

DESIGN

Why This Company Spent \$1.5 Million to Change Its Name

BY JILL KRASNY @JILLKRASNY

What happens when customers like your brand--but they're confused about what you sell? Cue the branding overhaul.



Every business wants to be known for doing something well. But when you're known for doing something you don't actually do, that's a problem.

Megan Tamte, co-founder of Evereve, a women's apparel chain of 48 stores based in Edina, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis, learned this firsthand. Customers assumed her stores, then called Hot Mama, sold maternity clothes. (They don't). "People loved our concept," says Tamte, who founded the clothing business with her husband Mike a decade ago, but "we also experienced a lot of confusion [over our store name]. That's why we decided to make this

move."

That move was a \$1.5 million branding overhaul.

Tamte had a very clear idea of what defined her concept but she needed a better business name to reflect it. The store caters to busy women between 25 and 55 years old. "Her family is her top priority, and we exist to help bring fashion to her." That's why the store keeps toys in the dressing rooms and a stash of Animal Crackers for hungry kids. Says Mike: "Our vision is to be the undisputed fashion authority for moms."

The clothes are designed to appeal younger, busier moms and the affordable pricing is right in line with department stores. It's a model that Tamte thought was ripe for expansion--but the Hot Mama name was holding it back.

The grand plan is ambitious--eventually the Tamtes aspire to open 300 to 500 stores nationwide. They'll start by opening another six stores next spring. "We knew we needed to make this change, and needed to make sure we were making this change with the new stores opening," says Mike. Here's how the rebranding unfolded.

Making the Change

To begin the rebranding process, the Tamtes hired a chief creative officer from a Chicago creative agency in January. His first project was to help the couple find a name that embodied the store's mission. "We looked at thousands and thousands," Mike recalls. "In today's world, you need a name that you can trademark and use for a URL. Fortunately, our [new] name had those two things."

They decided to incorporate *Eve*, the Hebrew word for life, because it had a feminine ring to it, says Megan. It made her think of "a woman who is modern and living in the present."

Changing a brand name is never easy--but especially so when it involves rolling it out to many different locations. The Tamtes developed a tiered approach for informing customers. First, they sent out an email blast, then they legally changed the brand's name. Next they determined when stores would get signs. (On September 3, the flagship store in Edina unveils its look, while signs on the rest of the 47 stores will be changed from October 1 to November 15.) "Our goal is to have them all [convert to] Evereve by the holidays," Mike says.

Since an email blast didn't feel like enough, the couple also produced a YouTube video explaining the story of Evereve and placed it on the site's homepage. "We did that intentionally so many people can click on it," Mike says. "It will probably be up for two or three months on our site, maybe not as prominently though."

Starting this week, paying customers will receive a flier in stores explaining the name change. Once all the stores have converted, radio ads will be next.

Denise Lee Yohn, author of the book "What Great Brands Do," is impressed with the way the Tamtes have handled Hot Mama's name change. She says they got the timing right, as the re-branding is easier to do while the brand is still relatively small because it's less costly. Even so, Mike pegged the tab at around \$1.5 million.

"The benefit is more than the cost," Yohn says. She adds that the new name is better suited for the brand. Hot Mama "seemed to suggest that women care more about what other people think of them," when the clothing is really meant to help mothers express themselves. "[Eveve] seems to be a more appropriate explanation." Plus, the name change "can kind of be a marketing tactic in and of itself, giving people a reason to talk about their brand."

The big takeaway from Hot Mama's rebranding? "Over-communicate your new brand name and why you're making the change," says Yohn. And whatever you do, do it sooner rather than later.

IMAGE: COURTESY EVEREVE

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