

A 4 Guys Interactive Case Study – The Trailblazer Award

Established in 1997 by the American Advertising Federation Houston (AAFH), this annual award recognizes an influential business leader for enhancing the overall image of Houston through marketing. Proceeds benefit the AAFH educational and scholarship programs.

Each year, the marketing materials are created pro bono by a local advertising and marketing agency from AAF Houston. In 2011, 4 Guys Interactive volunteered to be the creative agency for the Trailblazer Gala. Considering that the bulk of the work centered around print materials, some viewed 4 Guys' involvement surprising.

Generally, interactive web design firms don't do print work. Well, 4 Guys Interactive is not your typical web design firm nor is it a typical interactive agency. A strong supporter of AAFH, 4 Guys jumped at the chance to prove the critics wrong – that they couldn't do creative print work that would be, well, creative.

Once it was known who the Trailblazer Award recipient would be, 4 Guys went to work. Leroy Shafer, the Chief Operating Officer of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is known far and wide in rodeo circles and within the Houston area community. He began his career with the "Show" in 1973 and has practically been synonymous with the Rodeo ever since. He is truly a trailblazer if there ever was one.

When 4 Guys came up with the concept and tagline "The Man Behind The Brand," it fit Leroy like a custom-made pair of boots.

However, the creative development of the ensuing invitation (small booklet) and subsequent program (larger booklet) for the gala evening at the Houston Museum of Natural Science proved to be a challenge. 4 Guys wanted to tell Leroy's story in words and images, be accurate and interesting but not write a book in the process. And, they had to appease not only the Rodeo folks, but several key decision makers within AAFH.

Using the branding motif throughout, the design needed to be straightforward yet different and eye-catching. The special visual effects needed to complement the photographs, not compete. The writing needed to convey why Leroy was such a worthy recipient of the award yet not be boring when relaying vignettes of his life story as it was interwoven with the Rodeo's history. A daunting challenge indeed!

Yet, it was a challenge embraced by 4 Guys and enthusiastically received by Leroy, along with other key decision makers. He reflected often during the Gala that the Trailblazer experience had indeed become very special; one that he would not soon forget.

The professionals at 4 Guys Interactive are relentless in their pursuit of creative excellence in whatever project they are developing. The pro bono AAF Houston Trailblazer Award marketing materials were no exception.

Just ask Leroy Shafer!

Editorial Note: I had the pleasure of working with 4Guys Interactive to develop and write the content (along with this case study) while coordinating the photography and being liaison with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. This project was truly a team effort, and, I think, the results show it. Leroy liked it! ☺

-- Joe Fournet