BY BRYN MOOTH

SIDELINES

THING MAKERS

First, there's the name: OMFGCO. Then, there's the motto (also emblazoned on a T-shirt for sale on the firm's website): Fuck haters. Those two things combined pretty much give you a sense of the creative minds behind this Portland, OR, design shop.

And they clue prospective clients in on what it's like to work with Original Manufacturing Company partners Fritz Mesenbrink, Jeremy Pelley and Mathew Foster. Take it or leave it. "Any potential client can see how we go about our work," Foster says. "They can see our previous projects on our site, and read our company voice on our blog and see it in the products we make. If they like what they see, they reach out to us—if not, they weed themselves out of our client list. It's natural selection."

The clients who've signed on are an innovative, local bunch, allowing OMFGCO to develop an award-winning portfolio of identity work for the Ace Hotel Group, Stumptown Coffee and Olympic Provisions.

The guys involved in OMFGCO are alumni of legendary advertising agency Wieden+Kennedy who came together as independent creatives sharing office space. Impromptu collaborations on projects revealed that the three worked well together, and they decided to formalize the partnership in November 2009, with the intention of creating for themselves as well as for clients. OMFGCO has a line of screen prints and T-shirts available for sale through its website. The partners also share ownership (with Jack Barron of the Ace Hotel) of Spirit of 77, a new Portland sports bar. OMFGCO traded services for a revenue percentage, creating the bar's identity, graphics, signage and interior design. It's an ongoing income source for the firm, provided they don't drink their profits (Foster jokes that there's a cap on their bar tab).

After a year in business (as of this writing), Foster says their merchandise accounts for 5% to 10% of the firm's revenue, but they aim to up that in 2011. "We're thing makers above all else, so selling our own goods was part of the idea from the start," Foster says. "There are design firms out there (Coudal Partners, Aaron Draplin, Scott Hansen) who've become institutions in their own right, who not only do great client work but also make really rad stuff. A year into this now, the idea is to do as little client work as possible." HOW

Bryn Mooth is HOW's editor. HOWdesign.com

OMFGCO PORTLAND, OR www.omfgco.com

»WEB EXTRA
Read the full Q&A with Mathew Foster of OMFGCO. HOWdesign.com/OMFGCO





JAVA JOLT
Stumptown Coffee Roasters is just one client for which OMFGCO has produced top-notch work, including packaging and branded items.



HATIN' IT
The firm's motto, Fuck haters, serves to warn off prospective clients who won't fit the vibe.





ACE UP THE SLEEVE
Portland-based Ace Hotel Group is known for its highbrow/lowbrow design sensibility. OMFGCO designs its signage and other identity elements.



IN THE SPIRIT
The OMFGCO partners traded design services (interior decor, signage, identity, menus, etc.) for a revenue share in Portland sports bar Spirit of 77.

GOOD SPORTS
OMFGCO partner Mathew Foster says there wasn't a "real" sports bar in Portland before Spirit of 77 opened. The space features a vintage gymnasium scoreboard and repurposed basketball-court flooring.