

LAST CHANCE CAREER SURVEY • LAST CHANCE CAREER SURVEY •

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AUSTRALIAN

# marketing

## Matters

for shopping centres

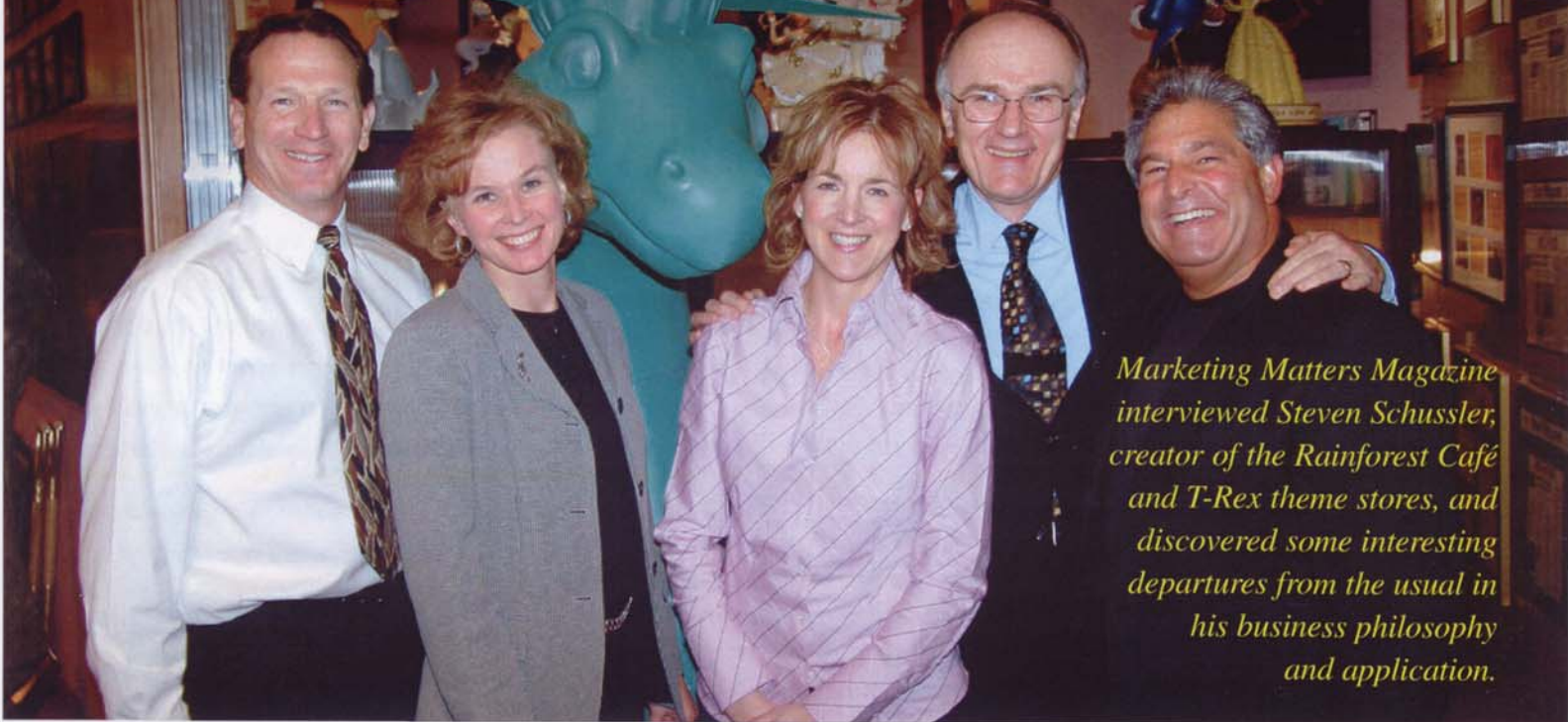


## E-media

The Pearl of the Gulf

US "edutainment"

# Concepts to conjure with



*Marketing Matters Magazine interviewed Steven Schussler, creator of the Rainforest Café and T-Rex theme stores, and discovered some interesting departures from the usual in his business philosophy and application.*

From right to left: Steven Schussler, Chairman of the Board; Helmut Lange, Vice President of Retail; Julie Varney, Product Procurement Manager; Kari Honoroff, Executive Assistant; Don Parrish, Vice President of Construction

The business philosophies behind Rainforest Café and T-Rex are similar in some ways but greatly different overall. In T-Rex, as in Rainforest Café, Steve Schussler always puts the customer first, but the major difference is that Rainforest Café, a wild place to shop and eat, was built as a restaurant and a retail store. T-Rex, on the other hand, is built as an attraction that happens to have a retail and restaurant component.

