

# Calgary-based Cult Collective Ltd. expands U.S. partnership

Teams up with NY City's Brand Keys Inc.

BY MARIO TONEGUZZI, CALGARY HERALD    OCTOBER 24, 2014

Presented By:



Chris Kneeland, right, Cult Collective chief executive, and Ryan Gill, president and partner, in their office in Inglewood.

**Photograph by:** Crystal Schick, Calgary Herald

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CALGARY - A Calgary marketing engagement agency, with many global brands as clients, continues to expand with a new partnership with a New York City-based brand research consultancy.

Cult Collective Ltd. is hooking up with Brand Keys Inc., which specializes in predictive brand equity, consumer loyalty and engagement metrics, with offices in major markets.

“We’ve always had case studies and industry experience to validate our belief that there are very specific things brands should be doing to create a cult following,” said Chris Kneeland, chief executive of Cult Collective in Calgary. “But I’m excited about our Brand Keys partnership because now we have the bullet-proof, statistically-sound research to add science to our art, and make our clients’ brand engagement strategies much more predictive, potent and powerful.”

Brand Keys is known for its annual Customer Loyalty Engagement Index (CLEI), a syndicated study examining consumers’ relationships with over 500 leading brands in 64 categories. Brand Keys has conducted work for brands such as Microsoft, P&G, Mazda, L’Oréal, the U.S. Army, Dunkin’ Donuts, ABC TV, Discover Card, Avis, AT&T, Samsung, McDonald’s, Turner Broadcasting, QuickChek, Absolut, and Delta Dental of Missouri.

Robert Passikoff, president of Brand Keys and author of *The Certainty Principle*, said the company has been around since 1984 and the business of managing a brand has changed dramatically over the years.

“We’ve learned from decades of research that meaningful customer engagement has little to do with mass advertising,” he said. “Our behavioural loyalty and emotional engagement models provide a comprehensive understanding of how customers view product categories, compare competitive offerings, and eventually make purchase decisions. Our affiliation with Cult, now allows us to help business leaders understand how to effectively optimize their marketing spend and actually implement our ideas with go-to-market strategies and tactics.

“It’s the modern-day version of what marketing needs to be . . . Cult is exactly the right word. What you’re looking for today is a kind of cult level of engagement between the consumer and your brand. Because if you haven’t got that, you’ve got nothing. And what we know, or at least what we’ve seen in the past couple of decades, is that just increasing your ad budget won’t do it.”

The two firms are aligned in their belief that customer engagement is what drives sales and long-term, sustainable growth.

Cult Collective was formed 2012. Its network includes North Carolina-based social media management firm Expion, Toronto-based creative shop Clean Sheet and New York City-based Fidelum Partners. In the spring of this year, Cult acquired Media Merchants with offices in Los Angeles and Toronto. It has been re-branded to be called Cult Experiences with an office in Vancouver.

“As we continue to grow at a rapid pace adding new international clients, Cult will also look to be more active in mergers, acquisitions and partnership building in 2015-2016,” said Ryan Gill, the company’s president/partner. “We hope to grow our offices in Ontario, Vancouver and in the U.S. However our strategic approach to finding the right partners and the right talent forces us to at times look outside of Canada and potentially even grow outside North America. The next few years are going to be very exciting.”

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