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Earnhart's latest brand: Homegrown Werkshop merges with NYC agency

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com 9 min ago

Tim Earnhart, who launched the Bowling Green-based Earnhart+Friends advertising and marketing agency in 2005, is now CEO of the SevenBlue agency.

Submitted

After nearly two decades of helping local clients like Minit Mart, Stewart Richey Construction and Western Kentucky University athletics achieve their goals, Tim Earnhart has achieved one of his own.

Founder of a small Bowling Green-based marketing agency called Earnhart+Friends that morphed into Werkshop Branding and set up shop in Nashville, Earnhart has made another leap forward in a career that was jump-started by a Small Business Person of the Year award 15 years ago.

Werkshop Branding, which was launched in 2009 when Earnhart+Friends bought a Nashville marketing agency, has itself been bought by New York City-based Stadiumred Group. Earnhart is now CEO and chief brand architect of SevenBlue, the agency formed by the merger of Werkshop and Stadiumred Life.

Earnhart, 47, sees this latest chapter as the culmination of a journey in the marketing and branding business that started with a marketing position at Wendy's after he graduated from WKU in 1995.

“When I was put in touch with Stadiumred, it was kinda like validation for all the work we'd done as a company over the years,” Earnhart said. “Someone saw value in that work and was willing to acquire that to help their company grow.”

In Stadiumred, Werkshop is joining a company that got its start in the music business and has expanded into brand strategy, creative, experiential marketing and public relations.

Earnhart and Werkshop's three full-time employees will maintain an office in Nashville but will be part of a larger company that has locations in New York, Los Angeles and Amsterdam.

The acquisition opens up opportunities for him and his employees, Earnhart said.

“The beautiful thing about this new arrangement is that we can work remotely,” Earnhart said. “Our traditional marketing, advertising and branding work will continue. In today's world of being able to work via technology, a physical office is not a requirement.”

The Stadiumred Group of companies has capabilities in digital marketing and web development in addition to traditional branding and marketing. The company's CEO, Claude Zdanow, said his strategy is to assemble an “agency collective” of companies that

can work independently or as a group.

Acquiring Werkshop Branding was a good fit for that strategy, Zdanow said.

“Just by the nature of where branding and strategy typically sit in the marketing hierarchy, I knew we needed a real strategist at the helm of SevenBlue leading that charge,” Zdanow said in a news release. “I could not be more excited to see how Tim takes what he built at Werkshop, combined with what I built at Stadiumred Life, and moves it forward to serve our growing list of national clients.”

Although he is joining a multinational company, Earnhart emphasizes that his roots will still be in the city where he got his start.

“Bowling Green has been very good to me,” he said. “I will continue to live here. This new adventure gives us new life for our future, but we’ll still continue to work with local clients.

“I’m still here and still involved in the community. This will always be home.”

Bowling Green gave Earnhart the start that led to his leadership of SevenBlue. From that early work with Wendy’s (“I got myself to the ad agency business through hamburgers and French fries,” he says), Earnhart bought Bowling Green’s Liberty Printing in 2000 and used it as a launching pad for the advertising and marketing firm that would become Earnhart+Friends.

While running the printing company, Earnhart earned the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce Small Business Person of the Year award in 2004, an honor that was more than symbolic for the young entrepreneur.

“That was a turning point,” he said. “The self-confidence that award represented made me think it was time to launch an ad agency.”



Opening Earnhart+Friends in 2005 was the realization of a dream Earnhart had nourished since his days as a teenager in Oregon.

“I had the idea of wanting my own agency as far back as high school,” he recalled. “I was an artistic, creative person.”

A fan growing up of the Wieden+Kennedy ad agency famous for its Nike campaigns, Earnhart launched his own agency out of Liberty Printing with Minit Mart as his first client.

Located in downtown Bowling Green for a few years, Earnhart+Friends and then Werkshop Branding grew to include such clients as Auburn University, Cabela’s, Joe’s Crab Shack and Chuy’s.

The purchase by Stadiumred allows the former Werkshop to add to the services it can provide, and gives Earnhart and those who worked with him at Werkshop more stability.

“I’m excited for the employees,” Earnhart said. “They received promotions at the time of the acquisition.”

Earnhart said he is glad Zdanow chose to make Werkshop “a part of the vision and future” of Stadiumred.

“I love what I do,” he said. “I hope I can retire with Stadiumred.”

Don Sergent

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