

PRODUCTION STORY



CLIENT: TGI FRIDAYS USA, Dallas HQ

PROJECT: “Tony Romaine: The Parts We Know”

A three-part brand improvement and employee empowerment training series shot on location in Baltimore, MD.



ReNae Morse had a tough job. Her Senior VP of brand improvement and strategic operations had just dropped a big challenge in her lap. *Live outside the box and find a way to turn up the creative for a new employee training series. Push the ideas and tell a great story about the TGI FRIDAY’S brand.*

As Manager of Strategic Operations & Margin Improvement for TGI Fridays USA, Morse had two choices; use the scripts in front of her that resembled a lot of the past scripts she had produced or go outside the organization and hire new production blood. Find a production company that deliver exciting new creative to the troops.

“I remember saying to ReNae, “We want to know what your challenges are, your expectations for our team and how we can quickly and effectively get on *your page* and assimilate *your vision*,” recalls Phenomenon’s Mark Fallone. Fallone served as account lead and director-producer for the Fridays project along with director Clay Kisker.

Morse filled in Fallone, Kisker and writer Greg Rempel with a detailed marketing brief and a separate Keynote deck outlining Friday’s strategic planning for the 2017 training efforts. Rempel, who would be brought onboard to script the production into what became a 54-page screenplay-formatted manuscript, dug into the research and during a two-week period crafted three episodes. Morse offered insights into her mission on the project to the Phenomenon team and thoroughly detailed TGI Fridays USA’s new initiative: empower the FRIDAY’s team throughout the USA in ways that would help staff and managers resolve customer problems quickly and with empathy.

Fallone remembers, “We knew we could help Friday’s illuminate the many ways the company coaches its managers to always be visible, help its managers stay ahead of the bubble, and help them take on the obstacles for solving tough problems.”



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Mark Fallone



In the end, Fallone, Kisker and Rempel believed they could create an innovative, forward-thinking set of videos that would help motivate staffers to join forces with the new Friday’s brand and training initiatives.

Paramount to the success of a video or series was Morse’s tenet that the video or video series offer insights to managers and team members that focused on three key practices: Manager Visibility, Problem Frequency and Problem Resolution. As Ms. Morse indicated, “This is where the *team member empowerment* piece really comes into play.”

Fallone, Kisker and Rempel set their collective sites on five “key themes” for the video series and ultimately pitched three concepts. The winning concept chosen by Friday’s leadership proposed three ten-minute segments crafted as reality tv episodes loosely based on the CNN series, Anthony Bourdain’s PARTS UNKNOWN.

“We believed strongly that we had strong creative solutions,” said Fallone. “As a baseline, we understand the TGI Fridays brand, grasped the promise of that brand to its guests and understood the role employees played in delivering that brand promise. Our team had to fully grasp customers’ real life drivers of dissatisfaction causing problems for growth and revenue at the company.”



One thing was certain. Fallone knew he, Kisker and Rempel had to use their experiences as customers of the brand as well as their production prowess. “Here in Pittsburgh, I frequent the restaurants in Greensburg and Monroeville and have never really had a bad experience,” said Fallone. “I drew on my interactions with the brand.”

This experience with the brand set several themes into motion as the Phenomenon team began to develop the script: TGI Fridays is the “original casual dining bar and grill”, offering *real* American food and “legendary drinks, served with genuine personal service.” TGI Fridays brings people together to socialize and celebrate the freeing and liberating spirit of Friday. Employees and manager are integral to bringing that brand to life of customers once they get into a Friday’s restaurant. “It is a great brand, with dedicated employees and we recognized that if we were to successfully capture that story and share teachable moments, we needed to get into a working restaurant to see the brand promise in action,” said Kisker.

During a three-day shoot on location in Hanover and Baltimore, Maryland, The Phenomenon crew shot with pro talent Mike Kraft in the role of Tony Romaine. Locations included a Friday’s restaurant in Hanover, in Baltimore’s iconic Inner Harbor and at the famed Lexington Street Market.



Morse, serving as project producer for Friday’s, organized more than 25 company employees to play servers, managers, hosts and guests, most of whom played parts in front of the lens for the first time in their lives. Amidst an open-for-business Fridays restaurant crowded with real paying guests, the crew and talent shot for more than 33 hours during the three-day production window. With Mike Kraft fronting the episodes as piper piper and employee mentor, the narrative framework compared and contrasted the right ways and wrong ways of taking care of business and thus taking care of customers.

The production crew consisted of co-directors, a TGI Friday’s producer (Morse), Writer, Gaffer, Grip, Sound, AC and a single production assistant from the Friday’s team. The series was photographed with two CANON C-100’s shooting in C-Log, two CANON 5D’s and a DJI GIZMO.

In January 2017, Ms. Morse and her team set out for parts known around the US with the three-part training series in-hand.

“Feedback on the production has been great from leadership within Friday’s. ReNae’s outside-the-box thinking for producing the content with our team is going to pay dividends for Fridays,” Fallone says with a smile. “We produced a content series that boldly showed the “parts” Friday’s employees play really do make a difference on the company’s bottom line.”