

SAVANNAH *now*

Paragon now attracts top-tier clients

By Savannah Morning News
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Thursday, December 25, 2008 at 12:30 am

Paragon Design Group doesn't take itself too seriously.

With job titles such as head strategic focus-izer and lead creative juicer, it's easy to see the playful side of the graphic designers at the small Savannah company.



Print, TV, and Web design firm Paragon is a homegrown company whose combined talents fulfill the design needs of both local and national clients. From left, Susan Isaacs, Philip Joyner, and Angel Ratcliffe display Paragon's Christmas card which features caricatures of them each as well as their fourth partner Andrew Davies who was home for the holidays. (John Carrington/Savannah Morning News)

But with a client list that includes local heavyweights Paula Deen, the Creative Coast Alliance, the Savannah Economic Development Authority and Farmers' Almanac TV, in addition to a number of national and international companies, Paragon means business.

The 7-year-old company considers itself to be a "triple threat" in the design world, focusing on print, Web and motion graphics.

"We feel they really complement each other very well," said Susan Isaacs, Paragon's focus-izer, or managing director. "Our clients are looking to stand out from the crowd. We put a lot of effort into finding ways to help them do that."

Isaacs, Philip Joyner (head production maverick) and Andrew Davies (lead creative juicer) started the company in 2001 after they finished their degrees at the Savannah

College of Art and Design.

"There was nowhere for us to work in Savannah," Isaacs said. "Not a lot of firms were offering us the opportunities."

So they started their own business.

"We were very naive, we thought, 'How hard can that be?'" she said.

But Paragon had a rough beginning, opening on Aug. 16, 2001, just weeks before the Sept. 11 attacks. They had a few projects to start, but clients soon changed their minds.

"Businesses were uncertain about the future and held back on advertising," Isaacs said.

Paragon grew slowly at first and networked with local businesses with the help of the Creative Coast, now the Creative Coast Alliance.

When business started taking off in 2006, the three founders all went full-time.

In 2008, the company won 18 local and national awards.

Paragon's business growth rate has been aggressive, but the firm itself has remained about the same size.

"Staying small still keeps the quality of the work very good," said Angel Ratcliffe, chief marketing prophetess, who joined the company this year.

Paragon designs "with the end in mind. We understand all, can design for all - that's our strength," Isaacs said.

One of Paragon's biggest projects so far has been creating motion graphics for the Weather Channel as it changed to a high-definition broadcast.

"Most people think, 'It's weather, how exciting can that be?'" Isaacs said.

It was a challenge to maintain the Weather Channel's brand while creating something new.

But Paragon did make the graphics exciting. So exciting, in fact, that Maxon, the company that makes the software Paragon used, asked to use an example of their work on their demo reel.

While Paragon's reach now extends outside of Savannah, promoting the city is one of the things Isaacs likes best.

The company designed an advertisement about the city for the development authority that's run in Inc. Magazine.

"We've helped portray what Savannah's really about - it's a mix of lifestyle and business opportunity," Isaacs said. "We love this city. We really want to feel like we're making a contribution."

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