



Inside the LAB

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When Your Biggest Job Changes

A Letter From Our CMO

A few weeks ago, I found myself shopping for something called a Woozoo fan. Not exactly a career milestone, but a pretty important purchase nonetheless. You see, my oldest daughter is heading off to college in a couple of weeks, and we've been shopping and making lists for months. As I stood in Costco staring at the empty space where the Woozoo fans were supposed to be, it finally hit me.

She was actually leaving.

Beneath all the lists, shopping, and excitement over graduation was something I hadn't really allowed myself to feel yet: one of the most important chapters of my life was coming to an end. That's the funny thing about transitions. They rarely happen all at once. They creep up on you. One day you're buying dorm room supplies, and the next you're realizing your daughter won't be living at home anymore.

For nearly two decades, my identity was tied to school drop offs, swimming practices, figure skating costume beading, doctor appointments, homework, birthday parties, forgotten lunches, and all the little moments that somehow become the center of your world when you're a stay at home mom. Almost 20 years!

Last year, I experienced another transition when I stepped back into the professional world as Chief Marketing Officer at Fab Four Labs Marketing. Before having children, I had built a career in graphic design that I loved. When our first daughter was born, Greg and I made the decision that I would stay home. At the time, that felt like a difficult transition too. Looking back, it was one of the best decisions we ever made.

My years in graphic design certainly prepared me for the role I have today, but my nineteen years as a mom were every bit as valuable. They taught me patience, perspective, resilience, empathy, and how to celebrate someone else's success. Those aren't lessons you learn in a classroom. They're lessons you learn by living them.

Now, just as I've settled into this new professional chapter, another transition is waiting for me. I find myself wondering what our house will feel like. What dinner looks like when one chair is empty most nights. How my younger daughter will settle into a new rhythm. And, if I'm being honest, how I will too.

Of course, the question every parent asks is whether you've done enough. Have I prepared her? That question didn't stay with me very long. A few months ago, during her senior banquet speech, she looked at the younger girls and said, "You only get 18 years to be a kid."

Then she looked over at me and smiled. "Listen to your parents, especially your moms when they're rambling on. They actually know what they're talking about... sometimes."

Everyone laughed. I laughed too. Like most parents, I assumed half of what I said went in one ear and out the other. Apparently, she had been listening all along.

So yes, in a couple of weeks we'll pack the Woozoo fan, load up the car, and make the twelve hour drive to drop her off at school (O-H...). We'll hug her goodbye maybe a little longer than she wants. I'll definitely cry on the drive home, and she'll probably cry that first night in her dorm room.

But that's the thing about transitions. They ask us to let go of one chapter so another one can begin. Hers is obvious. Mine has been happening quietly all along. She'll begin discovering who she wants to become. I'll continue discovering who I'm becoming.

And somehow, that makes saying goodbye just a little easier.

Good luck to every parent loading up a car over the next few weeks.

We've got this.

Andrea

SOMETIMES THE BEST MARKETING IS KNOWING WHEN TO STOP

The wildfires surrounding Ely weren't part of anyone's summer marketing plan. They certainly weren't part of ours. One week we were preparing to promote one of Minnesota's favorite vacation destinations. The next, residents were wondering whether they'd have to evacuate.

Suddenly, tourism ads didn't make sense. So we stopped them.

Our Connected TV campaign came down. Podcast conversations shifted away from attracting visitors and toward checking in with local business owners and sharing what they were experiencing.

Then something happened that none of us planned. One of our influencers, who spends part of the year in Ely, started documenting what she was seeing. There were no scripts. No creative briefs. No talking points. Just honest updates from someone living through it. She stopped being an influencer. She became a trusted witness and her views jumped to as many as 80,000 per post.

People weren't watching because the videos were beautifully produced. They were watching because they wanted to understand what was really happening through someone they trusted.

When the time comes for visitors to return, they'll remember those videos. Not because they sold Ely. Because they told Ely's story.

TAKEAWAY: The best marketing doesn't always begin with a campaign. Sometimes it begins by putting the campaign aside and helping people understand what's happening.

BEYOND THE LEADERBOARD

Reflecting on the past week at the 3M Open, I had the privilege of connecting with clients, friends, family, and business leaders from across the Twin Cities. We witnessed incredible performances from top golfers, including Scottie Scheffler and rising star Jackson Koivun.

However, what stands out most to me isn't the golf itself, but the conversations that took place. Whether walking the fairways, sitting in hospitality suites, or introducing two people who should know each other, these interactions were invaluable. We discussed the challenges businesses face, brainstormed ideas, shared stories about our families, and built trust.

Calculating the ROI of these conversations would be difficult. There isn't a dashboard that measures the strengthening of relationships, the formation of partnerships, or the opportunities that arise from simply being present.

As marketers, we often focus on metrics, and rightly so, as data aids in decision-making. Yet, some of the most significant business opportunities I've encountered started not with a click, but with a conversation. The 3M Open served as a reminder that while technology changes how we connect, one truth remains: people do business with those they trust.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this year's tournament memorable. I look forward to next year.



If this sparked ideas and you want more stories, from the Lab, hit reply and tell me one challenge you're wrestling with. The next issue might be built around your problem.

Bring your marketing into the LAB.



Fab Four Labs Marketing

14800 61st Avenue North, Minneapolis

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