



Stephanie Skinner
Publisher
Culture

"It's not the usual approach."

"At Lane, they understand that we're all in this together," says Stephanie Skinner. "They get it. If we succeed, they succeed — and vice versa."

Skinner says she was looking for a printer who 'gets it' when she put out the last RFP for *Culture: The word on Cheese*, a highly aesthetic magazine about all things cheese. A veteran of the publishing industry, Skinner runs the magazine with her sister, a "cheese monger" in California, and a small but dedicated staff of ten. She says they depend on their printer to be a guiding force for their success.

"Because we're such a tiny company, I knew we needed a printer who could take us by the hand and *think* — not just deliver, not just do everything we tell them — but *think*

about what we do and how we can do it better."

"To a degree, printing is perceived as a commodity product," says Skinner. "But the added value of having the kind of team we have at Lane — *that's* what we really need."

Call to action

Skinner says her team at Lane starts with her sales representative, John, with whom she gets together periodically to talk about publishing issues at large and *Culture's* business strategy in particular.

"I really enjoy getting together with John because he is very experienced," says Skinner. "He brings a lot of insight to what we do."

"In the past, working with other magazines or printers, I've had to do an awful lot of problem solving. At Lane, I know I don't have to do it all."

Recently, she explains, this insight yielded actionable ideas as Skinner sought to drive more readers to the *Culture* website and, in turn, to its advertisers. "John suggested we experiment with a digital edition, starting with one of our magazine's insert 'guides' — and then he produced a complete turnkey solution for us."

"With a small staff, we don't have the ability to assign someone to test ideas that may not have a direct line to revenue," explains Skinner. "This was something John suggested we could try in a very painless way. And the end product was very successful — for our readers *and* our advertisers. I can't tell you how valuable that is."

"John brings a lot of ideas like this to us. We benefit from the fact that he's out there traveling the landscape, talking to other publishers, and bringing that collective knowledge back to us."

A huge difference

Skinner says the challenges her customer service representative, Theresa, solves are the day-to-day ones where an extra measure of oversight "makes a huge difference."

Skinner cites Theresa's recent efforts to improve the cost of *Culture's* foreign distribution — which she says, with cheese being an international product, is critical to the growth and

success of her business. Skinner notes that with the average copy of *Culture* running 128 glossy pages and including a 48-page tipped insert, this challenge can be "daunting."

"With Theresa, it's not the business-as-usual approach where we just get those copies out there and then maybe lose money on them. She looked very closely at how much we were spending and then worked with the mailing folks at Lane to see if there was a more cost-effective option."

Noting that *Culture's* international mailing costs have decreased significantly since coming to Lane, Skinner says, "Now it's doable for us to ship five or 10 copies to a cheese shop in Europe. And the value is that our magazine is sitting in a high-end fromagerie in London or Paris where a cheese maker will wander in, see it, and call us for advertising."

"In the past, working with other magazines or printers, I've had to do an awful lot of problem solving. At Lane, I know I don't have to do it all. John and Theresa — they're just *really* terrific problem solvers."

"It's a great relief to know Lane is there for us — that our biggest vendor is in our corner, singularly focused on creating the best opportunity for us to succeed."