

Festival: Meeting of the big players.

World top experts: The future of advertising is in the new technologies.

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This is generally the opinion of well-known advertising experts who came to the festival of AdMall. Inspired by the glamorous contests that have been organized worldwide and have become memorable events, Sign Cafe magazine has organized the first festival of the advertiser. It has become a place where the local advertising business measured itself to the rest of the world and touched on a few new ideas. Some of the most interesting lecturers of the seminars and the tutorials were Todd Grant, Samantha DiGennaro, Richard and Judith Wilde, and Versace's photographer Stefano Oppo. They told newspaper Pari exclusively of their impression of Bulgaria, shared their vision for the future of advertising and PR, and gave valuable advice.

Ms. DiGennaro, tell us a little bit more about your company and your clients.

The company that I manage is called DiGennaro Communications. I established it three years ago; we deal with PR and strategic communications which is more in the marketing area. Our business is aimed mainly towards the media and companies who deal with advertising and marketing. That is a specialized area, so called B2B public relations. Our clients are marketing companies on a world scale such as Saatchi & Saatchi, global ad agencies, media agencies such as ZenithOptimedia, Publicis Groupe etc. Of course, we have small independent agencies that we also work with very well.

Our team at the agency consists of 10 people and we use the services of many outside specialists and consultants. The most important thing for us is that our work meets our goals and that our clients are happy.

Do you have any impressions of the PR business here?

Unfortunately I don't have extensive observations of the PR business in Bulgaria. Since I have arrived here, thanks to the people that I interact with, I can see a lot of common traits between the business here and in the USA or in Europe for example. There are though, some differences that are valid here. During the seminars I heard opinions from various sides that in Bulgaria, a lot of attention is paid to the press releases.



Samantha DiGennaro



Todd Grant

I tried to explain that you should not pay so much attention to them. It is good to find innovative and interesting ideas. I took a lot of questions on whether the PR expert of a particular company has to remain in the shadows or be out in open society. My opinion is that he has to make his client popular, rather than for him to be necessarily in the spot light. The media also works in a different way. The press in the USA has a place on the pages that is called advertorial. These are a combination of journalistic text and advertising but at the end of the page it is always very clear that this is paid material.

Over the last few years the PR profession is very popular here. Is that also the case in America?

I can say, yes. I think that now it is a lot more fashionable and popular now than it was 10 years ago, for example. My concern regarding the PR profession is that many people think that we only deal with the organization of events or we just publish material about celebrities. We are a lot more than that - PR is strategy, intellectual work. We have to solve problems related to big corporations and act quickly at a time of crisis.

What are the major points of a successful PR campaign?

There is nothing more important than to have a solid connection with your clients, with the media, with your employees and with the business. To maintain your contacts with those people means that they will be very much inclined to share information with you and to support you. Qualities like honesty, respect and sincerity towards your clients are compulsory in our work.

Note

Samantha DiGennaro, who travels a lot around the world, tells that when she visits a new place for the first time, she buys a book about the country but she only reads it when she gets back home. She absorbs her main impressions from the atmosphere and the people that she meets. The Bulgarians are incredibly warm and sincere people that not only know how to make you laugh but they also communicate in an intelligent manner, she comments. Samantha is a fan of European countries and Bulgaria has exceeded her expectations. She is enchanted by the traditional Bulgarian cuisine and by the Bulgarian wine.

Mr. Grant, from what you have seen here so far, how do you rate Bulgarian advertising?

If I have to be honest, I am not very familiar with it, but from what I have seen on the streets and in the magazines, I can say that visually it looks great. I do not understand Bulgarian and therefore can not make a comment on the text. I think that the print advertisements are fantastic. I am impressed by the photography and the ideas. I like what I see here, but I would like to learn more about what happens in Bulgaria when it comes to ideas and strategies. During the tutorials and the seminars that we ran here, the people showed originality and creative thinking. They did great in all categories that I put them through.

Do you share the opinion that internet and mobile phones are the media that will dominate in future?

I have heard many opinions that the press and television are dying but I think that is not the case. They will always be alive. Communication through internet and other new technologies have picked up a lot of speed but let us look back. Thirty or 40 years ago the press dominated, there were magazines that "took" away from its popularity and after that the power of television advertising appeared. There were millions invested in it and it earned a lot. In the last few years the fastest growing media is internet but I would not say that it will take over. More to the point, it will depend on its complexity.

What can break an advertising campaign?

To be left misunderstood by the audience, not knowing what audience you are catering to. You can have a great idea and an amazing realization but if you do not manage to make the public familiar with it, you will not succeed. Advertising is changing with a great pace; it surrounds us everywhere and often people go past it and it does not make an impression on people's minds. Advertisers are trying to make people take part in a particular campaign, to integrate them. It is a big mistake to miss out on the dialogue with the people.

What is the future for unorthodox ideas?

Innovation is something of a necessity. It attracts attention and it motivates people. Such ideas do not come up all the time but when they do, they always do well.

Will the recession have an impact on advertising?

There is no way that it will not. It will be difficult for us. I would like to be an optimist about the future of the business. I believe that we will manage those challenges.

Note

Todd Grant is also a fan of our delicious food and wine. He is most impressed with the outdoors advertising of the capital - ultra modern advertising, put on an old façade, and attractive billboards with advertising text painted alongside also got his attention.