



sara ness

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Senior creative director with 20+ years building and leading high-performing in-house creative teams. Hands-on leader who shapes brand strategy, directs art and production, and delivers omni-channel creative, and product storytelling with a passion for food and beverage.

HICKORY FARMS

Senior Director of Brand & Product Development 2022-2026

- Led, managed, and accountable for Brand, Product Development, and PMO teams. Responsible for brand development and stewardship, new product development, competitor analysis, identifying marketplace trends, creative content and assets.
- Created Kitewell, a modern gift brand targeting younger women, and developed its accompanying wine brand. Developed brand guidelines including positioning, voice, logo, visual identity, and merchandising strategy.
- Oversaw Wicked Good Cupcakes product expansion to include brownies, wine-paired cupcakes, birthday gift assortments, and a celebratory wine brand. Supported product collaboration with Sweetapolita, guiding packaging design, photography, and marketing creative.
- Updated core product packaging and refreshed brand guidelines including positioning, persona, messaging to reflect the evolution of the business, product lines, and sales channels.
- Developed new gift and packaging concepts to expand wholesale business, including:
 - Custom gift concepts with premium packaging for Sam's Club resulting in a 900% commitment increase YOY
 - Improved sell thru and product line expansion at Walmart and Target
 - New \$1M+ product category of DIY Charcuterie Board Kits

Creative Director, 2017-2022

- Built in-house creative team from the ground up, defining roles and processes, and developing talent into a center of excellence. Led in-house agency comprised of design, copy, digital asset management, and project management. Responsible for creative budget, vendor selection and relationships. Directed development and execution of omni-channel end-to-end creative for ecommerce, wholesale, retail, and B2B. Developed cross-channel storytelling, content development, and merchandising.
- Led rebranding initiative for Hickory Farms, including agency selection process, and new brand implementation. Partnered with agency to develop brand strategy, purpose, positioning, and guidelines. Creative direction of new logo, visual identity, and brand voice.
- Developed Taste of California branding for acquisition of wine gift basket company. Expanded private label wine assortment with creation of five new wine brands, including naming, packaging design, TTB approval, and USPTO trademark registration. Increased net sales of wine gifting category 1000%+ YOY after launch.
- Partnered with agency to develop brand positioning for the fine dining gift categories Steakhouse and Dessert Cart. Created a strong value proposition with elevated photography, recipes, and collaborations, including a product partnership with Lillie's Q, and a content collaboration with Goose Island.
- Rebranded Wicked Good Cupcakes, a Shark Tank company acquisition, resulting in 50% YOY growth. Developed new visual identity, and brand guidelines, with modernized packaging and a redesigned website, email, and social experience. Directed footage for Shark Tank update episode.

PAMPERED CHEF

Senior Manager of Marketing Projects, 2015-2016

- Led rebranding initiative for Pampered Chef, a Berkshire Hathaway company. Partnered with agency to develop brand strategy, compelling brand story and vision. Guided development of new logo and brand guidelines. Launched new brand at Pampered Chef's annual conference, cascading reveal to international markets.
- Directed creative for redeveloped heritage and identity space at corporate headquarters. Partnered with vendor and internal team to develop overall look & feel for renovated headquarters and open floor plan.

PAMPERED CHEF CONT.

Senior Creative Services Manager, 2013-2015

- Managed a team of fifteen, including design, production, copy, image, photo, and multimedia. Developed art directors, in-house photography resources, and hired high-performing talent.
- Creative direction of marketing programs, supporting both consultant programs and consumer-facing materials. Drove engagement with highly creative, editorial content marketing across print, digital and social media channels.
- Increased catalog effectiveness by implementing product performance analysis, aligning space allocation with revenues. Developed cross-sells and “must-haves”.

Creative Services Manager, 2007-2012

- Led team of designers to develop print collateral and publications, experiential marketing creative, product packaging, campaign concepts, and provided photo art direction for all markets, domestic and international.
- Merchandised and created seasonal stories for consumer catalogs and pamperedchef.com supporting company promotional strategy
- Cross-functional team member tasked with expansion into Mexican market. Guided in-country agency to develop culturally relevant marketing materials while maintaining the Pampered Chef brand.

Freelance Art Director, 2006-2007

GSP MARKETING

Freelance Art Director, 2004 - 2006

- Start-to-finish creative for a variety of clients including FTD, Follett’s University Bookstore, ADA, Sears, Lasik, and Otto-Sumisho.
- Worked closely with FTD Marketing and Brand Development on FTD corporate rebranding, including national print advertising, catalog, point-of-purchase, and collateral materials for both consumer and B2B.

ABD GROUP / AMBROSI

Senior Art Director, 2002 - 2004

- Led art directors and designers to develop creative for Sears marketing, including concepting, photo art direction, and production.
- Developed creative for pitch that won Butterfield Blooms account, a new FTD sub-brand. Developed and executed branding, catalog, and photography concepts.

Art Director, 1999 - 2002

Graphic Designer, 1998 - 1999

EDUCATION

- Scripps College | Bachelor of Fine Art | Studio Art Major | French Minor
- DePaul University CPE Certifications | Jacobs & Stone Multichannel Marketing & Communications
Practical Internet Marketing | Social Media Marketing | Marketing ROI

TOOLS

- Adobe Creative Cloud (Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign)
- Implementation and oversight of Adobe Workfront and Digital Asset Management (WebDam/Bynder, Widen)
- Familiar with other project management and creative workflow platforms (JIRA, Trello, BaseCamp, TeamGantt)

SKILLS

Creative Direction | Branding | Visual Identity | Omni-Channel Creative Strategy | Storytelling | Concept & Development
Content Creation | Packaging Design | Photo Art Direction | Video Storyboarding & Direction | Environmental Design
Experiential Design & Event Creative | Merchandising | Product Line Expansion | Product Development
Trademark Registration | CPG Packaging Regulations (FDA, USDA, TTB) | Organizational Development