

SARA KIES

MARKETING DIRECTOR, DIGITAL STRATEGIST

1607 Quail Run Lane
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
319.239.4008 | sarakies@me.com

Award-winning marketing professional with a 20-year track record of providing marketing vision, strategy and leadership for various clients in the financial, food service, and higher education industries. In-depth experience in digital marketing strategy development, market research and analysis, journey automation implementation through Salesforce Marketing Cloud and Hubspot, HTML/CSS, Drupal, budget development/management, and team building.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Journey/marketing automation development
- Salesforce CRM, Marketing Cloud, Hubspot CRM
- Market segmentation, persona development
- Google Analytics, Adwords, Data Studio
- HTML/CSS, Adobe CC
- SEO/SEM
- Budget development/management
- Team building/leadership

EDUCATION

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

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

EXPERIENCE

ASST. DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & BRAND STRATEGY (2/2021 – Present)

University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA

Strategic development and implementation 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 the annual university-wide marketing plan to align with the five-year university strategic plan. The plan includes goal development, KPIs, and digital/traditional tactical execution.
- Ensures brand consistency in all institutional marketing and communications
- Partners closely with members of the campus marketing community to ensure strategic cohesion in the development of automated messaging through Salesforce CRM and Marketing Cloud
- Utilizes Salesforce and Google Analytics to collect and interpret appropriate marketing direction
- Coordinates and manages all digital and traditional advertising placements
- Provides advocacy of Salesforce tools across campus
- Provides primary leadership to the University Relations office in the absence of the director

Key Accomplishments

- Developed audience persona reference to increase targeted messaging through email automation, which has resulted in higher engagement rates. Including a student success story of an Under-Represented High School Student in emails targeting that persona yielded a 60% open rate and 8% click-thru rate in UNI Jump Start event attendance
- Created and implemented the first Undergraduate Student Journey Map to guide strategy in each phase of the funnel
- Developed a permanent set of digital metrics to measure brand awareness ROI after the launch of the new University of Northern Iowa brand
- Maintaining UNI.edu SEO strategy that has yielded an 8% increase of new user search traffic in the last 90 days

DIGITAL MARKETING 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

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- Led team-building initiatives and collaboration with University Relations and campus communicators to embrace Salesforce CRM and Marketing Cloud
- Designed, wrote, and managed all internal and external college communications for web, print, video, and social media channels
- Created and implemented local and national earned media campaigns
- Trained and mentored a team of student employees

Key Accomplishments

- Developed the first annual CBA 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

MARKETING MANAGER (4/2013 - 2/2015)

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 been previously non-existent. 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 SEO for keywords like "restaurant supply" on major search engines, including Google and Bing
- Implemented Hubspot marketing CRM automation, resulting in more efficiency for targeted lead follow up and communications

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
- Wrote, produced, shot, and edited internal and client videos

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

- Developed marketing and creative plans, campaigns, and budgets for all companies
- Led marketing efforts across all platforms, including web, print, video, and social media
- 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
- Successfully planned and executed company re-brand transitioning from Peregrine Financial Group to PFGBest
- Conducted employee appraisals and reviews

Key Accomplishments

- Managed \$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 first automated email marketing campaign using a custom-built CRM system

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AWARDS

2006-2019 American Advertising Federation Addy award winner

2018 AAF Cedar Valley MVP Marketer award recipient

2019 UNI College of Business Leadership Award

CERTIFICATIONS

2020 Google Ads Video Certification

2020 Hootsuite Certification

2019 Google Analytics Individual Qualification

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Leslie K. Wilson, Dean

University of Northern College of Business, Cedar Falls, IA

319.273.6240 | leslie.wilson@uni.edu

Paul Farmer, Director of Continuous Improvement

Veridian Credit Union, Cedar Falls, IA

319.231.0567 | PFarmer711@gmail.com

Angela Dark, Marketing Director

Martin Bros. Distributing Cedar Falls, IA

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