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THE MAGAZINE OF THE MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS • 2024-25

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## A New Look for an 80-Year-Old Brand

By Suzi Morales

The Mississippi Trucking Association, or MTA, was established in 1942 as the “voice of trucking” in the state. Its members include companies of all sizes, and its activities range from lobbying to recruiting new truckers into the field.

The MTA’s mission remains just as relevant in today’s post-COVID world, when drivers are more in demand than ever and environmental and safety policies continue to evolve. The organization, however, recently faced a challenge: its branding needed a refresh. With so much tied up in branding – recognition, trust, connection, consistency, motivation, loyalty and purpose – the MTA needed a modernized look to reflect its modern relevance.

Enter Marketing Professor Mike Breazeale’s strategic brand management and social media marketing classes, which consult each semester with an actual business or organization. In the spring of 2024, Breazeale’s students – 170 of them – divided into groups to research and craft proposals for the MTA. Senior Carly Jones was among them.

“I had spent the past four years at Mississippi State learning all of these concepts and gaining knowledge on marketing, logistics and business as a whole,” she says. “I felt like it was time for me to apply all that I’d learned.”

Jones’ group focused on two core brand elements: being the voice of trucking and promoting the trucking industry to a new generation. Her group proposed a new slogan and created a brand style guide incorporating the established strengths of the organization while also modernizing. For example, the MTA’s red, white and blue color scheme was important to its identity, and the organization wanted to maintain it, so the students shared how simply tweaking the shades of the colors could refresh the look.



As the project began, Mississippi Trucking Association President Hal Miller shared information and answered class members' questions.

*Photo by Emily Daniels*

"I was so impressed not only with what they did, but how they presented it, how they communicated it," comments MTA President Hal Miller on his interactions with the classes. "We were there for multiple days, and the students were all just incredibly respectful and engaging."

Miller says the MTA is considering hiring an intern from MSU to help implement some of the recommendations.

After graduating in May, Jones joined International Paper, where she manages the supply chain operations for various paper mills. While her role is not directly related to marketing, she frequently draws on skills gained in Breazeale's class, such as being open to innovative ideas and thinking critically about real-world challenges. These abilities have proven valuable in helping her navigate complex supply chain processes and optimize operations effectively.

Breazeale himself learned by doing. He bought his first business, a video store, when he was 19 years old and found it to be a crash course in real-world branding.

"I'm really interested in answering the questions that I had when I was a retailer and any kind of question that has a real, practical implication to anybody's bottom line," he notes.

Whatever their career paths or needs, Breazeale's students can apply their skills.

"Branding is a universal thing," he says. "I teach it from the level of big brands that my students could go to work for or small to medium-sized brands that they may actually start themselves... and also focus on their personal brands and how they're going to market themselves to employers or lenders or investors, whatever their personal dreams may be."