

For this Pendleton business, rebranding is a family affair

For some businesses, changing a name and coming up with a new marketing strategy, or rebranding, would probably be done in a staid business environment. For one Pendleton business, though, the process was strictly a family affair.

Originally known as Rapid Print when it opened 27 years ago, this downtown Pendleton print shop has been under ownership of the Sykes family ever since. What's changed is that the two Sykes brothers grew up and took over.

David Sykes of Heppner started the business in 1988. It was a time when home copy machines weren't common and dot-matrix printers ruled the scene, the heyday of the quick printing business into which customers could walk in and get 500 copies printed while they waited.

"I got the idea from my brother-in-law who worked in a Portland quick-print shop," Sykes says. "And I thought, 'Hey, that would work in Pendleton.'"

Sykes started up the small print shop on SW Emigrant and, appropriate to his vision, named it Rapid Print.

Times changed, though. Rapid Print morphed into a

family-centered business when Sykes' son Chris Sykes came on board in 1998, followed by brother Andrew Sykes in 2006. Despite their obvious differences, the brothers, who both live in Pendleton, say they balance each other well.

"I'm more scatter-brained and running from here to there, and he's more into the numbers and figures and making sure everything is done on time, so that helps out a lot," says Chris Sykes, 36, who handles in-house printing, advertising and sales. "I needed Andrew. He fills in the gaps that I didn't have while I was working here alone."

"There's certain boundaries that you have to have," adds Andrew Sykes, 34. Andrew, who holds a degree in fine art from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, says he fills the role of business manager, as well as production and customer service. "It's just a give and take rather than one person being in charge of everything. He has his strengths and I have mine."

The symbiotic relationship seems to work well both for the brothers and the business. So well, in fact,

that Pendleton customers soon knew the brothers better than they did the company name.

"Everybody's already been referring to us as, 'You're the brothers, right?' Everybody always referred to us that way," says Chris Sykes.

It wasn't only the family-centered nature of the business that changed. As personal computers became more prevalent and home printers more sophisticated, Rapid Print became less about quick printing and copy jobs and more about quality, specialty printing.

"We provide full service custom printing—pretty much anything to market or to run your business, from business cards to flyers, forms and brochures. We also do graphic design," says Andrew Sykes.

David Sykes says the change in the perception of the business, and the idea that it was time for a name change, was driven home to him recently when he happened to answer the phone for the print shop. The customer, he said, didn't know the name of the business.

"He said, 'Is this the print shop run by those two brothers?'" Sykes recalls. "I realized, that's how people knew this business, not by the name, but by the two brothers."

With that, the idea of rebranding Rapid Print to Sykes Brothers was born.

Rebranding, says Chris Sykes, is like "a start-over when you're changing your company."

"Rebranding is when you want to change and go in a different direction as far as how you're perceived by the public," he says. "Your name's not getting out there or it's not what your company is. We didn't need to say Rapid Print. We're a family business. We needed to get that out there. When you rebrand, you're getting it out there."

With the need to "get it out there" came the need



Sykes brothers Andrew (left) and Chris hold up the logo designed by their sister, Allison Hayes. -Photo by April Sykes

for a new look, especially a new logo. While the Sykes family could have gone a dozen different directions for that new look, they chose to keep it in the family; the brothers called on their sister, 33-year-old Allison Sykes Hayes.

Hayes got a bachelor's degree in art from the University of Oregon and now works as Senior Graphic Designer for Pelicon Iconic Services, based in Manhattan Beach, Calif. She got her start, though, working for their father, David Sykes, at his newspaper in Heppner.

"Before we had computers, I used to paste up the paper with my dad. I had to make sure everything was lined up and sometimes, when we got the paper back, I could see that I hadn't gotten everything lined up," Hayes recalls. "In high school I used to take photos once in a while for the paper."

Hayes, who now works extensively with company branding and logos, says she was happy to put her expertise to work for the family business.

"It was really fun because they were actually pretty easy-going compared to normal clients I have.

They were pretty open to any ideas I had," says Hayes. "It was always nice to talk with them during the week, too, a nice little reprieve."

Hayes says she used the same design process she would for any other client, sketching ideas and trying to capture the spirit of the company, though she admitted to having a head start with this project.

"I knew them and what they were looking for and what they represent. Knowing about Pendleton kind of helped that process. I wanted to make sure it was right for Pendleton, too," she adds.

Hayes designed 15-20 logos during the rebranding process. In the spirit of family cooperation, the Sykes used the democratic process to make a selection, with voting rights given to parents David and April Sykes, brothers Chris and Andrew, Hayes and husband Matt, and sister Camille Sykes, 31, who also has a degree from the U of O in multi-media design. The winning logo is now displayed not only on signs and print products, but also on a large area rug in the Sykes Brothers lobby.

Chris and Andrew

Sykes say they enjoyed working with their sister during the design process. Andrew, with his own art degree, says he appreciated it from a design standpoint, while Chris Sykes seems to stand in awe of his sister's talent.

"Allison...got her confidence from our mom and her creativity from our dad, just to be able to put it down and go for it. I just wish I could get in her mind sometimes because she's so creative with stuff like that," he says.

The brothers say the rebranding process has gone well, with positive feedback from customers and the Pendleton community. Chris Sykes points out that it isn't the company that has changed, but only the name in front of it.

"We changed our name to who we are. The company was nameless and faceless. Now it represents who we are," he says. "The next generation's in here working on this."

The Sykes brothers are third-generation printers. Their grandparents Myrtle and Earl Sykes for many years owned a newspaper and printing business in Reedsport.



Allison Sykes Hayes sits at her desk at Pelicon Iconic Services in Manhattan Beach, Calif. Hayes is the creative force behind the new image of Pendleton-based print shop Sykes Brothers Printing. -Contributed photo