

The Shaw Family Seafood Co. Rebrand Story

I stood today watching the Shaw Family, owners of a 4th generation Jacksonville company, one largely unknown to locals, host a lunch outside for most of its nearly 200 employees. Howard Shaw, Jr., the company's 77-year-old president gave a brief address, explaining the brand change and re-introducing his sister, Sylvia, VP and company Treasurer and his brother, John Jr., VP, and company secretary, as well as son Howard "Bubba" Shaw and his first cousin, John Shaw III, both responsible for growing their family's 85-year-old company.



Most of their employees are "shift workers," helping the company to produce co-branded seafood products that are then private labeled by some of the biggest brands in the country, many we we know and love. Some of these folks have worked for more than 20 years at what was until today Shaw's Southern Belle Frozen Seafoods. Except for a few recent hires, the Shaws knew almost everyone's name. The ones they didn't know, some who started just this week, the Shaws went over and met, shook their hand. Lunch was served in shifts, 25-35 people at a time on their 30-minute breaks from work. At each shift, Howard Sr. did his short explanation, in about 120 seconds telling the story of his grandparents coming from New Jersey and never going back, starting this company on this spot, almost 90 years go. Each time, the employees clapped, gaped at the new logo, impressed, and thanked the Shaw family for lunch.

Bubba came over to me in between a shift and commented that this was what he wanted, a good morale booster for his staff. I reminded him then that the rebrand was about this, and not as much about the pretty new logo. It's not a morale booster. It's a cultural change. I reminded him that telling the employees before telling the world was important because they need the connection to the company; this is their community. He saw it. He understood.



When we rebrand a company, their customer sees the logo. The world sees the logo. While Kim Tippin did her usual amazing job, this being our 10th or maybe 15th rebrand project together, the logo is the tip of the iceberg. For 18 months we've been working with the Shaw family to create a new brand – not just a logo, but a cultural shift, a re-awakening, a new flag in the ground that says, "this is who we are now." For 85 years, the company went to market with Mama Shaw as the central character, the southern dame in the Shaw Southern Belle logo. Phenix Shaw is the woman who created the initial recipes and around whom her husband, Howard, from New Jersey, branded the company recognizing her sweetly as his charming and lovely southern belle.

But companies change. And culture changes. I applaud the Shaw family for recognizing that the "southern belle" image is out of date; for calling me asking for guidance, not waiting for someone to point it out. Despite this particular belle having nothing to do with plantations often associated with such imagery – they were, after all, Northern seafarers - the Shaws wanted to leave nothing for interpretation. Time for a change, for some modernization, for a "New coat of paint on the barn," as Sylvia told me. Hundreds of hours of conversations and research and COVID-induced false starts led us to the new name, the new brand – the new Culture.

We learned that no one in their world calls them anything but "Shaws." We learned that what their customers, their employees and even their lapsed customers value the most in working with them and for them, was always being treated like family. Their charm, their energy, and their wisdom all stem from being personally involved and having a close-knit relationship with each stakeholder group. Creating that feel is genuine and authentic. It is not forced. It can never be. It wasn't something we had to invent for them. They are a smallish fish in a literal sea of

large conglomerate brands. A family is who they are, and everyone is welcome to the family table. Family is central to their brand. And it is now central to their name and their logo.

Today, this 85-year-old company goes to market as Shaw Family Seafood Co. It's a new start, anchored in tradition, caring and a palpable passion for what they do. Yes, there is a new logo (and it's gorgeous, thanks, Kim!) and a new website, corporate collateral, signage on the building (the first new signs in 85 years, it seems). But more importantly, "Family" is how they make their decisions. "Family" is how they embrace their customers and their staff. "Family" is whom their employees care for with the wages they earn here. Family is who they feed when they produce and ship nearly 200,000 pounds of product each day.

I look out over their "balcony," an unintended roof deck created by countless additions to their plant over its years. I see the old CSX railroad tracks, today running into the Trout River that years ago carried Shaw's crab products across it, headed north. Up the stairs come The Big Three – Sylvia, John, and Howard – and right behind them the next generation, J3 and Bubba, ready to lead this company into the future, all of them together, as Family. I'm proud of the work we did here. I'm proud of them. This was not easy. It is a big change leaving "behind" the woman who founded the company. But I take solace in knowing it is "Family" that carries forward her name and legacy. Mama Shaw will always be part of this company, and now it's her entire family – four generations of it – basking in the glow.

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