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We have built our brands on social media through communities that engage over common interests.

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### What's the most interesting thing you've done outside of work in the last 12 months?

I spent time with my kids. I've travelled with them and tried to inculcate the habit of slowing down a bit even if it sometimes means getting bored. I feel kids these days have forgotten what it's like to slow down and observe things around them. When kids get bored, they get creative and that often unleashes their artistic spirits.

### Name a brand marketing executive or corporate personality - Indian or international - you admire. And tell us what about her/him is admirable.

I really admire Anand Mahindra (CMD, Mahindra Group) for building an Indian brand with global ambition. What he has done with his business and his social enterprises is just phenomenal. Emily Weiss (founder and CEO of Glossier) is someone right up there as well, for successfully transitioning from being a fantastic storyteller to someone who is now a poster-child in the direct-to-consumer (DTC) space. She has articulated her ambition of creating a brand that people love so very well.

### If your brand were an animal, what would it be - and why?

A bee - a meticulous, loyal, capable and busy builder, who doesn't shirk from its duty towards the community. Bees are aware that they are smartest when they are truly connected to the collective spirit of their tribe. Though each bee is extremely capable, they are among the most 'democratic' species. They have evolved to survive in and adapt to changing conditions.

### What was the biggest challenge you and your team faced in the last 6-12 months - and what did you learn from it?

The biggest challenge was in expanding the media business to commerce while maintaining a judicious balance between the editorial ethos and commerce-led content. After months of hard work, we created MensXP Mud, a community that normalises the conversation around male beauty needs.

### Which outside forces or trends impact consumer behaviour in your category most? Give an example.

We recently stepped into e-commerce and skincare, with MensXP Shop and MensXP Mud. Consumers are demanding more from their shopping experience. Convenience is the new buzzword; consumers expect a seamless, intuitive and curated digital experience. Customers like to invest in brands that stand for something. They want a richer, comprehensive and personalised shopping experience.

### Marketers across segments have fetishised the millennial. But hand on heart, which demographic will drive growth for your brand over the next 12 months?

Hand on heart, it is millennials. For us, they're not just a demographic definition, but a psychographic one, driven by their motivations, anxieties and aspirations. Their consumption patterns keep brands on their toes. We have worked, over the years, to create millennial communities and we cater to them with trend-setting content.

### Nowadays brands get trolled all too frequently on social media. As a marketer, have your views on trolling changed in the last couple of years?

It's always a mixed bag. Perception management is a big part of brand communication and PR. An honest approach and having individual connections with consumers is the best way forward.

### If you could advertise on only one medium for the next 6 months, what would that be - and why?

More than choosing, it's about defining the role of each medium basis the communication objectives. We have built our brands on social media through communities that engage over common interests. TV and print help provide validation to newer brands in a cluttered environment, while digital is a last mile conversion medium. For digital-first DTC brands, digital works as the primary medium as it helps with both conversion and conversation.

### What do agency partners grumble about most, today?

Agency partners, and clients too sometimes, get caught between finding the right balance between their marketing spends across the funnel. Most companies utilise their spends on top of the marketing funnel... only some navigate it to the bottom. Marketers who understand this fine line end up with the most evolved approach. ■



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