

## **Yuma County Economic Development Corporation**

### **Branding a Flagship Rural Community for Future Opportunities**



- Audience Audit
- Positioning and Brand Strategy Development
- Key Messages
- Graphic Standards
- Internal Marketing Plan
- Website

#### **The Challenge:**

A vibrant, rural agricultural community located 300 miles east of Denver on the Kansas-Nebraska border, Yuma County, Colorado has strong visions of long-term economic sustainability and vitality. But like many rural communities across the U.S., its vision is challenged by things like youth not returning home to work the farms; lack of technology infrastructure to keep them competitive; and geographic distance from vibrant economic centers.

Yuma County Economic Development Corporation (YCEDC) quickly realized the need to identify the community's assets and to develop a proactive branding and marketing program to attract the 'right business' to the County. The challenge was they had no tangible idea as to 'why' anyone would move to Yuma County Colorado to work and start a business.

After several months of local community assessments and meetings, we were able to extract some key insights about Yuma County that not only positioned the County for future economic vitality, but that reinforced a sense of community pride that is critical to any inside-out branding effort. Some of the key insights that led to the final positioning were:

- Yuma County is one of the nation’s leading corn-for-feed producers, naturally positioning it as a leader within the State and National Ag Sector.
- Yuma County was also identified as a ‘progressive’ community, with a long history of taking risks, inventing new methods and applying them successfully to increase crop yield and overall productivity.
- Today, they are applying this innovation to leverage existing assets, such as corn and biomass, into new avenues of opportunity, including biomass fuel, chemicals and ethanol.
- They have an abundance of natural resources, including natural gas, wind and solar;
- They have a strong commitment to community vitality, improvement, education and healthcare – and offer a high-quality of life for those who appreciate the benefits of rural community living.

These key insights provided the ideal foundation to create a leadership brand that would not only help position Yuma County to achieve its goals locally, but also position it nationally as a proactive, flagship rural community that would take control of its own destiny.

**The Solution:**

- In order to re-position Yuma County, we needed to closely evaluate three things: 1) their current position and image; 2) the new needs of the marketplace; 3) competitor positioning and offerings
- To do this, a series of internal and external assessments were conducted with local business owners, prospective business owners, residents, community leaders and YCEDC board members

**Our analysis assisted us in the repositioning effort by:**

- Determining awareness, knowledge and perceptions of Yuma County, Colorado.
- Examining the key issues and opportunities affecting the branding effort both within the community and externally (i.e., resource challenges, political challenges, etc.)
- Analyzing the surrounding competitive environment
- Developing our differentiating features, assets and community and business offerings
- Emotional associations, perceptions and descriptions of Yuma County to be used in developing the overall creative positioning concepts

**The Re- Branding Deliverables:**

- **A formal competitive positioning:** The research and our strategic planning identified Yuma County’s unique positioning differentiator as a ‘Colorado’s Progressive Ag Leader’ committed to creating new opportunities and leading change both within the agricultural sector and beyond.

- **A new logo** was developed for the organization that better reflected the agricultural leadership and progressive brand aspects of the community.
- **A new tagline:** ‘Yuma County. Go Ahead’ became the new tagline to not only invite opportunities from outside businesses and demonstrate the community’s progressive commitment to growth and expansion, but to literally demonstrate an almost ‘fearless’ leadership attitude towards change and growth.
- **Brand Imagery Photo Portfolio:** a series of photographs were taken within the County to specifically reflect key aspects of the Yuma County brand personality.
- **A New Website:** to better reflect the brand and key messages
- **An Internal Marketing Plan:** to help announce the brand locally, which is critical first step for both business retention, brand promotion and external attraction of new businesses.
- **A Public Relations Plan:** to position Yuma County as a state-wide leader in the renewable energy industry.

### **The Results**

Within six months of completing the plan, Yuma County Economic Development Corporation began to implement public relations activities to showcase its leadership position as a dynamic rural community. Over that time, it received:

- Five major articles in Denver daily newspapers including a 3-page feature in the Rocky Mountain News
- Article in Time Magazine, June 2007
- A full feature segment on KUSA 9News in Denver
- Heightened interest and articles in local weekly newspapers in Yuma County

**Please visit: [www.consideryumacounty.com](http://www.consideryumacounty.com) to witness the brand in action**