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Brand Fuel Clinches "Bricks and Clicks" Awards With National Showroom Prize

(Morrisville, NC)—Brand Fuel recently won the 2007 ASI Spirit Award for Best Distributor Showroom. The award, given by the Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI), recognizes the design and sales effectiveness of the showroom in of each of Brand Fuel's two locations, in Morrisville, NC, and downtown Norfolk, VA. ASI is the largest media and marketing organization serving the \$18.6 billion advertising specialty industry.

Two years ago, ASI named Brand Fuel a national award winner for its corporate web site and online store technology. "We are thrilled to win this 'bricks and clicks' combination," says Danny Rosin, co-founder and current president of Brand Fuel. "It is vital to have a strong presence both online and in our sales offices."

For the 2007 Best Distributor Showroom award, ASI judged showrooms across the country based on unique style, function, and creative displays of advertising specialties—all coming together to form a welcoming and inspirational environment for customers.

Rosin says he'll never forget the reaction of one client, who, upon seeing Brand Fuel's Morrisville showroom, joked that she needed to call her sponsor at Shopaholics Anonymous. "That's exactly the type of response we want to hear," says Rosin. "We have invested so much into a space that defines us visually and is one of Brand Fuel's most important selling tools."

The company's showrooms have a distinctly retail feel. Music is piped in all day from satellite radio. Specialized rack systems lend organization. Apparel is categorized by style, and every item has a tag to identify manufacturer and (in most cases) pricing for shopping ease. "There is form and function," says Robert Fiveash, co-founder and current vice-president. "Everything is streamlined for shopping ease and idea generation."

Going beyond that retail-style setting, Brand Fuel's showrooms display proven custom marketing and promotional solutions. "We feature the work we do for our clients in case-study format," says Rosin, "where we tell a story as we take clients on the tour. It can be so helpful to tie in a relevant past project. It helps the client visualize their own possibilities."

Brand Fuel employs other showroom strategies as well, which allow the company to retain an estimated 90-plus percent of clients who visit the showroom. Among those strategies:

- **Thorough branding.** From the 10-foot-long rocket embedded in the entryway to the custom tile flooring matched to Brand Fuel's Pantone colors, it is clear the company takes branding seriously. "Not



just ours," says Rosin, "but our client's branding as well. Our showroom is a reflection of how we represent ourselves. In turn, we send a message that we will do the same for our customers."

- **Smart marketing.** Brand Fuel has used novel approaches to bring existing and potential clients into the showroom. For instance, the company once mailed a quarter with an invitation to the "twenty-five cent tour." The showrooms are also integral to the annual celebration of Rocket Day, an annual open house event and party. Each year, Rocket Day as resulted in at least four times the amount of business than the cost of event production.

- **Web coordination.** Most of the showroom products coincide with the Brand Fuel web site's "Brand Fuel Picks" selection. The company has a department dedicated to seeking out products to feature in the showroom and on the Brand Fuel web site at www.brandfuel.com.

- **A fun, memorable experience.** In the center of the showroom, the "Red Hot Rack" showcases the hottest promotional products. The T-shirt Wall of Fame shows off the skills of Brand Fuel's in-house art department and is a testimonial to past and current clients. There is a case of historic promotional product collectibles. And humor is infused throughout, from cheeky advertisements to a sign reading "Employees must wear hair nets." In the waiting area, clients can page through photo albums that tell the Brand Fuel story: Rocket Day celebrations, band parties, bowling competitions, and more.

"Having clients visit the showroom lets us collaborate with them in a space full of product ideas and creative inspiration," says Fiveash.

"Our showrooms are a clear snapshot of our corporate culture and how we do business," says Rosin. "They are, simply, a representation of our company personality."

Additional comments and high-resolution images of Brand Fuel's showrooms are available immediately.

About Brand Fuel

Brand Fuel is a full-service promotional products agency located on the edge of North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, with a second office in the heart of downtown Norfolk, Virginia. Equipped with a showroom and full-service art, marketing, fulfillment, and web services departments, Brand Fuel provides turnkey specialty advertising services ranging from the selection and design of high-quality products to final production. With approximately 1,500 active clients, the nine-year-old company has risen into the top 3% of its industry in terms of revenues. Brand Fuel has 31 full-time employees and represents a client base that includes SAS, Pokemon, Quintiles, Trader Publishing, Red Hat, and Misys.

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