T-Rex is positioned as a family restaurant, a prehistoric family adventure, and a place to eat, shop, explore, and discover built around the elements of water, fire, and ice.

According to Steve: "Our demographic profile is wheelchair and strollers and we like to say from three to 103. T-Rex is built around water, fire and ice, and we call ourselves 'T-Rex — a prehistoric family adventure and a place to eat, shop, explore and discover'."



Artist's perspective of the T-Rex entrance

Rainforest Café planned on 45 restaurants around the world; and 37 have opened in the United States with eight outside the United States. T-Rex will only have eight locations in the United States and close to 20 outside the United States. The first store will open in October 2005 in Kansas City, Kansas.

**Developed to excel**

Most themed restaurants have a very short life span and don't often specialise in good quality food, but Steve calls T-Rex "edutainment," and assures us that food quality, value and good service are his primary concerns.

As he says, "Our guests come once for the wow factor, but they come back for good quality food and service."

Rainforest Café is 11 years old and going strong and, although the chain was sold to Landry's Seafood Restaurants over four years ago, it is still expanding.

T-Rex will take what Steve has done at Rainforest Café to a whole new level. He easily envisages a life of 25 years for T-Rex stores, and typically he will sign 25-year leases with a five-year option.

**Partnership of passion**

In an innovative move, Steve has partnered with Levy Restaurants of Chicago, which will operate the food service.

"We want to raise the level of food and service beyond what is expected. Levy Restaurants has a huge infrastructure. The combination of us together will raise many eyebrows. We are an explosive combination — no ego here, purely a combination of passion!"

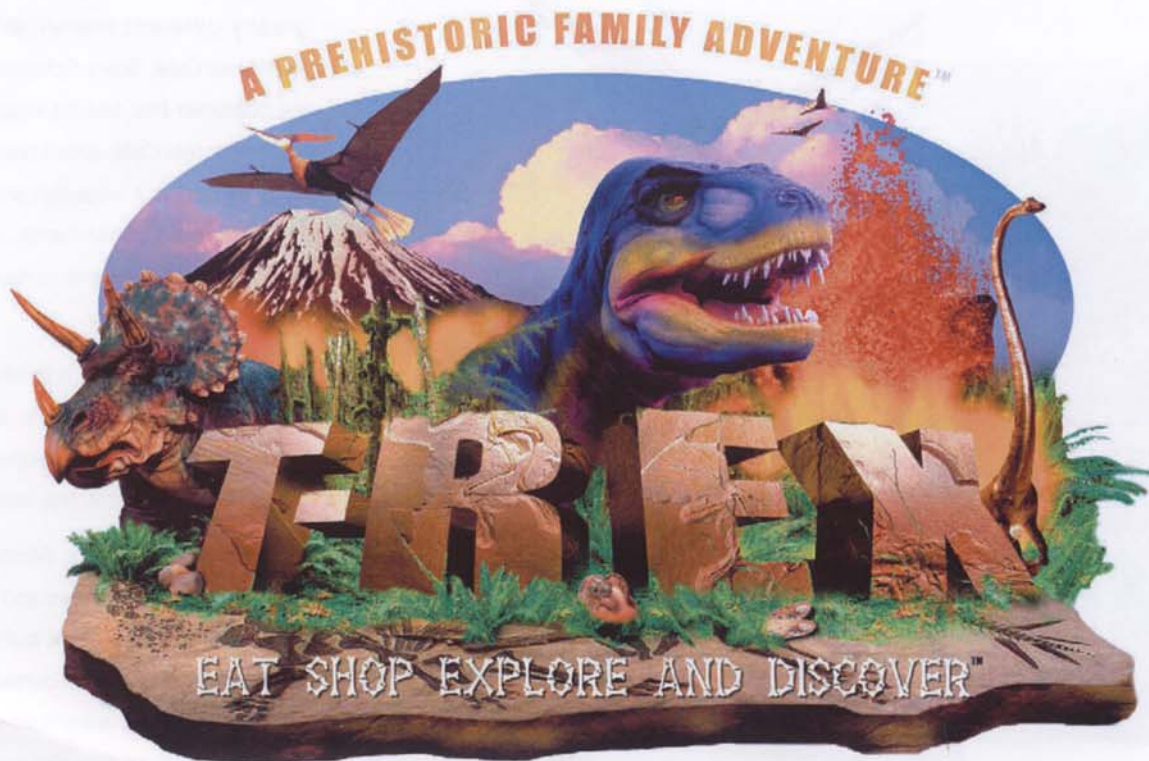
Steve's ideal customer is the family. The demographics are from three to 103, strollers and wheelchairs, middle income, but he will also cater a great deal to private parties. This attraction is being built with the ability to have bar mitzvahs, sweet 16s, birthday parties, and weddings, for example, all going on at the same time while open to the general public.

