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South Norwalk ad man offers peppery afterthought

By Bill Fallon

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Michael LeBeau, CEO and managing partner of South Norwalk-based Scrum50, an advertising agency that places itself "at the intersection of technology and marketing," has commercially released some homemade heat.

LeBeau's M. Fuego Gourmet Pepper Sauce is on the menu at Marly's Bistro & Bar, a Wilton bistro of which LeBeau is part-owner and which is named for his wife.

LeBeau grows a variety of peppers for the sauce – including hot cherry, cayenne, bell, habanero, poblano, jalapeno, Hungarian wax and ghost – in his Wilton home garden, whose size he described as having "the square footage of a small house."

"Gardening may be an avocation some CEOs embrace to unwind, but to LeBeau, gardening is a field laboratory for incubating new business ideas," a statement about the pepper sauce release said.

LeBeau's advertising business model embraces "producing stronger creative work faster." This "agile methodology" stresses flexibility, communication and collaboration, he said, and places great value on rapid feedback from the field, versus relying on traditional market research.

He grows food the same way.

"I garden 'agilely' by sticking with those veggie varieties that work and dumping those that don't," he said. "You always have to be refining the mix. Such field testing may seem radical, but it's the most direct method for proving what works."

Eight of LeBeau's hot sauces are featured at Marly's, each with a different formulation of peppers and spices. The hottest is called "Clubber Lang," named for Mr. T's character in "Rocky III."

"I love his quote in the movie when they ask for a prediction and he replies, 'Pain!'" LeBeau said. "That's what this sauce delivers."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bill Fallon

Bill Fallon is editor of the Fairfield County Business Journal. He has worked at Westfair Communications for more than five years, previously editing an upstate New York daily and a national motorcycle magazine in Nevada. He attended Iona Prep in New Rochelle, N.Y., and the University of Virginia.

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