

The Evolution of Multicultural to Cross-Cultural: Reaching All Segments in Advertising

Featuring:

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JOSHUA: Hello and welcome to another installment of the Draftfcb Podcast Series. My name is Joshua Dysart; I'm a member of the Corporate Communications team here at Draftfcb. And today I'm joined by Simon El Hage, head of Draftfcb Chicago's Multicultural team. Good morning Simon

SIMON: Buenos Dias, good morning to you too.

JOSHUA: We sat down last week for about a half an hour and had a great conversation about multicultural. And it really kind of covered a lot of topics. And I wanted to sit down with you and follow-up on one of the things that we touched upon and that being the idea that multicultural is just much more than translating copy. And translating a campaign from English to Spanish or whatever language it may be. And really find out your thoughts on what effective multicultural campaigns are today and how to go about them and the considerations that you have to take.

SIMON: I think it would be good to start clarifying a little bit the history of multiculturalism. There are many interpretations of multiculturalism in our business today. For some you know Fortune 500 in the past multiculturalism meant to have a dedicated niche market or an ethnic market agency addressing a particular segment. For some like Chrysler in the past who believed at one point that really multiculturalism meant that one campaign can talk to all ethnic markets at the same time. We're all similar. And for others multiculturalism meant to really do a bare minimum kind of community outreach communication just to talk to "the ethnic" market.

For us the evolution of multiculturalism really ended up in cross-culturalism and for us it means this is a total communication solution based in one place, in one agency like ours that has all the disciplines, all the channel experts and knowledge in one place. So it is one P&L, one company, channel-agnostic, addressing all segments. That doesn't mean at all that you've got one message

that can sufficiently be relevant and truthful to all segments. You still have nuances that you have to be aware of. And you still have filters that you have to look through to make sure your communication is getting through.

JOSHUA: You said something you just touched upon, multicultural versus cross-cultural. Go into a bit more about that because I know here in Chicago for those people who've been in the agency there's a huge sign at the top of the 20th floor. Go into more about why we took or why the agency took that position in terms of cross-cultural versus multicultural.

SIMON: It's a great opportunity again to clarify this new idea and new thinking. I think the banner speaks about our intention and who we are. We are the most integrated marketing communication company in the United States. That is a fact. But also if we take it a step further, we have been doing traditional multicultural communication for the last 12-13 years. The evolution of cross culture, why we declared our intention, is a lot of corporate America has built a network of agencies that fight among each other. Fight for the same budget, trying to steal a budget from each other. And for us we are playing to our strength. We are telling our clients and our potential clients that this is the most integrated agency. Not just from a channel perspective, but from a segment perspective. This is an agency that has the best disciplines in communication under one roof, one P&L channel-agnostic, but also looking at the business opportunity across all segments.

So cross-culturalism for us is really talking about integration and selling the integration beyond channels, but also across all segments and clearly building a brand steward leadership within the relationship with the client.

JOSHUA: Do you find that in terms of working with the various teams here at the agency or throughout your own career, have you been engaged at the beginning of a process? Or do teams come to you as a second thought? And how does cross culturalism and multiculturalism really fit into peoples planning and in clients' planning?

SIMON: You know for some teams and for some business leaders, the multiculturalism, cross culturalism component is natural.

We are working with other team members, other business leaders in the agency to “spread” the expanding definition of cross culturalism, but also to build and strengthen this agency of record relationship. Obviously we have a class of wonderful clients, Kraft, Brown Foreman I mean there is a great opportunity with other brands as well.

JOSHUA: Do you think that there’s a place for multiculturalism in every situation or do you think its very niche specific? Do you think that that’s something that needs to be considered in today’s day and age especially?

SIMON: This is really the big question that I always hear in any conversation and it is a great question to address today. Allow me to start with this fact: 45% of kids under 5 today in this country of ours are multicultural. Hispanics will be 25%, 24% of the population in the next 35 years. There is no category, there is no product where you really can ignore the multicultural opportunity. It’s huge. CPG, high tech, digital—you know you’re talking about a unique area of opportunity with the digital space. We used to talk about the Hispanic digital divide, Latinos underscore, under index in broadband or Internet penetration. What we have learned, what we have discovered in the last few months is in social media, Hispanics have become the avatars. They have become the leading group in social media and original creation of content and blogging.

So what this is telling me is you can no longer ignore those segments. And every business opportunity is a unique opportunity to understand where the sweet spot is. But obviously multiculturalism has become a key segment. They are consumers, they eat, they consume, they drive, they live life like everybody else, right?

JOSHUA: That’s something else that we’ve talked several times and you’ve mentioned that statistic before about the fact that Hispanic youth are so influential and participate so much in social networking, social media, things like that. Why isn’t that common knowledge?

SIMON: It is interesting. We’re living, this is the year 2009. Most data is telling us Latino’s have become the avatars in social media. But the truth is, the sad fact is, you look at the Fortune 100 today and you see what companies are really investing in the Hispanic space. It’s still a very under-penetrated market. The Hispanic market today is ignored for multiple reasons: lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, complexity, and the truth is some brands don’t understand it.

They think it's too complex. It's kind of the fear factor. Why should I go there? From my perspective, how can they not go there? It's really unbelievable that you are still under-penetrated in many categories, pharma, electronics, digital space. I mean let's take Apple for instance. Apple, one of the leading brands in this country, has not created a uniquely relevant message to the Hispanic consumer. I don't get it. I just don't.

JOSHUA: Do you think that you see it as a missed opportunity for many marketers. Do you see that changing any time soon? Have you seen trends that are maybe pushing towards marketers going that way?

SIMON: In downturns, what happens is the "ethnic" segment becomes an opportunity because marketers see the total market or the general market. They see the total market slowing down or maybe going negative. And then all of a sudden they wake up, oh maybe it's time to go talk to the ethnic segment, to the Hispanic or Asian, African American. That's the typical behavior.

JOSHUA: So essentially if the world's economy hadn't gone through this downturn then that's a segment and that's an opportunity that wouldn't have been tapped into at this point.

SIMON: Absolutely. Absolutely.

JOSHUA: Okay well I know you have to get going, but again thank you very much. We appreciate the insight today.

SIMON: Thank you. And anytime is a good time to talk to you.

JOSHUA: All right, bye.