

PUGET SOUND Business Journal

Business Leaders Get It.

JUNE 23-29, 2006 VOL. 27, NO. 8



Work spaces

Scent of an office

Nyhus joins Westin, Omni in choosing a signature aroma

BUSINESS JOURNAL PHOTO/DAN SCHLATTER

Roger Nyhus, president and CEO of Nyhus Communications LLC, chose the scent "Vital" for his office — a blend that includes Moroccan rosemary and French peppermint.

BY HEIDI DIETRICH
STAFF WRITER

When Roger Nyhus recently moved his growing public relations firm from his Capitol Hill home to a downtown Seattle office building, he wanted to give the sterile space its own scent that would mask the odor of new paint and make visitors think of his company.

Nyhus turned to Ummelina International Day Spa. He was aware that the tranquil day

spa located just downstairs from Nyhus Communications had a full line of essential oils. With the help of Ummelina's chief visionary officer, Nina Ummel, Nyhus selected a scent called "Vital." Every day, he and staff members drop Vital essential oil all over the firm's carpet and spray the scent in the air.

"People will associate a good, positive energy with working with us," Nyhus said.

Nyhus Communications is one of a growing number of companies and office employees trying

out signature scents. Ummel said she sells her essential oils to a number of downtown office workers, many of whom believe in the therapeutic benefit of herbs. One of her scents, intended to stimulate the immune system, is particularly popular in an office environment.

Hotels have emerged as the most enthusiastic adopters of scents. The Sheraton brand recently introduced an aroma of fig, clove and jasmine — a scent intended to make guests feel they belong. As of this month, all Westin lobbies smell like white tea. Westin ran magazine ads with white scent strips with the tag line "White tea. The calming new scent of Westin."

Omni Hotels' lobbies now smell like lemon grass and green tea, the swimming pools carry a scent of coconut sunscreen, and the coffee shops smell of mochaccino or sugar cookies — courtesy of a scent machine, not actual baking. The Four Points brand plans to introduce a cinnamon smell, and Langham Hotels sprays rooms with a ginger aroma.

Unlike the hotels, most of which use synthetic fragrances, Ummel uses only organic herbs. She feels that people have become more aware of the mental and physical benefits of herbs, and bets that more of her clients will do as Nyhus has done and adopt a scent as part of the company's brand.

"With Roger embracing this, it makes me think that maybe there are enough people with knowledge of herbs," Ummel said.

Ummel's customers can select herbs that are either relaxing or stimulating. Most offices prefer the latter. Vital, the scent chosen by Nyhus, is a blend of Moroccan rosemary, Israeli grapefruit, French peppermint, Indian basil and Chinese ginger, and is meant to give visitors a refreshing, uplifting sensation.

After Vital is dropped on the office carpet, heat from a vacuum cleaner helps disperse the scent, masking the paint and carpet smells that accompany a new space.

Adopting an office scent isn't without its risks, as scent-sensitive employees or clients may be turned off by the aromas. Ummel said, however, that she's found people have more problems with synthetic perfumes than with the organic herbs in the essential oils she sells.

Contact: hrdietrich@bizjournals.com • 206-447-8505 x112