

Vermont wood means craftsmanship

That's the idea Vermont is trying to promote through a new logo and brand awareness

By **Brian Caldwell**

STAFF WRITER

Vermont quality wood products — since 1791.

Do people envision something positive when they hear the phrase? Maybe craftsmanship or tradition, authenticity or environmental sensitivity? The Vermont Wood Products Marketing Council believes

wood products made in Vermont have added value, and has unveiled a program to promote its new logo and brand position statements. The council was formed in December 2002 and has guided the development of the Vermont quality wood products' brand. The council and Vermont Economic Department conducted research on possible brand premises and what should be contained in the logo.

"We tested 25 different brand premises with end-users to understand what were some of the attributes that people had associated in their mind with Vermont wood," said Mary Jeanne Packer, council secretary and executive director of the Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association.

Based on the most popular brand statements, the imagery for the logo was developed. The top four brand statements were:

- Craftsmanship is everything in wood products. I buy Vermont wood products because I know that each one is carefully crafted rather than stamped out by some cookie-cutter machine.
- Vermont wood products are made with an eye toward tradition and the values of days gone by. Old-time values of hard work and getting it right are important in how Vermont wood products are made.
- To me, Vermont is authentic ... the real thing. Even the wood products I buy feature old-fashioned craftsmanship and attention to detail
- Vermonters work hard to preserve their environment and that makes me feel better about buying their wood products. I like knowing that the wood products I buy from Vermont are made by people who are sensitive to the environment.

Packer was asked what people who

live outside of Vermont perceive about the Green Mountain State and its wood products.

"Vermont is where everyone wants to be," she said. "Even though a lot of them know they can't afford to leave midtown Manhattan, they can leave long enough either to buy a piece over the Internet, to mail-order a piece, or spend a weekend in Vermont and bring a piece of Vermont home with them," she said. "Half of the thrill of a vacation is remembering it once they're home and there is this Vermont piece that stands for all that we are: clean, safe, high integrity, old-fashioned values, happy workers in their workshops manufacturing these thoughtful pieces. It's just this incredible set of images about what Vermont stands for in people's minds."

Any company that makes a wood product in Vermont is eligible to fill out an application to use the new industry logo at a cost of \$25 for the first year. Charter supporters — \$500 for companies and \$250 for organizations — will receive a first-year license to use the logo and will be included in the publicity to showcase wood products made in Vermont.

The Vermont legislature approved a special appropriation of \$40,000 to assist with the launch of the product brand, which includes a consumer trade show in Burlington, Vt., in early May 2004.

"It's intended to introduce Vermonters to the brand and to the quality of Vermont wood products," Packer said. "One of the things that we've discovered is that Vermont wood products are in many ways better known outside of the state."

The council plans to undertake a variety of collaborative marketing projects including media relations, legislative affairs, and paid advertising incorporating the new industry logo. Vermont companies and organizations that are early charter supporters include Becken/Parsons, Champlain Hardwoods, Copeland Furniture, Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers, Maple Landmark Inc., Mill River Lumber Ltd., Newport Furniture Parts, Vermont Store Fixture Corp., Vermont WoodNet, and the Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association.

Contact: Vermont Wood Products Marketing Council, P.O. Box 196, Poultney, VT 05764. Tel: 802-287-4284. www.vermontwood.org

