University Relations office in the absence of the director
- Serves as the liaison between marketing partners and IT

Key Accomplishments

- Led and executed the University of Northern Iowa rebrand in 2020, leading to an increase in organic direct and referral traffic by roughly 300% since the launch.
- Developed a permanent set of metrics and reports to measure brand awareness ROI after the launch of the new brand.
- Created the first audience persona reference guide to increase targeted messaging through email automation. Customizing a message by persona in an email to current students yielded a 60% open rate and 8% click-thru rate, leading to a 5% increase in event attendance.
- Designed and implemented the first Undergraduate Student Journey Map to guide strategy in each phase of the hourglass funnel.
- Executed first evergreen content marketing strategy to increase organic optimization, which has yielded an 8% increase in new user search traffic in the last 90 days.

Marketing and Design Consultant (8/2013 – Present)

Sara Kies Marketing & Design, Cedar Falls, IA

Develop and execute traditional and digital marketing strategies for a variety of local and national contractual clients, including:

- Rich Gross Solutions Higher Education Consulting - Hot Springs, SD
- Financial Designs – Cedar Falls, IA
- Martin Bros. Distributing - Cedar Falls, IA
- Hurling Hatchet - Cedar Falls, IA & Cedar Rapids, IA
- Hurts Donuts - Cedar Falls, IA
- Black Hawk County Gaming Commission - Waterloo, IA

Marketing and Communications Manager (7/2015 - 2/2021)

University of Northern Iowa College of Business, Cedar Falls, IA

Directed all marketing, advertising, and communications initiatives for the College of Business at the University of Northern Iowa

- Developed business-college-specific personas to implement targeted business-student messaging through Marketing Cloud email journeys
- Managed and created all paid advertising and organic digital marketing assets to increase business student enrollment
- Implemented and managed college-specific budget to guide marketing and advertising activity used to track university-wide marketing ROI

Key Accomplishments

- Developed the first annual College of Business marketing budget, which led to an integrated campaign with University Relations that resulted in a 10% increase in applications in 2017.
- Provided UX and SEO guidance for the newly designed UNI.edu website.
- Served on Salesforce CRM steering committee to advocate for the purchase and adoption of marketing automation and data-informed marketing direction.

Marketing Manager (4/2013 - 7/2015)

Martin Bros. Distributing, Cedar Falls, IA

Managed marketing team and creative initiatives for Midwestern-based food service distribution company

- Developed and managed marketing and creative plans, campaigns, and budgets
- Managed a team of four graphic designers, one web designer, and two marketing coordinators
- Managed all outgoing marketing messaging and campaigns, including the *DISH!* Monthly publication and *DISH!* series of monthly e-newsletters
- Implemented Hubspot email and social media marketing automation system
- Conducted employee evaluations and reviews

Key Accomplishments

- Implemented a digital marketing presence that had previously been nonexistent. Online campaigns saw a 1200% increase in traffic to the website, followed by a 5% increase in revenue.
- Authored and presented "*The Future of Marketing and What You Should Be Doing*" at industry-level events, including the International Food Distributors Association (IFDA) Conference in New York City, NY.
- Successfully implemented an educational blog which has resulted in a significant rise in organic traffic for keywords like "restaurant supply" on major search engines.
- Implemented Hubspot marketing CRM automation, resulting in more efficiency for targeted lead follow-up and communications.

Digital Marketing Strategist/Web Designer (7/2012 - 4/2013)

Spinutech, Cedar Falls, IA

Website design, development, and digital marketing guidance for various clients

- Designed and coded websites using Adobe Dreamweaver (HTML/CSS)
- Consulted and implemented various organic and paid digital marketing campaigns

Director of Marketing and Creative (6/2001 - 7/2012)

PFGBest/Wasendorf Group of Companies, Cedar Falls, IA

Managed marketing and creative initiatives for the Wasendorf family of companies, including PFGBest, W&A Publishing, Traders Press, and MyVerona Ristorante Italiano

- Successfully planned and executed company rebrand transitioning from Peregrine Financial Group to PFGBest
- Developed marketing and creative plans, campaigns, and budgets for all companies
- Directed creative and messaging to align with each brand, including *SFO* magazine publication design and management
- Created monthly ROI reports based on annual budgets and spends
- Managed brand consistency and implemented brand guidelines for MyVerona, PFGBest, *SFO* magazine, and Traders Press

Key Accomplishments

- Managed a \$3M annual marketing budget that included outdoor, broadcast, print, radio, and digital placements.
- Successfully collaborated with NADEX futures exchange on a \$500,000 binary options partnership campaign that resulted in a 4% increase in new accounts.
- Directed a direct mail campaign that resulted in a \$3.50 cost/lead ratio – down from a \$54.95 cost/lead on a previous campaign.
- Directed a team of award-winning marketing professionals, including three graphic designers, two marketing specialists, and two student interns.
- Implemented the first automated email marketing campaign using a custom-built CRM system.

CERTIFICATIONS

- Google Analytics Individual Qualification
- Google Ads Video Certification
- Hootsuite Certification

AWARDS

2006-2019 - American Advertising Federation Addy

2018 - AAF Cedar Valley MVP Marketer

2019 - UNI College of Business Leadership