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A sign from God ... or Duluth firm?

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Promoting a Christian response to Hurricane Katrina is just the kind of thing that a decidedly unskill public relations agency in Duluth specializes in.

The DeMoss Group is in charge of spreading the word for a hurricane relief fund-raising concert — date not yet set — that will be sponsored by the Atlanta-based Gospel Music Channel.

The belief that Christian organizations need to do a better job presenting their message and their works to broader audiences led a former political operative to form a public relations agency that draws faith-based clients from across the nation.

"There was a need for Christians to communicate better," said Mark DeMoss, founder of the DeMoss Group. "Their message was not getting out, and it was their fault."

DeMoss, 43, had no experience in the public relations field when he started his agency about 15 years ago. He had been the spokesman for the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority. He could see, though, that relations between those groups and the mainstream media were often too adversarial.

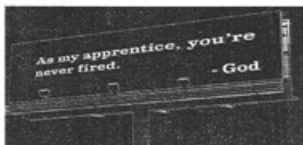
He went about promoting the good works of Christian groups in a decidedly unskill way.

"Braggers can't really be clients of ours," DeMoss said. Instead, he looks for groups that "do more than they're getting credit for."

In the DeMoss Group's office suites, it is common to find a Bible placed prominently in the various offices. The agency operates a Web site, DeMossNewsPond.com, geared



NICK ARROYO / Staff



About 15 years ago, Mark DeMoss formed a PR agency that appeals to faith-based clients. His company is updating the "God Speaks" campaign (left), which features "quotes" from God on billboards.

toward assisting media seeking information from and about faith-based groups.

Some well-known names have found their way into DeMoss' PR niche. The agency's clients include the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship, Bishop T.D. Jakes, the Christian mens' group Promise Keepers, and

Atlanta-based Gospel Music Channel.

Also, the agency is helping to promote the reprise of a spiritual ad campaign from the 1990s, the "God Speaks" billboards.

The messages have been updated — "As my apprentice, you're never fired, God" or "All I know is ... everything, God."

About 400 billboards nationwide

are expected to carry those and similar messages. The precise location of the billboards has not yet been determined, though some are expected to pop up along metro Atlanta freeways.

For DeMoss clients, it is important to have their message conveyed by a public relations firm that believes in the message.

Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, said his agencies needed a public relations firm to handle the many media inquiries that he received. However, he added, he wanted those inquiries handled by people who were spiritually compatible.

"Some public relations firms tend to hype things, but I don't want people like that around me," Graham said. "Mark does not hype. He presents things with truth and integrity."

Charlie Humbar, head of the Gospel Music Channel and the son of evangelist Rex Humbar, said it was important to him to find the right PR agency to promote his cable channel to a broader audience.

"We needed a PR firm that naturally understands the values of our audience and can speak to that audience," Humbar said.

The DeMoss Group had the Christian credentials for the job, plus the promotional skills to do the job well, he said.

"They're as creative as any mainstream agency I've ever dealt with," Humbar said.

To DeMoss, helping Christian groups spread the news about their good works is also helping them answer their call to evangelize and spread the good word.

"All of our clients exist for the same reason — to spread the gospel of Christ in one way or another," DeMoss said.



COMMUNITY OF FAITH Sign from above? Duluth? Or both?

The DeMoss Group seeks to deliver powerful messages that resonate with the masses. **J4**