HELPING YOU BUILD YOUR BRAND
RESA Communications offers a range of communications and strategic planning services to schools, governments and nonprofit agencies. We take a comprehensive yet affordable approach to your unique issues. Our strength is problem-solving.

Or, as we prefer to look at it:

Tell us where you want to go. We will help you get there.

An effective communications plan lets people know about new programs, procedures and opportunities. It can draw in new volunteers and help keep old friends. It can encourage donations and target resources. The Internet and the pervasiveness of computers, cell phones and other devices provide more channels for your message than ever before.

RESA Communications understands that the two major roadblocks to more effective communications are time and fear. We can help overcome both.

**Time.** Every organization sets priorities. Providing services to your constituents should be atop the priority list. RESA Communications can show you how to efficiently turn information you’re already gathering into messages you want to convey to the audience you want to reach.

**Fear.** Good communications is timely. It’s also personal and conversational. Yet the fear of mistakes or being misunderstood often prompts organizations to hold back on communicating with their public until every item can be triple-checked, or run up and down the chain of command. RESA Communications can help you develop a workable communications plan that can ease those fears.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING**
It’s important to know your audience’s needs and concerns before you try to develop an effective strategy for meeting them.

We can develop surveys, conduct focus group sessions and facilitate fact-finding meetings with key audiences: taxpayers, staff members, donors, parents, volunteers and board members.

**DESIGN AND CREATIVE WORK**
Having people recognize your “brand” and what it means to them is a key element of good communications. Brand awareness engenders good feelings and allows the organization to focus on specific messages. RESA Communications has extensive experience in the creative aspect of communications: logos, print newsletters, online newsletters (yes, there’s a difference), direct mail, billboards, print and online advertising, booklets, brochures and fliers.

**WRITING AND EDITING**
Writing is a technical skill that involves not only choosing the right words, but also setting the right tone. Our experienced staff can provide a range of written materials, from newsletters to press releases to speeches. Need some one-liners for a “roast”? Need a special introduction for a special report? Call us. We also can edit for content and grammar any material you have, large or small, technical or informal.
The St. Clair County Regional Educational Service Agency is one of 56 intermediate school districts in Michigan. RESA provides high-quality, cost-effective support services to the county’s seven public K-12 school districts. It also provides, on a contractual basis, specialized services to school districts outside the county, as well as to various municipalities, governmental agencies and non-profit organizations. Its overall goal is to best leverage the public’s money for the benefit of the public.

GARTH KRIEWALL
Communications Office Supervisor
This award-winning writer and editor has been with RESA since 2003. Before that, he spent 21 years with the Times Herald in Port Huron, and also has worked for Ferris State University’s public affairs department. He has a master’s degree in journalism and has done graduate-level studies in survey research at Northwestern University.

LISA STEINBORN
Communications/Graphic Design
Lisa has worked at RESA since 1998 as a graphic designer and communications specialist. She has a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. Lisa has won a number of state and local design awards.

THE RESA BRAND
A redesigned seal is the basis for the RESA logo and variations. The Communications Office redid the seal to simplify and clarify it. The flame at the heart of the seal was repurposed for the bold RESA logo. That flame also is used as a separate design element on such things as internal reports. The result is a highly flexible design that can be used in multiple ways, with each variation retaining its connection to the seal.
The design of a new logo always starts with a conversation. Perhaps including a cup of coffee or a bottle of water, but always a conversation. The logo must represent the organization’s culture, history and goals. It should be clear enough to be legible on a business card or a billboard.

But mostly, it has to feel right to the customer. That’s why we take a special effort before doing a logo design to understand the customer’s needs.

These are some of the logo designs RESA Communications has developed. They represent public schools, charter schools, nonprofit organizations and community events.

*It all starts with that first conversation.*
IMLAY CITY SCHOOLS

The challenge
Imlay City Community Schools is a Thumb district that had an identity problem. Its IC logo and Spartan mascot took on a new look every time a different vendor printed a newsletter or baseball cap. Its leaders had long ago realized it needed a consistent identity and a way to promote the district as a way to retain students living within its boundaries. But they were concerned that a private design firm wouldn’t understand how schools operate and would be difficult to work with. Then they learned of RESA Communications.

The solution
Imlay City schools did not need a different logo. Clearly, the IC was iconic. But it was used inconsistently. A new IC logo was custom-drawn. The flame was added to the top of the “I” as both a design element and a representation of the flame of knowledge. The sports version omits the flame.

The marketing campaign was hidden in plain sight: within the IC initials. IC became, “I see.”

The campaign features an individual with the line, “I see success.” The district’s response: Imlay City Schools: We See Success.”

