

ADVERTISING STAR



## J.C. Abbruzzi, Copywriter at GSD&M

[By Robin Salisian]

J.C. Abbruzzi thought crunching numbers all day would kill him. “Literally,” said the copywriter for GSD&M, an advertising agency located in Austin, TX.

So Abbruzzi ditched majoring in finance, zeroed in on his journalism background, combined his business skills with his zeal for writing, and found advertising. He graduated with a communications degree from the University of Texas in 2002, and ever since, he’s thrived in the ad business.

“I focused on the creative track and went through the portfolio program,” recalled Abbruzzi. Now, Abbruzzi works as GSD&M’s copywriter, working on ads that include Southwest Airlines, BMW, and AARP.

“The work for AARP is probably the most interesting because I’m not trying to sell a product; I’m trying to get Washington, DC, to pay more attention to some of today’s most-pressing social issues.”

This is what GSD&M was founded on. According to its website, “Right from the start, the six founders had a gut sense about the power of having a purpose in business or in any endeavor, a purpose beyond making money. Successful advertising, they sensed, was dependent on something more fundamental than an interesting product.”

Thirty-six years later, GSD&M is thriving. The company has grown from six employees

to 650 and has gone from earning zero dollars to earning \$1.5 billion in revenue. Building the company on purpose seems to be working.

But growth involves several components, including new technology. “Advertising needed a major update,” said Abbruzzi, “and technology is forcing us to really put more thought into what we do.”

**Q. What do you do for fun?**

A. Live music. Lots of running. Wakeskate.

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

A. You mean iPod? Lately a lot of Daft Punk, Ghostland Observatory (amazing), the new White Stripes, Cold War Kids, Blood of Abraham, CSS, Arcade Fire, and Whitey.

**Q. What is the last magazine you read?**

A. *The Week*. The best news magazine around.

**Q. What is your favorite TV show?**

A. A three-way tie between *Family Guy*, *Entourage*, and *Planet Earth*.

**Q. Who is your role model?**

A. My art director, Tim Delger.

The update? TiVo. “Thank God for TiVo.”

“I think the biggest shift is that we’ll actually have more of a one-on-one connection with consumers. They’re now able to interact with what we deliver, as opposed to just watching spots. We just have to make sure we continue to entertain/connect with consumers as we educate them about our brands.”

While Abbruzzi entertains and educates consumers from inside the rooms of GSD&M, he also enjoys *being* entertained by other companies’ ads, especially by traditional work such as the Sony Bravia spots and creative ads by Skittles and Starburst.

“The work Crispin did for Mini a few years back...brilliant,” Abbruzzi added. “They took something so small and made it huge. Also a big fan of the Smirnoff ‘Tea Party’ web work.” A mixture of creativity, perseverance, and fun is what drives Abbruzzi today. “I’m a LEO, and I currently have a Mohawk,” he wants people to know, and he also tells young professionals, “Work hard, study the award books constantly, and keep up with as much new music, movies, and pop culture as possible.”



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University of Texas  
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