

Better Together

by Jeffrey Reed

In the eyes of the Ontario Motor Coach Association, there are some prophetic words in Sam Cooke's iconic song, *A Change Is Gonna Come*: "It's been a long time coming, but I know a change gon' come. Oh yes it will."

Celebrating its 84th anniversary in 2013, the OMCA boasts more than 1,100 members, including more than 75 bus operators, over 100 tour operators, 62 bus product and services and some 800 affiliated sellers to the group tour industry, including attractions, destinations, hoteliers and retail outlets across North America. With such a diverse membership, the OMCA is excited about its new branding, unveiled at the 2012 annual OMCA Conference and Marketplace in Buffalo, New York.

With a brand-new logo and a fresh brand values statement, yet relying on more than eight decades of unparalleled service for its members, OMCA is headed in the right direction, according to association President and CEO Doug Switzer.

"We are very excited about this new look. It's been over 17 years since we last updated our branding and we felt strongly that we needed to bring our branding back in line with who we are today.

"The fact is that all member types have played an increasingly important role in the association since the implementation of Marketplace. We now have members from not only every

province, but from 34 states as well. Almost 50 percent of supplier members are from the U.S." added Switzer.

OMCA member company RadonicRodgers Design + Marketing of Vaughan, Ontario, along with the association's board of directors, worked hard



OMCA

BETTER TOGETHER

throughout the 2012 rebranding process. In fact, hundreds of catch phrases were bandied about, resulting in a short list of almost 10 possible slogans to carry the association into a new era.

Numerous think tank sessions finally resulted in the new slogan, *Better Together*, emphasizing OMCA's evolution over the years into an organization that represents all aspects of the group travel industry, with members across North America.

"The association has evolved," said RadonicRodgers Managing Partner Ed Radonic. "We didn't want to change the name, and we're certainly not changing what OMCA has done in the past. They've improved and added more services over the past few decades. The new brand simply reflects who they are now," said Radonic.

"When an organization has evolved so much over the years, with new member types, new services, it can be difficult to get people's attention; it just falls on deaf ears. One way to get their attention is to rebrand. They stop and take notice of your message, and all that has gone on in the last few decades - it is all encapsulated in the new branding and new marketing phrase – *Better Together*. We have simply brought the branding up to date with what has been happening in the last two decades," added Radonic.

As part of the process of re-branding, RadonicRodgers developed the new marketing phrase, *Better Together*, after consulting with OMCA and then identifying and describing the key brand values, which read as follows:

OMCA is an organization that provides high value opportunities for its members to grow their business. OMCA is a strong, inclusive network of interdependent businesses producing results greater than the sum of their individual parts. OMCA is an organization that cares deeply about providing the highest level of value and personal service for its members. It is the heart of OMCA that embraces the road to sustainable and progressive development of the industry by providing advocacy and education with the aid of technology to members across North America.

"OMCA is a North American association," explained Radonic. "Motor coach is the hub, but it's much more than that. It's the travel industry, tour operators, marketing them to consumers, creating a demand for motor coaches. We have supplier members including hotels and resorts and attractions. There are insurance companies – so many member types. We bring them all together. That's how we came up with the slogan, *Better Together*."

"We wanted to make sure that our branding reflected those realities," said Switzer. "But more than that, we wanted to emphasize that OMCA is a place where members can come together to achieve things that they couldn't individually, to grow their business and their industry by working together – hence the phrase, *Better Together*, which is at the core of the new look."

According to Radonic, once a rebranding – including a new logo and new identity – has been implemented, the next step is for the association to ask itself, "Where do we go from here?" RadonicRodgers offers a brand manual which Radonic said is "still tactical. The brand goes far beyond just using the new logo. You need to remember what your directive is. Embrace it. Live the brand. It's much more than just a logo – it's who you are as an organization."

Prior to its recent rebranding, OMCA had written its mission statement: "To enhance the growth and viability of our members' organizations, and the safety and quality of industry services through education, awareness and advocacy." And, OMCA's vision statement read: "OMCA is a member-driven organization that is an indispensable business partner with our members."

Those are certainly words to live by, and they now gain greater strength with the implementation of the new slogan. But as Switzer and Radonic emphasized, *Better Together* is much more than a slogan; it, too, is a visionary statement.

Greek philosopher Heraclitus wrote, "There is nothing permanent except change." Indeed, OMCA embraced change for the better of its diverse membership and concurrently those who use their products and services across North America. ■

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