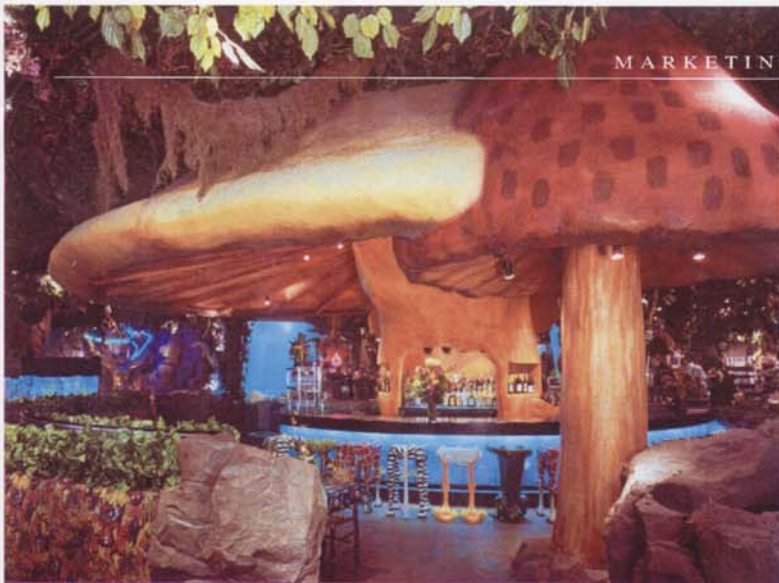
To determine his target market Steve has conducted many years of research and literally thousands of families have gone through focus groups to determine what works best.

**Ongoing plans**

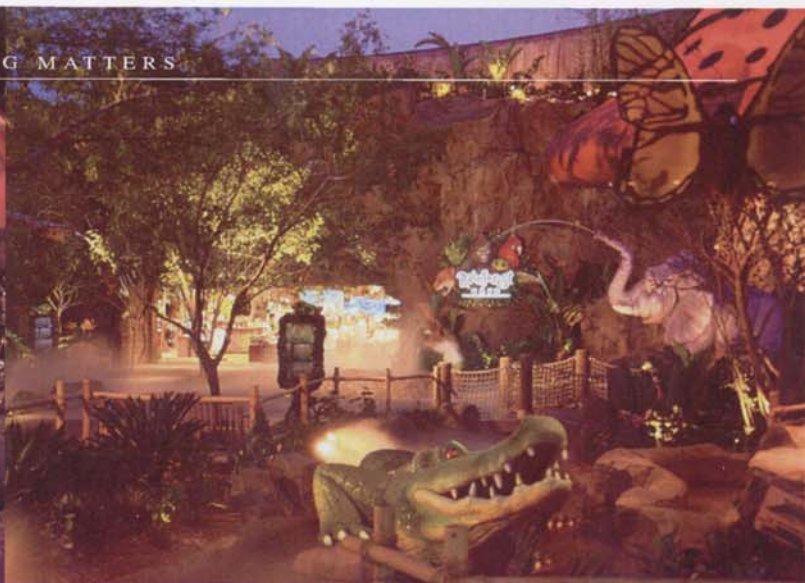
Steve explains, "We will have an ongoing frequent dining program, guest speakers and educators autographing books, and complimentary seminars done by palaeontologists, scientists, and educators. My background is television and broadcasting and we are also working on an interactive educational television program that might run on the Discovery Channel or a major network.

"We believe in strategic partnerships and are developing relationships with Microsoft, LG, Coca-cola, et cetera. Our strategic partners play a major role in our marketing efforts, strategic planning, and the ability to entertain, educate, and sustain our food quality, and the ability to change to market conditions fast."