The old-style district newsletter was abandoned in favor of a newsier, simpler and much cleaner sheet that is more accessible to readers, and much less expensive to produce and distribute. The website incorporated the new look.

The district also received a style guide that it can provide to vendors, better ensuring consistency in design and color from project to project, year to year.

“Garth Kriewall and Lisa Steinborn fully embraced our project, helped us produce a clean, crisp visual image and helped craft our message in a way that truly does speak to those inside – and outside – of our community. We’ve been very impressed with their work and with our relationship with the St. Clair County RESA. Our community feedback regarding our re-branding has been excellent.”

Stu Cameron
Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Imlay City Schools
The challenge
The Relevant Academy of Eaton County is a public school academy that offers a combination of online and face-to-face learning to former students in the county who had either dropped out of school or been expelled.

RESA Communications was contracted to write the grant proposal to the state on behalf of the organizers. It also was contracted to design a logo and create a marketing campaign.

The solution
The logo (affectionately called “the egg” by staff) grew out of the academy leaders’ desire for something simple, distinctive and flexible enough to use in a variety of settings.

The marketing campaign started with the phrase: “Stop dreaming about your diploma and start working toward it.” That phrase was drawn from academy organizers’ goal of helping students who still had ambitions, but had given up hope of getting a diploma through traditional school.

The marketing campaign has been in effect since the academy opened and has been cited by academy leaders as integral to establishing the academy’s identity and building name recognition.
MEMPHIS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The challenge

Memphis Community Schools is a St. Clair County district of about 1,000 students. District leaders wanted to minimize the flow of students transferring to neighboring districts that had aggressive marketing campaigns designed to attract new students.

The solution

It was clear that district leaders felt strongly about Memphis kids and Memphis schools. They were proud of what they did every day. They were proud of the many things that made school worth attending.

There was no single dominant factor in Memphis’ favor, but rather a collection of factors. Thus, the campaign: “10 Reasons Why Parents Choose Memphis Community Schools.”

Stock photos were used for a prototype, but district officials were so enthusiastic about the message, they sent a person to photograph local students and teachers.

The campaign was turned into posters, mini-brochures, and booklets. They were distributed across the district and became not only a marketing strategy but a reminder to everyone that Memphis schools have plenty to be proud of.
The challenge
The RESA’s Technical Education Center has long-since shed the persona of its former life as the county Skill Center. The level and quality of education it provides is far different today than it was 20 years ago. Today, a majority of its students go on to college or get advanced training after finishing TEC. Yet the Skill Center image lingers on.

The solution
If you want to reflect a new type of TEC, show it. In TEC’s case, “it” is the students. The emphasis here is photographing the diverse nature of TEC’s student body in professional attire. A student studying auto mechanics may be holding a wrench, but wearing a shirt and tie rather than overalls.

Each year, TEC’s students win state and national skills competitions. They are champions. Throughout, TEC students are portrayed as professional, intelligent, eager and ambitious. These are students with identified careers and bright futures. This campaign emphasizes that reality.
The challenge
The Great Start Collaborative of St. Clair County wanted to begin a promotional campaign to raise awareness. The phrase that collaborative members suggested was, “Little hearts deserve a Great Start.” The collaborative’s director said of the tagline, “It's a little hokey, but what do you think?”

The solution
“Little hearts deserve a Great Start” can convey the right sentiment, but only if accompanied by images that echo that sentiment.

The first piece of this campaign was the billboard. The simple image of mother and infant was powerful. That image was in no way “hokey.” It was lovely.

Next up was a series of posters that were to be distributed countywide. Ultimately, six posters were in the collection. The original text was written by and for an audience of educators. It was good information, but full of jargon, words and terms that were not reader-friendly.

A rewrite was in order. Unlike the billboard, which was designed to be striking, the posters were designed to be educational and fun. Collectively, this campaign has impact without any of the visual clichés so common to depictions of programs for infants and their families.
WRITEWELL CURRICULUM

The challenge
St. Clair County RESA’s Education Services Department was working on a writing curriculum it would offer at no cost to county schools, and sell to districts elsewhere. Its working title was, “The St. Clair County K-12 Writing Curriculum.” RESA Communications staff suggested there was a better way.

The solution
This curriculum is designed to help students write well. Thus, the name. Visually, the classic yellow No. 2 pencil underlined the title. Pencils may not be the writing tool of choice in today’s technologically adept world, but they aren’t obsolete, either.

The pencil then became the visual motif used throughout the WriteWell curriculum materials.

The result: A professional looking product that delivers exactly what its name says.
For more information on how RESA Communications can help you get your message out, contact:

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