

ADVERTISING STAR



Eric Robertson: Marketing Manager (Etcetera) for Ad Agency JWT Worldwide

[By Robin Salisian]

At JWT Worldwide, currently the United State's largest and world's fourth-largest advertising agency, Eric Robertson dabbles in just about everything. Marketing. Account managing. PR. Event planning. You name it. Each day is different than the next, and Robertson never knows quite what to expect. However, he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I'm passionate about what I do," he said. However, it took him some time to get there.

"My first years in New York were spent working different jobs in different industries. After stints at a financial firm and a couple of non-profit organizations, I took several months to decide what I wanted from my career and what would best fit my personality."

Highly energetic and creatively driven, Robertson discovered advertising was his niche. In 2004, he joined JWT, and while he said it was a lateral move, it was one of the best moves he could have made.

JWT was founded in 1864 by William James Carlton and renamed, in 1877, The James Walter Thompson Company by James Walter Thompson. With its headquarters in New York, JWT has offices all over the world, including Hong Kong, Sydney, and London.

Currently working as JWT's marketing manager, Robertson says that the best part of his job is the wide-ranging projects he is involved with. One day he works with teens on a project called RelightNY, "a pro-bono project started by New York City teens to help inspire people to switch to energy-saving light bulbs," and the next on organizing a digital forum.

"I'm also part of the trend-spotting and strategic-content team that conducts qualitative and quantitative market research to identify consumer insights that will feed into strategies and/or creative briefs,"

Robertson continued. Not to mention working with some of the "world's most-loved brands," including Ford, Johnson & Johnson, Kellogg's, Kimberly-Clark, Kraft, Nestle, Nokia, and Rolex.

An admirer of the Smirnoff's commercial, "Sea," which he described as visually stunning, and the Sunsilk's "Hair Off," which is funny, vibrant, and unexpected, said Robertson, he is fascinated by what captures an audience.

"I've enjoyed watching the viral-video phenomenon unfold because it's fascinating to see what captures people's attention. In one day, three of my friends emailed me a link to the recent YouTube clip of Filipino prisoners dancing in unison to Michael Jackson's 'Thriller.' One friend lives in New York, another Indianapolis, and the last in Kuala Lumpur. It's such a silly clip, and I stopped watching after 20 seconds, but it captured the attention of a global audience and shows how momentum can build quickly. We are all on the lookout for that next cool thing we can share with our friends first."

But there is a catch. "I think it makes us as a society a bit cynical. We've begun questioning: 'Are these clips real or are we being fooled?'"

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Catch up with friends. Lately, I've been attending a lot of concerts.

Q. What CD is in your CD player right now?

A. Do people still listen to CDs? My iPod stopped working this past weekend, but I'm sure that Mark Ronson's "Version" and Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black" would be on my most-played list.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Vanity Fair*, because somebody left it on my desk.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. *24*. The episodes are best watched back-to-back, so I wait until the season is released on DVD and then proceed to watch them in practically 24 hours.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. I've learned more about business, and especially advertising, from my current boss, Marian Salzman, than I've learned from anyone in my entire professional career.



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Similarly, with the rising popularity of TiVo and the Internet, capturing people's attention remains an issue, but not as much as keeping their attention. "People are bombarded with messages begging for their attention and time," explained Robertson. "In order for advertisers to reach consumers, it's imperative that they communicate with them on a personal level. As a result, brands will increasingly create original entertainment content and build social-networking forums to help foster stronger connections with consumers and

like-minded people. In addition to messages, product innovations will play a key role in maintaining the relevance of brands in consumers' minds. All of this will be driven by the need for deeper insights into societies, communities, and individuals and a greater understanding of people's motivations and behaviors."

So. Account managing. Marketing. PR. Business. It's no wonder Robertson advises eager individuals interested in advertising to keep an open mind. Look where it got him!

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