Rainforest Café's magical exterior and entrance



Rainforest Café features the Magic Mushroom Juice &amp; Coffee Bar

### Keeping the experience fresh

Steve considers his stores are well above and beyond your typical themed restaurants. Most have a very short lifespan but Rainforest Café is celebrating its 11th anniversary. He has taken what he has learned and worked that with over eight years of research and development, focus groups, and test kitchens to build something that will be sustainable for many years to come.

"Keeping the experience fresh is easy when you are passionate about what you do; passion becomes the engine of success and food is the heart of any successful restaurant," he says.

Major set backs are handled with urgency, passion, and a commitment to the guest. In the normal course of business things happen that are distractions, but when handled with a professional attitude and a commitment to the guest experience, they usually become just a bump in the road.

### Choosing the best

When talking about selecting and training staff, Steve explains: "We look for the very best and talented people in every area. You can't expect a trainer that lacks passion to set the standards for your employees. We only hire the best qualified and that includes the most passionate,

friendly, and dedicated people. We hire not based on age, religion, race, or creed, but we look for high energy and interactive skills; that will certainly separate us from our competition."

Steve loves other attraction restaurants and retail stores as he believes they add density and traffic to any location. "But quite frankly," he says, "we are in our own field, having an interactive, educational experience with great quality food. It does put us in our own category."

Steve pushes the boundaries in every category and in every phase of his operations. He constantly monitors, evaluates, and recreates to prevent ideas from becoming stale.

### Marketing for success

Marketing is a huge issue for Rainforest Café and T-Rex, and most of it is done through publications like *Marketing Matters Magazine*. The businesses make themselves available, promote and market their unique style, and hope that those in the print media pick up the story.

Steve sees the single best way to market and advertise is by guests having an incredible experience and talking about how great their food and service was. This is closely monitored through sophisticated measures such as surveys and exit interviews, as well

as by hiring secret shoppers, and having store executives eat, shop, and comment on their own experiences.

Steve sees his next challenge and experience as honing the T-Rex concept and making it the hottest theatrical attraction, featuring incredible food, service, and retail that the world has ever seen.

That's some ambition! ■

*Steven Schussler*

*Chairman of the Board, Schussler Creative, Inc. USA-based Steven Schussler is responsible for the creative vision and overall strategic direction of Schussler Creative, Inc., and oversees management of operations.*

*Steven Schussler is the founder and creator of the award-winning Rainforest Café. He also served as Senior Vice President of Development and Construction, overseeing all creative development for the concept, as well as the design and construction at each location.*

*Steven has previously been involved in the restaurant and entertainment arenas for several years, having also created Jukebox Saturday Night (a popular "nostalgic" restaurant and nightclub with eight locations), Blue Suede Shoes, Juke Box Junction, Peggy Sue's, and The Rodeo.*

*He has also held executive positions in the television and radio broadcast industry with Telerep Television, Harrington, Righter & Parsons, Petry Television, Peters Griffin and Woodward, and sold television time for ABC, CBS, and NBC.*

# Legends



## The Legends adds 44 new stores

RED Development, LLC, announced in October 2004 that 44 tenants were set to join The Legends at Village West, a U.S. outdoor shopping and entertainment lifestyle centre, during a groundbreaking event at The Legends, including several first-ever locations for the market. A substantial collection of "market firsts" joins a handful of previously announced new concepts for the Kansas City market including Dave & Buster's, T-Rex, Bozo's Hot Pit Bar-B-Q, and Ted's Montana Grill.

The first-ever concepts and/or first locations to the city, state or region are sure to be a big draw for both locals and visitors."

RED Development, the developer responsible for The Legends project, broke ground on the site last year,

officially commencing the start of construction. The project is scheduled to open in late 2005 and will include the opening of The Legends Theatre, a 14-screen multiplex theatre developed by Phoenix Theatres. Once complete, The Legends will generate more than US\$200 million annually in sales and will create approximately 2500 new permanent jobs.

The Legends is a 69,677 square metre destination development situated in the heart of Village West, the hot new retail and entertainment district in Kansas City, Kansas. Once complete, The Legends will bring more family-friendly entertainment to Village West and will feature a unique mix of one-of-a-kind entertainment venues, retail and restaurant offerings designed to draw out-of-state visitors.

### About RED

RED Development, formed in 1995, develops, leases, manages, and owns shopping centres in rapidly growing communities throughout the Midwest and Southwest of the USA. The company primarily focuses on open-air, regional shopping centres, known as lifestyle centres. Additionally, the company has experience in the development of power and community centres.

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