

# Sooo OC

I live in The OC, so, darn it, I'm hip and people like me.

BY THE TL

You will now refer to me as “The TL.” • I will do the same, as in “The TL would like his dinner now.” • No matter how annoyed my wife Gayl gets.

It's the kind of tough, controversial decision a good leader has to make in challenging and competitive times in order to get The TL brand out there. Because let's face it, my parents were great people, but they obviously knew zero about marketing in the YouTube era. I mean, it's absolutely brutal out here; at last check, my personal Web site, [www.loose.com](http://www.loose.com) (soon to be [www.TheTL.com](http://www.TheTL.com)) had a mere seven hits a day. And six of those were creeps looking for porn. How's a guy supposed to become a household name in China with that meager exposure? Let alone feed a family of three (henceforth known as The GL, The LL and, collectively, as The LF).

You may be asking, “Hey, The TL, why now? Why the sudden epiphany?” Fair questions. And the answer is that the five members of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, those gods of hip marketing genius who will henceforth be tagged as The BOS, have shown me the light with their March 18 unanimous decision to rename a number of county departments, losing the Model T-era “Orange County” for the so-today-it's-kinda-yesterday “OC.” It's a bold move that embraces what they call “the OC brand” and attempts to cash in on the cachet created by the hit Fox TV show “The O.C.,” which of course was cancelled in early 2007 and has since been labeled a melodramatic joke and universally vilified by any self-respecting Orange Countian.

But it did put Orange County on the map, bringing thousands of tourists to our shores to see in person what the show splashed to millions worldwide every week.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the show was shot in L.A. (And when's the last time you called it Los Angeles? Be honest...). But people, focus: The important point here is we still got their frozen banana money. And that's what it's all about. Forget tradition. Forget the fact that it's been Orange County since 1889. Forget stationery and road signs and Google Earth. Just repeat the following simple formula: \$\$ = Brand = Idiot-proof. That's the rockin' America I live in.

Consider the fact that George W. Bush – known simply as “W” – roped in 60% of the vote in The OC in 2004. That's the biggest percentage since '88. And who is more hip than a county full of staunch Republicans with “W” bumper stickers on their Hummers? Those Prius-driving liberal greenies can't touch that kinda marketing mojo. Maybe if Nixon had gone by The RN, he would have won that debate with The JFK, despite the sweating, and later turned that whole Watergate thing around.

But just to be sure The BOS is squeezing every last penny out of the whole brevity thing and playing its own riff on “The O.C.” brand by... wait for it... dropping the periods. Yeah, baby, go light. Shorten. Tighten. Word.

So, don't let their pasty skin, stiff collars and mind-numbingly boring meetings that wouldn't draw a one share if they followed “American Idol” fool you. The OC BOS is totally whack...

Wait, is that the slang that means stupid?

Whatevaaah! The point is, The BOS know cool when it rocks up and throws down a hit TV show that can help blast market our waaay stylin' county... about five years later.

Just check The EV (that's short for evidence, bro):

The Dana Point Harbor Department is now the OC Dana Point Harbor! (Exclamation point totally mine). The cumbersome Resources and Development Management Department is now the sleek and sexy OC Infrastructure. And Integrated Waste Management is now... wait for it again... the OC Waste and Recycling! Smells better already, doesn't it?

Of course, there was another, more mundane reason for the rearrangement and renaming that day. Saving money. To offset state and federal budget cuts, a few departments were not only slapped with the OC moniker, but also combined. A staff report suggested allowing smaller agencies to share administrative resources and eliminate duplicative services. Thus, the new OC Infrastructure now has two agencies under it: OC Public Works and OC Community Resources, with seven smaller agencies between them. It's

hoped that this new matryoshka doll-like structure will save \$500,000.

But the ever-thinking – and hip – BOS had a worry: What about all the stationery changes? The letterhead, the business cards, the memos – oh, the memos! Not to worry, said The OC CEO Tom Mauk, there would be “relatively minimal costs” because the project would be phased in over the next year.

Except, wait, I don’t get how the function of time lowers cost. In fact, whenever The TL uses it, he usually makes things more expensive. And he really doesn’t appreciate those creditor calls during dinner. But you know what? Forget it. If being cool costs us in the long run, go for it. We’re all about the credit down here in The OC. Just ask all the defunct subprime mortgage lenders.

The BOS also figured simplifying the names of agencies would help the public identify departments. Yes, taking the word “Department” out really does help. Thank you.

