

Furniture Retailer Walter E. Smithe Has Fun with its Marketing

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Walter E. Smithe has been a household name in the Chicagoland area since 1945. Renowned for their custom furniture, and personal design services, Walter E. Smithe's 13 retail locations provide clients with over 2,000 unique frames with 5,000 exquisite fabrics and leathers. All furniture is handmade and comes with a lifetime warranty.

Most people would associate a maker of high-end, custom furniture with a business that is conservative, staid; some might even say "stuffy". Nothing could be further from the truth, as evidenced by Smithe's April marketing campaign that announced that they had acquired the naming rights for another Chicago landmark, Wrigley Field. Using known Chicago news personalities, mock news announcements were aired, stating that Wrigley Field would be named Walter E. Smithe Field! Subsequent segments announced the consideration of a dome over the revered ball park, emblazoned with the Smithe name, and the replacement of Wrigley's ivy-covered outfield walls with video screens. They did add that a video of ivy would occasionally be played to placate the Cub faithful.

An earlier campaign for KFC featured the now famous Bucket Boys beating their pickle barrel drums. A surprise ending to the segment was provided by the three Smithe brothers doing the drum beat. An NBC news feature announcing the Martha Stewart addition to the Walter E. Smithe accessory line, had Martha complimenting the Smithe furniture products, "...they have the best furniture in Chicago, and their commercials aren't bad either, especially this one." At that point, the brothers start singing the Walter E. Smithe jingle, to which Martha adds, "...their singing is (long pause) OK". There's also been a U2 / iTunes concert takeoff. While the Smithe advertising strategy aims to inform people about their offering, these tongue-in-cheek commercials generate water-cooler discussions, and certainly grab consumer attention.

These third-generation brothers have successfully built a brand that represents the highest of quality, with a marketing strategy built on parodies of topical issues, AND they're doing it on a relatively small budget. All commercials are produced in house through collaboration between the brothers and the advertising department. In house production also provides a great measure of flexibility and speed versus dealing with a large advertising firm. The Smithe brothers are clearly demonstrating that building a successful business can also be fun, and that creativity doesn't have to be limited to high-budget Super Bowl commercials!

About Walter E. Smithe: The Smithe family has been selling, making and servicing furniture in the Chicagoland area for over 60 years. They currently have 13 stores conveniently located throughout the Chicago area. Everything is

handmade, one-at-a-time, with a written lifetime warranty. Walter E. Smithe offers a unique collection of furniture and accessories for every room in your home. They have staff designers whose design fees are included in your purchase. www.Smithe.com.

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