

Maven Communications' Five Year Anniversary:
Looking Back at the Beginning

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Tierney agency grads launch Maven Communications

The veteran ad/PR firm has had a big impact on the creation of new shops

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One of Philadelphia's most established advertising and public relations agencies has spawned another PR shop.

Maven Communications, which bills itself as Philadelphia's newest full-service public relations agency, was started by Rebecca Devine and Jessica Sharp, two former Tierney Communications employees.

"We were nervous, but [Tierney Communications] has been so supportive," said Devine. "Philadelphia has a small [advertising and public relations] community, so everyone knows one another."

Perhaps no PR shop has had the impact of Tierney Communications, with a long list of blue chip clients like McDonald's, Exelon, Lincoln Financial Group and Independence Blue Cross, among others. It has also been noteworthy in producing entrepreneurs who in turn start their own PR shops.

No fewer than four PR agencies have ex-Tierney people as principals, including: Vince Powers and Jay Devine (no relation to Rebecca Devine), who founded Devine & Powers Public Relations in Center City; Jeff Jubelirer, a principal at the issues-advocacy firm Ceisler-Jubelirer ; and Sharon Gallagher, co-founder of Sage Communications, who was an account supervisor at Tierney before going to the Pew Charitable Trusts (and eventually Sage).

On the advertising side, Tierney Communications has spawned Peter Madden, founder of the Philadelphia agency AgileCat; Kelly Simmons, founder of bubble, a gender-marketing firm; and Scott Franks, former chairman at Tierney Communications, who is now chief operating officer at Azuna, a Jenkintown printing-technology concern.

And of course Tierney's namesake, Brian Tierney, who in 1998 sold Tierney Communications to an entity that is now part of the agency's parent Interpublic Group Cos. He went on to start T2 Group and last year led a group of investors in buying the Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News.

Maven's principals were at Tierney Communications for three years. Sharp is a Virginia native, who arrived in Philadelphia as a Drexel University student. Devine is from New York and came to Philadelphia with her husband, an associate at the law firm Pepper Hamilton .

At Tierney Communications, they honed their PR skills. "We got a great education there, a good base," Devine said.

In starting their own firm, the partners decided to "just leave and pound the pavement" in search of clients, Sharp said.

Maven offers full-service public relations, including strategic planning, message development, media training, media relations, and crisis/issues management.

The firm has offices at 1735 Market St. in Center City. It was started with two key clients: InfoLogix Inc., a Hatboro firm that offers mobile work-force technology solutions and the Musser Group, a consulting firm led by former Safeguard Scientifics CEO and Chairman Warren V. "Pete" Musser.

With InfoLogix, a 5-year-old firm that recently went public, "they saw that we're able to step in and dedicate 100 percent of our time," Sharp said. "They said, 'When can you start?' We said, 'Tomorrow.'"

Devine said the company has found a "sweet spot" with other young companies.

"They're young, eager, hungry," she said. "They want someone like that."

