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

I have been part of a volleyball team comprising men in their late 30s and 40s. It's a team we've put together... we've been playing tournaments, where we compete with youngsters – we have been losing most of the games, but it has been fun.

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

I admire all marketers who have built new brands from scratch and have been able to fight against established brands and make a mark. These journeys are all stories of clarity, focus, perseverance, failure, and course correction.

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

Eagle – always flying high fearlessly, with a keen vision that's on the lookout for great opportunities.

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

Over the last year, we have been looking at driving the e-commerce business in a big way. It involved putting together a team, customising our product portfolio, and making changes on the marketing front. A young team has driven this process, and the learning for me is – if you give a big challenge to a motivated team with enough elbowroom to operate on their own, then the kind of execution you get is amazing.

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

As the non-urban and rural crowd connects with the rest of the world, their increasing aspirations make them 'lucrative' consumers. With the democratisation of the internet, consumers have become tech-savvy and conscious of their preferences. As brands, we need to have an emotional connection with them.

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

For us, the belly of the nation – lower middle class, especially in rural areas – is the core target group. It will continue to be the growth driver for our brands.

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?

In the digital age, where opinions can be expressed at the click of a button, the biggest challenge is being prepared for every possibility. Backlash is inevitable; however, it is important to keep a unified front and be innovative in whatever you do. A troll, when dealt with in the right way, can enable a brand to break through the clutter of the internet.

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

My medium of choice for the next six months would surely be TV, as it provides the scale and engagement needed in our business. But if the question is about picking a medium focused on a specific target segment, and managing with very limited monies, then digital is undoubtedly the best platform. It gives maximum brand recognition with minimum investment. Though digital started off as a platform for the millennial, it has slowly grown into a medium of communication for every demographic. Soon it will challenge TV.

What do agency partners grumble about most, today?

Given the action in the digital space, with OTT platforms, web series, content-heavy marketing efforts and long-format advertising, we have been pushing our creative and digital media agencies for sales impact, ROI, media efficiency and metric-based marketing. This has been a regular point of debate and argument – and I'm sure it's leading to some grumbling too. ■



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