

## **“Adoption Marketing: Thinking Out-Of-The-Box”**

**Written by Lynne Berman (future adoptive parent)**

We've all investigated agencies, spoken to attorneys, and read everything out there on how to be successful in adopting a child. I am sure that you've written and rewritten your adoption ad for the newspapers a million times and have never stopped taking pictures to update your profile and personal website with recent photos. While the marketing techniques are endless, there is not enough emphasis on thinking out-of-the-box. This concept became all too clear to me on a recent trip out of town during the holidays.

My husband's uncle was recuperating from heart surgery and needed some help transitioning home from the hospital. We had the week off during the holidays so we volunteered to help him during his recovery. While we were asked to arrive early at the hospital one day to observe the physical therapy treatment, we approached the front desk for our visitors pass and what we noticed next almost changed our lives. A woman in her 40's was standing in the lobby thanking those who were offering their congratulations. A minute later, she was asking for her overnight visitors pass so that she could stay with her daughter who had just given birth to a baby. What happened next could have passed someone by in the blink of an eye, but for some reason, it caught my attention.

I noticed that the grandmother looked miserable when she was asked by the receptionist the name of her daughter's spouse. She sadly answered that there was just a boyfriend. It wasn't so much what she said, but how she said it that made me pause and take notice. She sounded and looked so sad and disappointed that it quickly occurred to me that her teenage daughter was either planning on raising this baby or was making an adoption plan. In an effort to make sure that I wasn't letting my imagination get the better of me, I watched as the grandmother went into the gift shop and bought something pink for the baby. At that moment, I was feeling a range of emotions which included sadness for the grandmother, compassion for the whole family during this obviously difficult situation, and hopefulness that my discovery might have put my husband and myself in the right place at the right time. Two minutes later, we had our visitors pass in-hand and were on the elevator when I told my husband what had just happened. I thought about stopping for a second to talk to the grandmother, but was uncomfortable and decided against it. However, I couldn't stop thinking about it all day and I knew that I had to find out what was happening with the baby and if my instincts were right.

The next morning at the hospital there was no sign of the grandmother and I was second-guessing my decision to not stop to talk to her the day before. Just as this thought crossed my mind, the hospital's case manager walked by. We had become friendly with her as she was assisting in our uncle's rehabilitation. It was then that I decided to take a proactive approach and tell her everything that I observed the previous day. A slightly awkward conversation quickly turned relaxed when the case manager said that she would gladly check into it for me. She told me that these situations happen all of the time and that you never know - we could really be in the right place at the right time.

The next morning, the case manager told me that my instincts were completely accurate about the family. They were planning to place the baby for adoption and had already made an adoption plan with another couple. Ironically, we were told that there were two other babies born during the same few days; both of whom had been working on an adoption plan with adoptive couples. We couldn't believe the odds of three babies being born within days of each other in the same hospital all of whom were placed for adoption. The case manager was somewhat sad that fate didn't work in our favor this time, but she did tell me that there have been cases in the past and there will most likely be cases again where an emergency adoption plan is needed. She suggested that I send her a copy of our profile to keep on hand. She also encouraged me to keep in touch with her regarding our adoption plans so she can hear the good news when it happens. She couldn't get over what an unbelievable story this would have been – if we went to visit our uncle to help in his recovery and ended up coming home with a baby.

While the result of this story is not what you or I would have hoped, it does highlight the power of thinking out-of-the-box and having the nerve to be proactive when it comes to adoption. If I had never talked to the case manager, I would have wondered forever if my hunch was right. Now, I have an advocate at the hospital with our profile in her desk as well as a renewed trust in my instincts.

So, my message to you is this....trust your instincts, follow your heart, and keep an open mind because you never know when the perfect situation will be right under your nose. Think out-of-the-box whenever you can – it could make all the difference!