

> **backstory**

A Direct Quote

Literature and design enthusiasts celebrate 25 years in the stationery and gift business.

BY LENISE WILLIS

Inspiration sells. That's something that we in the gift business know all too well—now. But, 25 years ago, the trend wasn't quite as popular, and card companies were focused more on decorative images than cool messaging. That's why when Quotable co-founders Gillian Simon and Matt Fernandes-Vogel founded their stationery company in 1993, they were ahead of the curve.

Quotable's distinguishing characteristic is that it uses the words of great writers, artists and thinkers to drive the design of the card or gift. The words are the main attraction, not a complementary element to an image, and have a unique, bold, but easily read design.

The typography style is part of what has helped Quotable stand out among the rest—especially in a saturated inspiration market—and what has contributed to its success.

The story behind the text involves two recent college grads who wanted to channel their love of literature and create smart, but simple cards that they didn't see available at the time. Yes, they did their homework at the National Stationery Show in New York. "We wanted to make cards that were different," said co-founder Matt Fernandes-Vogel, "and we just had this great love for quotations and literature and design."

To start, Simon and Fernandes-Vogel introduced a 48-black-and-white card collection, including the card that started it all: A Spoon and Plate card with a quote by Irving Becker.

"Gillian went to work that day and came back with (the Spoon and Plate card), which we're re-introducing this year, and she did this thing that was nothing like anything I had ever seen before," Fernandes-Vogel said. "It had bold words and this amazing focus on the words that covered the whole



Quotable co-founders Gillian Simon and Matt Fernandes-Vogel.

square. (The design) emphasized the quotes and didn't detract from them and just let you focus on the words. It looked very modern at the time and I think that was something people weren't expecting."

Besides the unique (and now iconic) typography, the cards were special in that they were square (and required more postage), blank on the inside and non-occasion specific.

"These initial 48 cards not only defined the company—they inspired a completely new message-driven market within the industry," said Krista Ohlsen, of Quotable.

"It's a pretty fundamental, human desire to read and connect to people through language and words, and so we found something that was very natural and commonplace for everybody and decided to put it on greeting cards, which was the novelty," Fernandes-Vogel added.

After about four years, the duo decided to move into magnets, which propelled their business into the fuller gift world. Now, Quotable makes greeting cards, magnets, trinket dishes, coffee cups, small zipper bags and other gifts.

Storeowners will appreciate the gift line for its harmony and how items



After succeeding in stationery for about four years, Quotable began adding other gifts and now has a full collection of coffee cups, stationery, dishes, bags and more with unique, but harmonious designs.

play off of one another for an eye-catching display. Each product has a unique style of typography, sometimes bold print, sometimes cursive, sometimes a touch abstract, sometimes colorful, sometimes black and white, and always different, but complementary. Putting together a full display of Quotable cards and gifts attracts customers to the collection as a whole but also inspires them to explore each product individually. It's a nice break for the customer's eyes because the display doesn't blend together or seem too chaotic. (You can read more about this tactic in our Visual Merchandising Tips on page 36.)

So, what keeps Quotable current and competitive? "Our look is still very unique," Fernandes-Vogel said. "There are plenty of companies that have inspirational messaging, but typically they go with a very standardized format and it starts to look homogenous. With us, every design has been labored over. And we try to find quotations and authors that haven't been quoted."

Quotable puts in great time to source quotes from both past and present influencers, like best-selling author Kristin Hannah, long-distance swimmer Diana Nyad, folk musician John Wilson, Gandhi, Edith Wharton and Anais Nin.

When it comes to finding new quotes, the nine-person team at Quotable researches on its own, but also accepts submissions from consumers on their website. "At this point, we have

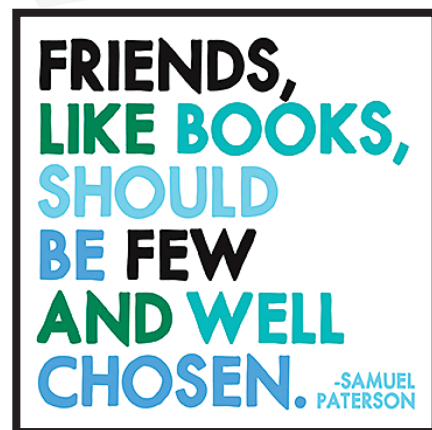
a huge database of quotations that we have saved and keep adding to," Fernandes-Vogel said.

"We don't go for shocking, but rather unexpected. And we like to have something in the line for everyone. We try to find something that resonates with people and we try them out on one another. Some have a little bit of poetry in them, which we really like, and some have a little bit of a twist to them, like: 'Barn's Burnt Down—Now I Can See the Moon.' Some are very simple and direct; we're kind of all over the place."

This year, in honor of Quotable's 25th anniversary, the company is re-introducing two of its original best sellers, including the first card ever produced. •



These stackable plates have a simple, universal message: Hugs and Kisses. Quotable. 212.420.7552. quotablecards.com CIRCLE #671



Quotable states its mission is to inspire through the power of the written word. Quotable. 212.420.7552. quotablecards.com CIRCLE #672, #673 ALL PRICES RETAIL