Though the vote to shorten the names and combine departments was unanimous, there was a no-holds-barred SmackDown when it came to specifics. Okay, holds were in fact barred and the whole affair was pretty mellow and dignified. After all, these guys don’t get anywhere near pro-wrestling money and John Moorlach is somewhere around 6’ 5”. So the chairs tend to stay on the floor. (Hence the Nielsen one share.)

There was some trash talking, however.

No, I mean real trash talking, as in a debate on what to rename the trash department. As Moorlach said, “I prefer ‘OC Waste Management,’ although ‘OC Dumps’ is a lot of fun.” You know it, bro!

Wait, why is that fun, exactly?

Never mind, let’s move on to the library dilemma. Seems the original idea was to label a department OC Libraries, to which Supe Bill Campbell protested, arguing that it must be OC Public Libraries or nothing. Immediately, the ever politically savvy Supe Chris Norby supported Campbell, demanding that there was no way he would cast a vote “opposing public libraries.” Whew! The last thing we need around here is more guarded gates.

Finally, a real battle broke out over

the renaming of the agency previously known as Harbors, Beaches and Parks, a tediously long label that only served to communicate exactly what the department was about. But that pales in comparison to the need for cobra fast branding in a world where teens have the attention span of a ferret on crack. So, since last October, it’s been known as OC Parks. But this didn’t go down so well with Supe Patricia Bates, who wanted it to be named OC Beaches & Parks. “People come to Orange County for the beaches. How we don’t have that in our headline is perplexing to me,” she argued. Puh-lease! “Beaches &” is like a full eight characters more, not counting the spaces. Do you realize how much longer that takes to IM my posse? GRG! (That’s IM for Get Real, Girl!). And stop with the Orange County. That’s so ’90s. It’s The OC. Haven’t you been watching?

Oh, and I forgot the best part: The OC’s got a new slogan, because any good, or crappy even, TV show, needs a tagline, something that sums up all the comedy and drama of a high-concept idea to get viewers frothing to tune in. Or, in our case, to get those frozen banana-loving tourists flocking here. According to IMDb.com, the tagline of Fox’s “The O.C.” was “The O.C. Orange County. It’s where all the beautiful people live.” Starts out a little lame – and redundant – but it finishes nicely, I think. There’s nothing like beautiful people to get ugly rich people to go somewhere. But The BOS decided not to go with that.

Instead, ours is: “OC: Our Community, Our Commitment.”

Hmm. First, I don’t know what that means. At best, The OC sounds like the land of chores, or incarcerated lunatics. But worse, it sounds a bit xenophobic, and history – as well as consistent Nielsen ratings – have shown that xenophobia is not a great way to make friends and influence tourism.

To be fair, though, the slogan does seem accurate: We beautiful people do have our own special community and we are totally committed to keeping it that way. We welcome visitors, but please, check in with the guard at the gate first.

The BOS has been getting a hailstorm of bad vibes, though – two things with

which we OCers don’t do well. For instance, the OC *Register’s* Total Buzz blog lit up with total negativity. To the question: “Do you think supervisors should rename county agencies to reflect the ‘OC brand’?” a whopping 74% said it was a “dumb idea.” That’s a higher percentage than The W drew in ’04.

But I’d like to address some of these backward thinkers who believe that rather than spending our time and resources chasing after ultimate hipness, we should be focusing on such – and I have to say it, totally boring – subjects such as crime, traffic and education. I mean, what’s better for education than making the library sound hip?

Specifically, ocbear blogged: “This is the worst idea I’ve ever heard of from our supervisors and I’ve lived here 35 years when (sic) this place used to be full of orange groves.”

Well, ocbear, I’ve lived here 41 years, and when you were still somewhere much less cool, I walked to school through those orange groves, on dirt roads, up hill, both ways! And I’m here to tell you... uh... what was the question again?

Smoothoperator blasted: “This has to be an early April Fools’ joke. WTF?”

Please, smoothoperator – if that is your real online name – cut down on the dirty IM talk. We have children tuning in.

Finally, Ed Fairchild chimed in with: “Do tourists often visit landfills?”

To which I say: They will now, Ed, they will now!

If you’re starting to wonder if these harsh vibes have deterred me from changing my moniker to The TL, don’t worry, it has only emboldened me. I’ve even come up with a new family slogan: “The LF: Loose Family = Lots o’ Fun.” A little cheeky, a bit bold, but hey, sex and controversy sell.

To go with it, I’ve combined and renamed a few departments in The LF household. So, what was formerly known as The Family Fun and Entertainment Center will hence forth be called The LF TV. Please refer to the former Family Bookshelf as The LF BS. And what was The Integrated Waste Management Center will now be The LF Waste and Recycling.

Now, that is the hippest trash in The CdM!☺