

> **backstory**

Inspired Gifting

Compendium celebrates an anniversary. Thirty years of living out its mission as an “inspiration company.” BY DIANE FALVEY

**HEADQUARTERS**

Compendium was founded by Dan Zadra (inset). Kobi Yamada (seated), president and CEO of the company, took Compendium's inspirational focus and introduced it to retail and consumers. When he says he's going to the office, Yamada said, his daughter reminds him that he's going to the playground. "We don't take ourselves too seriously," he said.

Live Inspired. It's the Compendium mission. It is also the company's web address: live-inspired.com. It is the thought that goes into Compendium products too, from Thoughtfulls, the first product introduced, to its latest greeting card line, Positively Green.

"We're not just a greeting card or book company," said Kobi Yamada, CEO and president. "We're really an inspiration company."

As the company celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, it's evident that it is connecting with retailers and consumers through its products.

"It's not just about Happy Birthday," Yamada said. "The other 364 days of your life are also for celebrating. We're in the reminder business in that way. We get just a little time on this planet, and we need to make it matter to us."

In the Beginning

Compendium began in 1985 as a communications firm, with the intent by founder Dan Zadra to work with corporations on their meaning, purpose and work, providing services such as speech writing, helping with company vision and creating mission value statements. Even then, it was about inspiration.

When Yamada joined the organization just out of college, he also saw an opportunity to bring the company's inspiration to the consumer. The first Compendium product? Thoughtfulls: little cards with inspirational messages hidden behind a flap—part card, part fortune cookie.

"We'd always made them for clients," Yamada noted. "In the 1990s, we decided to put more of a primary focus on consumer products and resource the company toward a specialty gift supplier of

inspirational products."

Thoughtfulls were certainly an inspirational start. The company made them for corporate clients. "We've made over a billion of those cards," Yamada said. "They've been to the bottom of the ocean, to the top of Everest and into space. NASA picked it up and used some as well. Organizations buy them to inspire their core values; it's a great way to recognize their employees."

From Thoughtfulls, which the company had de-emphasized but brought back for the 30th anniversary, to books, greeting cards and more, the focus on inspiration stems from an energy that runs throughout the company. Based in Seattle, Compendium has nearly 50 employees, and it is careful in the talent it chooses, ensuring that each employee's focus fits. "We really look at this life as an opportunity and not an obligation. We look for people who can



INSPIRED STAFF

Compendium looks for employees that fit into the company culture. It was at a company retreat where the team came up with the "Live Inspired" focus.

embody and encourage that. That's how we've assembled our team and run the company," Yamada said. "Even though they get paychecks, everyone is a volunteer. We want to make this the best company in the world."

Teamwork

Compendium employees have a voice in the company's decisions, Yamada said. For example, the company came up with "live inspired" as a group at a retreat," he said. "We came up with Live Inspired as a group, because that is exactly what we are about. We want to embody that in the way we treat each other and the way our culture is as a company: healthy, engaged and intrinsically motivated," he said.

Compendium affirms its "live inspired" motto through its products as well. Most recently, the company launched Positively Green, a new line of greeting cards. Each card is printed with soy ink on FSC-certified, 100 percent recycled paper, and a percentage of proceeds goes to organizations that protect the en-

THOUGHTFULS

The first product Compendium rolled out were Thoughtfulls, small, inspirational cards with a flap that reveals a message when opened. Thoughtfulls were re-emphasized for the 30th anniversary.

vironment. "It's the fastest growing card line in the company," Yamada said. "We didn't set out to make a greeting card line. We wanted to do something so we could donate 10 percent to environmental causes."

At the end of the day, Yamada added, the message is less about the company and more about what the product's supposed to do.

"The magic is the space between you and who you are giving the product to," he said.

With that attitude, Compendium is set for another 30 years at least. •



SOMETHING GOOD

Compendium starts the day at the office with its message: Be a part of something good.



POSITIVELY GREEN

The latest greeting card line for Compendium gives back 10% to organizations that protect the environment.

