



T.J. Brightman will help A Bright Idea's clients connect with sports marketers.

Former O's exec Brightman forms sports marketing unit

Business will be part of wife's Bel Air PR firm

Geoffrey Shannon | Contributor

Former Orioles executive T.J. Brightman, who was ousted from his job as director of advertising sales this summer, has joined public relations firm A Bright Idea LLC as the head of its new sports marketing division.

The catch? Brightman must work with his toughest boss, A Bright Idea President Anita Brightman, also his wife.

"I had to answer to [Orioles owner] Peter

Angelos, and now I have to answer to Anita Brightman," quipped T.J. Brightman, who worked in the Orioles' front office for 19 months. "It's a little different."

Said Anita Brightman: "I guarantee I'm just as tough."

Started in 1996 and based in Bel Air, A Bright Idea has grown from a tiny consulting business to a major strategic communications firm specializing in government and retail advertising and public relations. The company serves a diverse clientele ranging from the U.S. Army's chemical weapons disposal program to Aberdeen Proving Ground Federal Credit Union to Mount Washington Cigar Co.

As vice president of client services, T.J. Brightman will help build a sports marketing base by connecting A Bright Idea's clients with sports marketing opportunities and by helping team executives find sponsors and advertisers.

"I've sold just about everything [in sports], from [Baltimore] Blast soccer to Johns Hopkins lacrosse to Navy football," Brightman said. "There aren't many teams I haven't had an opportunity to work with, and probably every advertiser and every advertising agency in this area has worked with me. Now we are taking those relationships in a different direction with A Bright Idea."

However, A Bright Idea enters a competitive field in sports marketing, especially in a region that lacks major corporate advertisers, said marketing executive Howe Burch. Burch operated sports marketing firm Twelve for less than a year before closing its doors this past summer to take a position as a vice president with Reebok.

"The corporate community here is not that significant," Burch said. "Within the Baltimore-Washington region itself there was not enough corporate business to sustain and prosper in [sports marketing], so I had to look outside the region."

Under Brightman's guidance A Bright Idea already signed two major sports marketing clients. Locally, the company will exclusively sell advertisements for the 2006 Preakness Stakes for the Maryland Jockey Club. The deal includes naming rights to the day's main event race and under card, as well as coinciding celebration events.

A Bright Idea will also work with Angel City Designs, a Los Angeles company that specializes in high-tech interactive displays for movie premiers and sports venues. The local firm will sell sponsorships for the company's displays at LPGA events. The displays give advertisers opportunities to bring their products directly to the public via showcase booths and samples.

A Bright Idea will also help individual sports stars find sponsorship opportunities. The company is currently working with former Orioles pitcher Jim Palmer.

Brightman joined A Bright Idea after 15 years working the region's sports advertising market. In November 2003, Brightman joined the Orioles as vice president of corporate sales and sponsorships, developing advertisers for the Orioles TV Network, stadium signage and hospitality suites.

Orioles executives decided to change advertising strategies, so Brightman said he amicably parted ways with the team in June.

"We always thought I would end up here [with A Bright Idea], and Anita and I would both continue to build the business together," Brightman said.