

AMERICAN EXECUTIVE

Where Leadership Begins

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COVER STORY

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By marrying global branding expertise with high-tech platforms, GlobalWorks is changing the way companies go to market.

Mixed Message

made clear...



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What's new in the marketing world these days? The owners of the highly successful GlobalWorks can sum it up in one word: convergence. And since this 70-person ad agency consistently beats some of the largest firms in the world for accounts like Lucent Technologies and Avaya, their opinion counts.

"I think agencies have to go through the same convergence as devices are going through," said Yuri Radziewsky, who founded GlobalWorks with his wife, Anna, and Web developer Mans Angantyr. Radziewsky said just as it's getting more difficult to define a computer, a phone, or a camera these days, ad agencies must stop treating the various parts of their businesses as siloed entities.

They also need to get a lot more tech-savvy if they're going to compete with agencies like GlobalWorks. When Avaya wanted to relaunch its brand worldwide, it was given project times of one-and-a-half to five years from consultants like IBM Global Solutions and BearingPoint, according to Radziewsky. GlobalWorks estimated the project would take less than nine months, won the account, and within seven months had the main site up and running, with new international sites going live each month.

In tune

Manhattan-based GlobalWorks was created in 1999 by the Radziewskys and merged in 2000 with Angantyr's Liquid Digital Information Systems. The merger created an unusual agency with years of global branding and marketing experience and the technology know-how to distribute those brands.

"Technology is part of everything we do. We treat it as a creative discipline," said Radziewsky, explaining that technologists are always at the table during discussions of brand strategies. "We have to think not just about brand identity and relevance, but about delivery of brand content around the world."

In marketing, the most important technology is, of course, the Web. Radziewsky points out that the Web not only created a



global marketplace, it completely changed the relationship between marketers and consumers. "Old media was about controlling time and space," he said. "New media is about transferring control to the customer."

Radziewsky said he sees GlobalWorks' role as ensuring that its clients' brands are at home in every cultural neighborhood and every media worldwide. "The Internet speaks your language and never closes. When you go on the Net, whether here or in Tibet, you go to the places that are in tune with your needs, values, and behaviors."

Indeed, the idea of "local" marketing no longer makes sense, Radziewsky continued. "You can't contain information anymore—whatever you do locally is seen and heard worldwide," he said, noting that many companies still do not understand this.



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Agile partner

GlobalWorks is uniquely suited to help its clients adjust to the new paradigm, with an extremely diverse workforce in New York and a network of market specialists around the world. “We brought representatives of the world to a single place under one roof. There is no such thing as a foreign language or foreign culture for us,” said Radziewsky. “We speak dozens of languages and represent dozens of cultures.”

The company breaks with tradition when it comes to getting on-the-ground information. Rather than setting up satellite foreign offices, as most of the large US marketing firms have done, it taps into a network of about 500 consultants, strategists, linguists, and editors around the world.

“We developed these relationships over decades of being in the global marketing business,” said Radziewsky. “It’s an advantage for our customers because it’s extremely fast—it doesn’t require setting up a network of agencies with their own P&Ls and interests.”

Speed is a theme that crops up repeatedly in conversation with Radziewsky and Angantyr. Just as the IT team at GlobalWorks created a platform that allows Avaya to quickly make changes to its Web sites around the world, regardless of language, the branding team helped Lucent Technologies redefine itself as the number one choice in convergence—at a time when everyone believed convergence was merely hype.

Although Lucent’s agency at the time was marketing giant McCann Erickson, the much smaller GlobalWorks won the account. “Lucent realized that in their industry, the velocity of change is so rapid that they cannot afford to rely on slow-moving agencies,” said Radziewsky. “They needed an agile partner in the marketing field.”

GlobalWorks helped Lucent launch a global campaign in 24 countries, 17 languages, and four mediums. It also drew on its technology expertise to create software running on wireless tablet PCs to poll trade show attendees. “The results went into our program, were analyzed and tabulated, and were presented to Lucent in real time,” explained Angantyr.

Built-in flexibility

It’s not just that the GlobalWorks team has a robust technology element woven into everything they do; it’s the approach taken. “The problem is that so much of what is done today is digital and involves IT, but IT people don’t understand marketing, and for the most part, marketing people don’t understand IT,” said Radziewsky.

Recognizing this truth, Angantyr insists on built-in flexibility for every project. He points to the Avaya project and says the reason other companies’ time frames were so much longer is they believe in defining all of the elements before building.

“If you take the approach that you can never define everything, you build in ways for people to change their minds. What if certain products aren’t available in certain countries, or they need to be talked about differently in certain places?” he said. “If you don’t have a system that allows for that, you’re never going to win that battle.”

In essence, said Swedish-born Angantyr, he and his team solve marketing problems by applying just enough technology to solve the problem. “And we do it in a way that doesn’t clash with the client’s internal roadmap.”

Radziewsky, who was born in Russia, uses an Indian deity to express the company’s underlying philosophy. “In its largest sense, our job is to be a digital-age Ganesha, a remover of all obstacles.”

—Jill Rose



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