

Outside experts help firms grow

People in business spend lots of time and money getting the word out, getting known. They place ads, they get on the internet, they send out mailings, and they publish brochures, flyers, newsletters, catalogs, and all sorts of other printed materials.

Some experts you don't hear much about make all this happen. Getting the help you might need has become more complicated.

Signs are an important part of announcing the products and services of a business — both inside and outside the business itself.

"We try to (educate people as to) what they can and should use outside" help, said Steve Carroll. He and wife Cindy operate the **NJ Sign Store** in Lebanon. "We give people a choice — various options — from the price standpoint."

The outside sign choices are legion. They include banners, A-frame signs, various types of business name signs, vehicle graphics, channel letter light box signs and neon.

Carroll recently repaired the neon signs at Hunterdon Medical Center. Another project was a 4-foot by 36-foot banner across a stage in Carteret where the Smithereens were performing. If it's a sign, he's on it.

But it's more than fancy stuff at this operation (908-455-0667, www.NJSignStore.com). Carroll and his staff produce markers for the handicapped that are compliant with federal law, mailbox signs, nametags and countless other types

Al Warr

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of small signs used inside buildings.

Ambitious business people will want to check out the marketing possibilities of videography. These are films varying from short-shorts to longer. Think of putting yourself on YouTube or Facebook — or being the star at your own wedding.

Bill Ivie has been doing videography since the 1970s. His background includes work for ABC, NBC, ESPN, Learning Channel and the NBA.

"Many commercials (today) don't look (to be) network level," he told me. "The threshold is so high now." He thinks that the average person would be amazed to see what goes into the production of a piece that lasts only a minute — or maybe several.

Ivie's Clinton-based company, called **CinematicEye** (CinematicEye.com, 908-310-5481) produces for both the national and local markets. Right now, he's completing the video of the Sept. 26 Oxford Olympic Triathlon held at Furnace

Lake in Warren County.

"My background in mixing and sound designing audio professionally for television and film has been a huge advantage as a videographer," he said. "Picture, voice, music and sound effects all have to work together."

Go to his web site to see his productions. These include videos of The Garden Gourmet, Kindred Quilts, Center Street Cigar and High Bridge Pilates & Yoga, as well as sports events and weddings.

Another local expert concentrates in design and illustration. He is William Waggoner, who runs **Studio Alpha Design** in Clinton.

"You need to keep content down to being engaging but not frustrating," he said. He was specifically talking about web site design, but it can apply to everything he does.

Waggoner's work is done direct with some clients, but mainly he works through developers. He is concerned with business-to-business and direct-to-consumer materials. This includes publications, display, brochures, direct mail, print ads, illustrations and logos, as well as web design.

"So much (technology) is available in web design," he cautioned. "For example, material must be cross-platform and cross-browser compliant." He related a story of a client wanting to use an unusual typeface, but, unless the viewer's computer supported that particular font, it would revert to a default typeface. This would ruin the desired effect.

This is just one reason to call on an expert such as Waggoner. He founded his business (www.StudioAlphaDesign.com, 908-797-8244) in 2004, after leaving A.M. Best in Tewksbury. Another reason is that he is a painter and illustrator, bringing content and artwork together seamlessly.

Finally, the **Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce** is holding a "Growth Board Informational Meeting" tomorrow (Oct. 22), 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the chamber offices in Flemington. It's free, and it includes a light breakfast.

John Hyman of The Alternative Board will be leading this session. It is designed to show small and medium-sized business owners how they can get help from business coaches and peer advisory boards. To register, call 908-782-7115 or go to www.HunterdonChamber.org.

Whether you want signage or video, web design or graphics, illustration or a coach, these people work behind the scenes to help you get where you want to go.