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PERSONAL

Who is your biggest professional mentor?

I've been blessed to have been guided and mentored by various people including my bosses and seniors. They've all shaped my career and the professional I am today.

If not a brand marketer, what would you be?

Restaurateur. Actually, I still hope to open my very own resto-pub in my second innings!

Name a brand (other than your own) you admire. And tell us why.

Netflix. Just look at its journey. It started so low-key with DVD sales and rentals by mail followed by streaming media. Today it is present in 190 countries, creating world-class content with budgets that are larger than established studios and production houses. Netflix is changing the very nature of the entertainment business and distribution throughout the world. Its biggest success is that the entire brand building exercise, though somewhat conservative, generates tremendous organic reach.

CATEGORY

What are the big challenges you see coming your way in the next 12 months?

Previously, there were only broadcasters; now, with so much choice, you need to work harder to attract the same consumer. Today, you have to include digital in your plan. However, there's a big question mark over its measurability. So, designing the right marketing mix could be a challenge.

What's the biggest change in the way consumers approach your segment today, versus a year back? To what do you attribute this?

Multiple genres of broadcast - news, movies, regional, OTT - are vying for the attention of the same consumer. Consumer loyalty is changing from 'platform conformity' to 'content conformity'. Technology is increasing inter-connectivity. The post millennial generation is born to interactive entertainment; viewing habits are evolving.

Which product segment out there impacts trends in your category most? Why?

Multi-platform consumption is the most significant trend we are witnessing. Today, content is platform-agnostic. The audience shifts seamlessly from device to device, while consuming the same content. A brand's marketing strategy too needs to be platform-agnostic and content-first.

In what way/s does your marketing strategy change from tier I to tier II and III markets?

The way a metro reacts to communication is very different from the way a mini-metro would. Similarly, Maharashtra would react differently to communication from Gujrat. You

must keep in mind the sensibilities of consumers across each market and design communication accordingly. This holds true for tier I versus tier II markets as well.

MARKETING

What's the toughest part of being a brand marketer today?

Making your communication stand out and creating communication that breaks through the clutter and engages the consumer. This is especially true at a time when there is such a battle for mindshare.

As a marketer in the digital age, what is your biggest nightmare?

Accuracy and measurability of digital is a big concern. As a marketer, you want to try the digital medium because of the reach it offers, but the effectiveness and authenticity of the medium is yet to be ascertained. So the nightmare is the toss up between using digital or not in your campaigns.

ADVERTISING

What is your lead medium of communication today?

Which medium do you use least?

Television remains our lead medium. The ROI it offers is unmatched. Its measurability and efficacy are much better than other mediums. We use outdoor the least.

Are the best creative minds still in advertising?

Not really. There are so many content creators and people with ideas; the best communication can come from anywhere. That's why we work with a variety of people for our communication needs.

In what way has your relationship with your agency partners - creative and media planning/buying - changed of late? What's the one must-have quality for an agency today?

We look at them as part of the same team. We recently changed our media agency and our relationship with them is a partnership. Most critical is the understanding of the brand objectives. The media agency must also understand and deliver the best economies for the brand.

Are you open to paying agencies a pitch fee? Why/why not?

There are many situations in which the pitching agency needs to make a significant investment, for instance, in research. In such situations, we would be willing to consider it. In India, so far, agencies have not been paid for pitches, but as the industry modernises, this could soon become a reality.