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Suite deals: Make yourself stand out

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M & M's. Typing a news release, rewarding my creativity with a few brightly colored candies, wondering how long it actually takes for one to melt in your hand. Their slogan dares you to experiment.

And the logo on every piece. What a great marketing gimmick! You look at the little 'm' every time you eat one. And it tastes good. That's branding. Now look what they've done in recent years: You can customize with personal or business messages, a logo or tiny photo. Order all one color or mix and match in gift packs.

Genius. Not so fast. What took them so long to think of these innovations? M & M's were born in 1941 and became popular with GIs during WW II. Mars added the tiny 'm' in 1950. They first made a dark chocolate version in 2006, and a pretzel variety in 2010.

It took a giant company that spends millions each year on advertising - with in-house and outside marketing / PR geniuses - 10 years to think of imprinting the 'm', and another 50 years to think of custom imprinting and gift items. Was the person who came up with these ideas promoted with a huge bonus? What about the previous execs in that position who didn't come up with these ideas? So many years taking the plain 'm' route.

There's a lesson here for all businesses. Examine your product or service every day in a new way. No matter what your business, take a chance: Replace milk chocolate with peanuts or dark chocolate or pretzels. Change your logo or packaging. Create a new slogan. Find story angles. Get into the news.

Speaking of candy, I once recommended to a commercial property owner client that we advertise "Suite Deals" on office space, and attach three giant sourballs to the building. It created buzz. The space was leased. Another time, I suggested mailing Good & Plenty boxes to promote the company's "good" space and "plenty" of commissions.

A good idea is worth a million bucks. A good idea person is worth even more!

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