

ADVERTISING STAR



## Kristi Bridges: Partner and Creative Director of The Sawtooth Group

[By Robin Salisian]

When Kristi Bridges, partner and creative director of The Sawtooth Group, visited an ad agency at age 11, she fell hard for the advertising industry. She met Carol Ann Fine, a partner at the agency, showed off her writing, and after Fine claimed to love it, decided she wanted to be just like Fine. “I’ve been in love with this business ever since,” said Bridges.

Bridges attended Syracuse University for one year, transferred to the School of Visual Arts, and immersed herself in creativity. She was anxious, she admitted, to be in the city and be around advertising people. Anxious indeed. At just 17, Bridges began working at DDB Needham, an advertising agency founded “[to] forever remain a vigilant enemy of the ordinary,” says its website.

At DDB Needham, she worked with clients from Volkswagen to Hershey’s and Clairol. From such early exposure, Bridges learned “all the intricacies of the industry,” including what advertising tactics are best: the ones that really make deep, personal connections with the customer, she explained.

“Sometimes that can be done through TV, and sometimes it needs to be done more personally, more locally. The things that work best generally are the ones that are inherently true to the brand and the customer.”

“I think we have more opportunities to reach our audiences,” she continued, when asked about the impact of TiVo. “And we have the ability to do it when they are really looking for our message. We just need to open our minds to new ways of doing it.”

Eventually, Bridges left the Needham family and ventured from Manhattan to New Jersey,

where her “head hunter” introduced her to Sawtooth. In 1997, Bridges joined the agency.

The Sawtooth Group, founded in 1988 by Bill Schermund (current president and CEO), promises “to be curious about your brand until we know every aspect of it,” “to be passionate about getting to know your customers and the world they live in,” and “to be absolutely relentless about inventing new, and often surprising, ways to help your brand reach its potential.” Welcome to The Sawtooth Group.

To the agency, Bridges brought “big agency experience” with her, which worked both to her advantage and disadvantage. Knowledge

and experience in the industry was a bonus—“she [was] able to offer her clients exactly what she [knew] they can’t get anywhere else: personalization, an agency willing to invest their own money, and time to learn their brand and consumer inside and out and immerse themselves fully in the mindset and big-agency experience in a small-agency environment,” says her bio; however, the adjustment to a smaller agency took Bridges some time—six months.

But she acclimated, and this year, she celebrates 10 years at The Sawtooth Group, six of those years as its creative director.

During those 10 years, Bridges has worked with several well-known clients, including McCormick, Pabst Blue Ribbon (PBR), and Saint Peter’s College.

“For all of them, we’ve done integrated campaigns that find a way to truly connect with each respective target audience. Through our current print and TV campaign, the McCormick brand has become a reflection of today’s mom and everything that is important to her.

“Our PBR campaign,” she continued, “is a ‘thank you’ to the unique, loyal PBR drinker and reflects their passion for the beer and for self-expression. Drinkers get to share their art and passion with each other.”

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

A. Play tennis, cook, and go to the beach

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

A. Dave Matthews Band.

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

A. *Vanity Fair*.

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

A. *Entourage*.

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

A. My 13-year-old daughter.



ADVERTISING STAR

Which then, with a plethora of campaigns to choose from, is Bridges's favorite?

"[The ads] I'm most proud of [are] the ads that work. Right now, we are seeing incredibly positive results [from] our new PBR campaign, as well as ongoing positive results [from] our McCormick campaign. I think that's a result of really finding compelling, relevant ways to connect with those particular audiences."

From a young girl visiting an ad agency to a "big agency veteran," Kristi Bridges lives and breathes advertising. Bridges offered advice to young individuals seeking the same thing she dreamed of at age 11.

"Learn as much as you can. Every day, someone invents a new way to communicate. You will be most valuable to your company and your clients if you know all of the options."

**ON THE NET**

The Sawtooth Group  
[www.sawtoothgroup.com](http://www.sawtoothgroup.com)

DDB Needham  
[www.ddb.com/DDBWeb](http://www.ddb.com/DDBWeb)

McCormick  
[www.mccormick.com](http://www.mccormick.com)

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.