

For Entrepreneur Latin Heritage Is in the Cards

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By Evelyn Hoover | Feb 19, 2013

Latin Heritage Cards provide entertainment and education in one deck

A good **business plan** generally begins with a desire to meet an unmet need. That's exactly what happened when the son of a Dominican mother and a Haitian father, who was raised primarily in the Haitian culture, had a desire to learn more about his mother's ethnic roots. What Newton Paul noticed was a dearth of Latin history information on the shelves of national bookstores.

The New York state resident says he spent a lot of time in the national bookstore chains. "They had maybe one huge shelf—and I'm not talking about the whole shelf but two rows of Latin information and it wasn't historical," Paul explains. "It was more those Latin fiction books about relationships and that type of thing. I started to research."

His research didn't net any real results. He and his brother, Andre, decided to educate people on the **Latin culture**. That's when Latin Heritage Cards was born. The playing cards feature prominent Latino historical figures like Cuban poet Jose Marti and Puerto Rican-born U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Maria Sotomayor. Future sets of the cards will expand beyond just people.

"We want to eventually evolve the product to people, places and things so that way you're just not looking at just the historical figures but also delving into the economics, their currency, different types of foods based on different ethnic groups within the Latin

culture,” the 38-year-old says. His future plan is to also develop PowerPoint presentations for schools.

Doubling Down

While celebrating his birthday in Manhattan in 2006, Paul was assaulted, suffering from a broken cheekbone in five places, an eye fracture and stitches; he took one month off from work to recover.

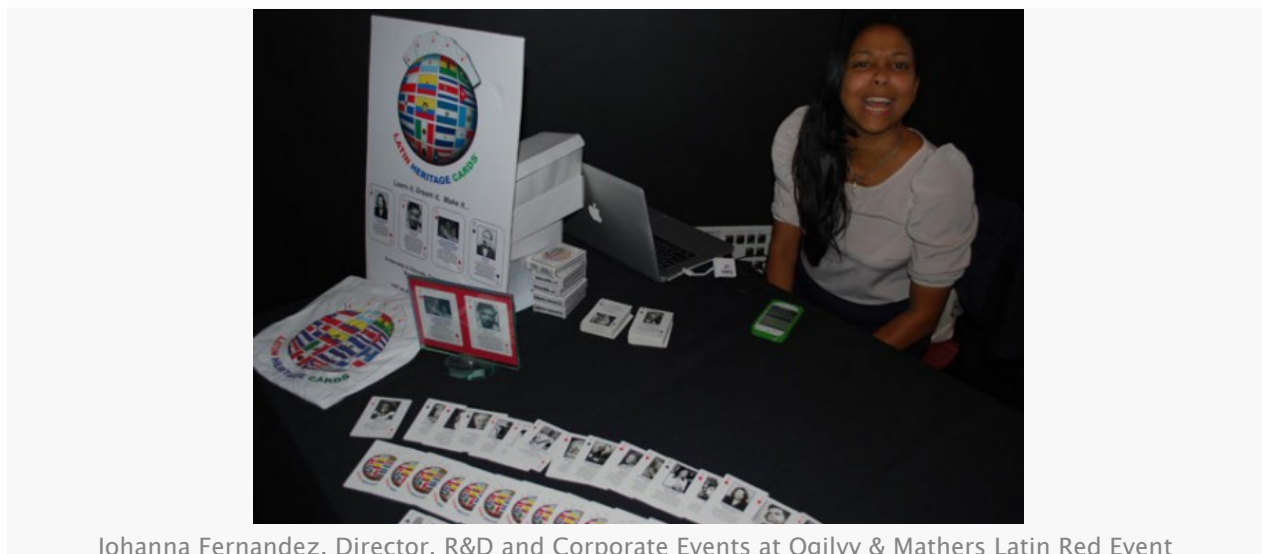
“I basically took all of the negative energy and put it into this product and developed it. I wrote out the marketing plan and just started pushing it to media and got the right people around me to get it out there. I tried to take the negative experience and make it something positive,” he says.

His brother Andre came up with the idea to use the cards as the mechanism to deliver the Latin heritage information after seeing the U.S. military developed playing cards that helped troops identify the most-wanted members of Saddam Hussein’s government. “We said, ‘You know, that’s pretty negative but how can we take it and use it for something positive?’ ” Paul recalls.

He immediately thought of the Latin population based on his own desire for information coupled with the fact that in the Southwest colleges were shutting down Mexican-American studies, “which was bizarre because half the **Hispanic population** is in the Southwest.”

In September 2010 the idea became reality.

On Deck



Johanna Fernandez, Director, R&D and Corporate Events at Ogilvy & Mathers Latin Red Event

Determining what to include in the deck was a matter of conducting research on U.S. [Latino demographics](#). Predominantly in the U.S. it's Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican and Cuban. "I know those are our top peer groups so you'll find that most of the characters are based on them. Then you go into the other ethnicities: Nicaraguan, Panamanian. There's a certain amount of representation in the cards," he says. He's also planning to customize cards for various ethnicities, including Puerto Rican and Mexican.

To determine which historic figure went on each playing card, Paul compiled a list of different individuals that he read about.

More renowned leaders were aligned with the picture cards, which generally the highest cards in the deck. "I used some of the more renowned leaders for this round to get people to embrace it because you generally hear about Cesar Chavez and all of the majors so I want to try to appeal to the current masses that can relate to those individuals," he explains. "As we delve back further we'll start to create new products that will capture people beyond the 1800s."

Trump Card

The idea is catching on, particularly with smaller boutique stores. Sales have been good at La Casa Azul Bookstore, for example. Located in Spanish Harlem, the turnover of Paul's product has been happening relatively quickly there because of the demographic the store serves.

National chains, like Barnes and Noble and Target, don't understand the value the cards represent, according to Paul. But online orders have been coming in from coast to coast as well as Puerto Rico. Latino student unions at several colleges have also been partnering with [Latin Heritage Cards](#).

School presentations are also under development. "We're also going to have an opportunity where people can color in the flags of different countries to get them more involved and help them understand the logic behind the flag and the meaning behind the flag for that country.



Johanna Fernandez, Director, R&D and Corporate Events, York Kemp (Cofounder/Executive Vice President, Promotions, Marketing, & Sales), Volunteer, Newton Paul (Cofounder/President), Patricia Perez, Director, Promotions, Marketing & Sales at Latino Book and Family Festival in Chicago, IL

“We’ve been doing a pilot in a school in Harlem on 140th and Frederick Douglas where the purpose of the cards and the PowerPoint presentation is to obviously look at the culture in terms of the historical leaders,” he says.

Ever enthusiastic, Paul’s desire is to spread his business coast to coast in the U.S. and then eventually globally to educate, entertain and engage people on the Latin heritage. “I think it’s important,” he concludes.