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DOREMUS & COMPANY: A 75-Year Education

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BACKGROUND: A total communications company that is as old as modern communications itself--that's Doremus & Company. In 1903, when Doremus opened its doors as a three-man financial advertising firm, it took one full day to send a telegram coast to coast. Today, when Doremus has offices and affiliates across the nation and abroad, it only takes seconds to transmit information, whether its from our uptown office to our downtown base . . . or coast to coast . . . or across the oceans.

By 1978, Doremus and the world had learned a great deal about communications. And communications shaped Doremus' destiny. The narrow financial specialist of yesteryear is now one of the oldest and largest total communications firms in the world, with 350 employees, ten U.S. offices, a London subsidiary and affiliates in the U.S. and abroad. Doremus & Company evolved into a firm that can offer clients a complete range of advertising, public relations and graphic design services on an international basis--with the public relations arm a self-contained profit center contributing one third of Doremus' total income. 3  
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OBJECTIVES: A milestone year is a year to be celebrated--to extend recognition to employees past and present and to the companies that have helped Doremus to expand and prosper. Thus, Doremus decided on a special campaign that would dramatize the company's evolution, longevity and leadership in communications . . . express appreciation to employees, clients and shareholders . . . and emphasize a total communications capability that would attract clients and expand existing business.

METHODS: To commemorate 1978 and our 75th anniversary, Doremus decided to forego more conventional approaches and, instead, we went to a total communications approach, as follows:

\*Doremus Presentation. A multimedia presentation would most vividly show the world that Doremus had transcended its persistent image as financial news specialists. Instead, in just four and a half minutes, a pulsating sound-and-light presentation traced the 75-year evolution and talked about our corporate clients . . . or financial clients . . . PLUS our clients that make cars and calculators and beer . . . AND our clients that ask us to represent them in Washington, measure U.S. public opinion, design prize-winning graphics, and even help prepare materials for court trials.

Since its premiere at the May 4 annual meeting, the presentation has proved to be a particularly effective, all-purpose sales tool, used to give a sharper perspective of Doremus with existing clients and to show off Doremus and its capabilities to new business prospects. It has been screened to shareholders and employees--and to the press. Among its initial anniversary showings were such important audiences as Phil Dougherty of The New York Times and Paul Stouffer of Investment Dealer's Digest, who combined the occasion with interviews of Doremus management. The result was substantive articles on Doremus and its 75th anniversary. Dougherty commented in his May 3 article, "Doremus & Company . . . brings Madison Avenue to Wall Street . . ." His words: our sentiments, too.

Since the Doremus annual meeting was concurrent, it focused on the anniversary. Shareholders were invited to drop by our Board Room to see the new presentation.

\*Doremus Celebrates. The New York City and regional offices of Doremus made the anniversary the occasion of a series of dinners and parties for staffers, families, clients, prospects, business associates and press contacts. In New York, Doremus employees were invited to a festive evening at the Essex House. Following this, Doremus' senior management and top executives of long-standing clients commemorated the anniversary at six dinners.

\*Doremus Graphics. The citation, "Our 75th Year," was imprinted on all Doremus-related graphic materials for the year, including letterheads, the annual report, metering stamps, cocktail party invitations in connection with the Financial Follies, and all company-related news releases.

BUDGET: Our total budget was approximately \$50,000; the two major expenditures were the multimedia presentation and the office celebrations.

RESULTS: The 4½-minute multimedia show, inspired by the anniversary, has proved to be an outstanding "souvenir" of that occasion. Since its creation, the show has been screened no fewer than 100 times. Public relations and advertising modules have been produced and added to the show to expand its impact in new business presentations. The presentation, in the words of several new clients, was an impressive element in our proposal, persuading them that the persistent myth of Doremus as an old fashioned financial house was indeed a myth. Since the presentation was produced, it has been shown to prospects--now clients--such as Fiat Motors of North America, Inc., and the Episcopal Church.

Also during the year, we grew with the acquisitions of Bolyhart, Lovett & Dean in Los Angeles, and Wilson Kaight & Welch in Boston.

In addition to articles in the ad column of The New York Times and in Investment Dealer's Digest, Doremus' regional offices received publicity in local newspapers and in trade publications, including an Advertising Age photo feature of the Chicago Office party.

Congratulatory letters, and other mementoes, were received by Doremus from clients, competitors and employees around the country. Some mentioned growth and longevity; some said that the hardest years are in the past. All mentioned their faith in our continued success.

In short, the occasion of our 75th anniversary was gratifying and enlightening for the company in terms of concrete benefits--going onstream with the multimedia presentation--in feedback from old friends--and the unexpected thoughtfulness of clients and business associates.