

WEST VIRGINIA

EXECUTIVE

A portrait of Woody Thrasher, a man with short, styled grey hair and glasses, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue and white striped dress shirt, and a yellow tie with a repeating pattern of blue and white crests. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

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WOODY THRASHER

Planning for Prosperity

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Young Guns

RELOADED

“I have never been the type of person to get hung up on what I can’t do. I thrive on focusing on what I can accomplish and what I can do to take each of my clients to the next level.”

Sandy Sponaugle

For Sandy Sponaugle, the owner of Platinum PR and a member of the Young Guns Class of 2010, the phrase “the more things change, the more they stay the same” rings particularly true when it comes to her career. Sponaugle worked in economic development before starting her own public relations firm, and today she has come full circle, returning to those roots.

“When I first started Platinum PR, I wanted to help small businesses and entrepreneurs,” says Sponaugle. “I am now primarily focusing on economic development and tourism marketing and communications. I worked in economic development before starting my business, and after denying it for some time, I found it to be one of my true passions.”

Today, Sponaugle works one-on-one with economic developers and tourism

professionals, training and coaching them on the most effective communications techniques to reach their target audiences and market to their communities.

Since 2002, Sponaugle has been able to hone in on her passion to create one of the most successful advertising firms in the Eastern Panhandle. Over the years, Platinum PR has grown from a one-person operation to a cohesive team that is spread out between offices in West Virginia, Maryland and Colorado. Sponaugle claims that it is the people she comes in contact with that make running her business worthwhile. “I’m definitely a people person, and I love hearing and sharing other people’s stories,” she says. “The best part about owning a PR firm is the flexibility of taking on fun projects just because I like the people.”

Platinum PR is proof that a small team can do great things. “Through choosing to keep my firm small, I’ve been able to stay selective with the type of work I do and the people I work with,” she says. “I have a community of clients and other small business owners I can maintain deep and long-term relationships with.”

By partnering with businesses that have small staffs and limited budgets, Sponaugle is able to see every challenge as an opportunity. “I have never been the type of person to get hung up on what I can’t do,” she says. “I thrive on focusing on what I can accomplish and what I can do to take each of my clients to the next level.”

For those who would like to follow in Sponaugle’s footsteps, she has a few words of advice. “Don’t try to start your business right out of college,” she says, noting the value of the experience gained by working

for others. She also suggests finding a mentor or someone with whom you can share your goals and exploring ways in which the two of you can collaborate on projects.

Looking toward the future of Platinum PR, Sponaugle is optimistic about the many opportunities that lie ahead. For instance, she recently started offering online training programs and has plans to expand her online courses and online audience.

“I wanted to offer my clients a way to gain the tools and techniques that will be beneficial to their businesses in a way that is engaging and intimate,” she says. “The online aspect of the training programs gives people a live experience as I am going through slides and answering any and all questions they might have.”

In early June, Sponaugle launched the first series of online marketing courses that will be taught through early September. Some of the topics include Facebook Live for Summer Events, Setting Goals and Tracking Results and Target Marketing and Messaging.

“The courses speak to my target audience of economic developers and tourism professionals, but I’ve also found them relevant within many other industries,” she says. “My goal with these online training courses is to empower others for greater organizational success and help people help themselves.” ■



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