



SONIA HURIA

Head, Corporate Marketing, Communications and
Sustainability | Viacom18

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PERSONAL

Who is your biggest professional mentor?

Rajesh Kamat. He has been a big influence on my career and the way I've shaped up as a professional. He infused in me the spirit of never letting a challenge overwhelm me. That attitude is my biggest strength.

If not a brand marketer, what would you be?

I'd be a historian. I'm a firm believer in the adage - the knowledge of the past is what determines our future course of action. Given the cyclical nature of civilisation, history is a fascinating study of humankind.

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

Airbnb, for the cross-geographical appeal of their campaigns and the way they resonate with the urban youth and wanderers. Imagine a brand that has convinced you to open up your home to strangers - how powerful and reassuring the brand must be!

CATEGORY

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

The biggest challenge is measuring ROI and measuring the effectiveness of marketing initiatives. A brand's equity and public perception need to be evaluated on a scale greater than direct impact to P&L.

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

The M&E (media and entertainment) industry is driven by technology and research. We are speaking to an audience that is spoilt for choice. Homes are becoming multi-screen, with the advent of OTT video services and social media players betting big on video. Ensuring consumer attention/engagement has become a challenge.

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

In corporate marketing, the industry becomes the product category. Technology impacts data mining and data analysis. OTT has disrupted traditional terrestrial distribution; consequently, the very nature of content development has changed. Digital measurement can disrupt the allied discipline of advertising, on both creative and business fronts.

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

For a corporate brand, while the marketing mix and tonality vary across market segments, the core messaging remains the same.

MARKETING

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

Improving effectiveness of content marketing, improving customer understanding of the brand, launching new products in existing markets innovatively, and supporting sales efforts effectively.

Name the biggest professional hurdle you faced recently... How did you tide over it?

The challenge was uniting our individual and disparate brands such as COLORS, MTV, Nickelodeon, Vh1, under one umbrella. We base all our network marketing efforts on the 'Open New Worlds' philosophy.

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

Out trust with fake news that led to a full-blown crisis around the movie Padmaavat has made me extremely wary of fake news in the digital age. The use of technology to fabricate news that tarnishes a brand's image is a menace facing every communications and marketing professional today.

ADVERTISING

What is your lead medium of communication today?

Which medium do you use least?

Our ATL marketing efforts operate primarily within print and digital media, while experiential marketing forms a large part of our BTL mix.

Are the best creative minds still in advertising?

I believe they are, especially if you see content marketing as an allied discipline. And there has been an influx of young talent that is questioning the traditional status-quo.

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?

Agencies today are more of partners and less of vendors. This has improved their engagement and commitment levels.

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

I believe such practices are a derivative of market conditions. When its time comes, the pitch fee will be the norm rather than the aberration.

Do you wish you could work with just one full-service creative agency instead of multiple creative minds?

I would prefer working with multiple agencies. It is human to seek conformity and uniformity, but creativity prospers in conflict. It's a marketer's job to manage the conflict.