



02138: Zip code, a state of mind, a DNA

That's the idea of a title targeting Harvard alums

By Samantha Melamed

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Harvard University graduates share something, and that thing goes beyond fuzzy memories of beer-drenched parties and cramming for exams.

They share a common intellectual DNA, in the mind of Bom Kim. It's what sets them apart from all other college alums, and it does not fade over time. It's a sense of style and engagement, of knowing what matters.

It's also knowing, or remembering, that Harvard's zip code is 02138.

That will certainly help when a select few Harvard alums receive a subscription pitch for a new magazine, launching next month, titled 02138.

The idea behind 02138 is that the shared Harvard experience, that common intellectual DNA, will be strong enough to roust a goodly number of subscriptions from the very elite and wealthiest of the college's roster of graduates.

But as Kim, the magazine's founder and president, sees it, 02138 won't be just another alumni title.

In 02138, Kim sees a broader, general-interest title of the highest editorial quality, a sort of Vanity Fair for the Harvard Club set. Its appeal should be broader too, he says, reaching out to non-Harvard grads hoping to join in the sharing of that DNA experience.

The magazine will take its Harvard focus and thread it through profiles, features, lifestyle and fashion sections.

"For us, Harvard is merely a starting point, not the destination. It's a lens through which you look out at the broader world," Kim tells Media Life. "The idea behind reaching a community of Harvard graduates is a shared sensibility of how Harvard impacts the

world. It will likely also interest a wider group of people who believe they have that shared DNA."

Kim, himself a recent Harvard graduate, class of 2000, has been pretty persuasive in selling his idea so far. The launch, a bimonthly, is being backed by David Bradley, the wealthy Washington developer and owner of the Atlantic Monthly.

For sure, O2138 is the ultimate vanity publication, targeting as it will an ultra-niche, ultra-elite bound by memories of shared youth. It follows a long trail of like-minded titles that failed by imagining a similar sort of bond where links proved weaker than first perceived when it came to writing out subscription checks.

But that history hardly dooms O2138. In recent years, there's been a huge surge in local society magazines that have succeeded brilliantly by targeting the select rich few, so the climate is certainly ripe. The art of O2138 will be in the execution, whether it pulls the right emotional strings.

Kim and Meredith Kopit, O2138's publisher, say they're modeling their title in part after regional titles like Texas Monthly. Kim launched Current, a newsmagazine for college students now run by Newsweek, and in doing that he says he learned the strength of institutional identities. He believes that the desire to be part of that Harvard identity will draw readers.

One challenge will be in building circulation, which is always tougher when there's a relative small pool to begin with. Kim figures the universe of Harvard graduates is around 320,000, and most of them--220,000--already receive Harvard's alumni magazine.

The first issue of O2138 will mail to 50,000. Kopit says the target audience will resemble the pool of Harvard alums: in their mid 40s, skewing slightly male and more than slightly affluent.

No newsstand price has been set—if the bimonthly title does indeed appear on newsstands—but subscriptions will be priced at \$36 for six issues.

Kim and Kopit say O2138 is nothing like an alumni title, which focuses on generating nostalgia that in turn generates donations and avoids any of the gossip and intrigue that readers really crave.

"It is all about the people and the personalities of the Harvard alumni community today," she says. "It is meant to be a lifestyle magazine for the alumni," to appeal to a group who are intensely curious about one another.

The first cover story should make the difference clear: titled "The Harvard 100," it's a list of the most influential Harvardians that the creators are betting will turn a few heads.

Other sections include Vanitas, an Ivy League Page Six; Passions, which includes luxury travel, fashion, design and food; Smarts, a focus on alumni achievements; and an index in the front that allows readers to track every bold-face name at a glance.

But every section will be driven by Harvard personalities, not by products. So a fashion or jewelry story might tie in to a collector. Kopit says that the typical Harvard grad is interested less in consumption than in cultivation and how material possessions can fit into and enrich their lives.

That's the message she's also taking to the uber-luxury advertisers that she says are expressing lots of interest in 02138. Marketers that are signing on include wealth management firms, automotive, men's fashion and accessories, upscale liquor, technology, entertainment and anything with a ridiculous price point, like semi-private jets.