

Agency integrates digital, traditional media channels



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By SALLY SILVERMAN
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Debra A. Taeschler, president and CEO of the GraficaGroup, founded the Chester-based full-service, integrated advertising and digital marketing agency in 1986. It specializes in integrating both digital and traditional media channels to achieve greater marketing efficiencies in a customer-relationship-management environment by continually measuring and optimizing communications through data intelligence.

Longevity in the business world: "You have to be able to make hard decisions. The worst time for us was not during the recent economic downturn, but right after 9/11. Business stopped. All our clients cut their budgets. We had to cut one-third of our work force, but it helped me to get more involved in everything. As we got smaller, I got more involved in more of the details," Taeschler said.

Despite economic downturns, GraficaGroup's clients have included AT&T, Beneficial Management, Cathedral Healthcare System, Century 21 Real Estate

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Debra A. Taeschler, president-CEO, GraficaGroup, Chester

LLC, First Morris Bank and Trust, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, Jackson Hewitt Tax Service, KPMG, Lucent Technologies, Novartis, PSE&G, Rutgers University and more.

Beginnings: Taeschler was born in Jersey City in 1953 and grew up in West New York. She is a Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude graduate of Rutgers University with a bachelor's degree in fine arts.

"As part of the hippie generation, it was cool to be an artist. I loved the arts and started working in oils. It was a time when SoHo was SoHo," she said. "If I ever retire, I'll take up oils again."

Career path: Taeschler worked at ad agencies in New York and New Jersey as a mechanical artist, then did layout

and design. She was vice president of account management at Landmark Associates and then an advertising coordinator at McCaffrey and McCall.

"With inspiration from my husband, I decided to give a shot at having my own business," she said. "I had no children yet, so it was easier to make that leap."

At home: Taeschler lives in Chester with her husband Don and two sons, "the light of my life." In her spare time, she enjoys dance, art and films. Of this year's nominated films, Taeschler was most taken with "Invictus" because of the social message.

Role models: Taeschler admires two giants of the advertising industry — Mary Wells Lawrence and David Ogilvy. Lawrence was the first female CEO of a company listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

"In the golden days of advertising, she held her own with the big agencies," Taeschler said. Ogilvy is called "The Father of Advertising." "He said that agencies can come from different points of view; he focused on the merger of art and science," Taeschler said.