

ADVERTISING STAR



Jason Bangerter and Ryan Goodwin Were STRUCK by Advertising at a Young Age

[By Robin Salisian]

With pencils poised in their hands, Jason Bangerter and Ryan Goodwin, creators of ad agency STRUCK, can conquer the world—or at least the advertising world. And all of it began in Bangerter's backyard.

"You don't have to go to New York to do incredible work for incredible people," says Goodwin. "Jason and I were in the same B.F.A. class, so we spent four days a week honing our skills as young designers. Jason had been working in the design and advertising industry since he was 16 and had accumulated some mean business skills even while going to school. By the time we graduated, he had a rockin' freelance business out of his house."

But before college, each ad guru had discovered his passion for advertisement at a young age. Drawing, instead of math class or football camp, enticed Bangerter. "I have always had an affinity for drawing," he says. Goodwin admits that his route to advertising started as soon as he could hold a pencil.

One thing both advertisers refused to fall prey to, however, was the "starving artist syndrome."

"When I heard about graphic design...it seemed like the best way to do what I love without becoming the traditional starving artist (so, yes, my true capitalist self was beginning to bloom)," says Goodwin.

Bangerter adds, "I decided to pursue design/advertising as a career especially when I realized that the pay was a lot better and it didn't involve swinging a hammer."

The two met at Brigham Young University, where they both studied graphic design and

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Bangerter: Hang out with my five-year-old and three-year-old daughters. Have dinner with my wife and good friends. Travel to random places. Play lots of Halo. I love history. Goodwin: Mountain bike, snowboard, rock climbing, and I have a real sickness for German cars.

Q. Throughout your lifetime, what movie have you watched the most?

A. Bangerter: I don't watch movies more than once (except *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*). Goodwin: I'll bet I've seen *Rad* more times than any other movie. I used to know every word... "Hulk Hogan, eat your heart out...a backflip!"

Q. What was the last book you read?

A. Bangerter: *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Goodwin: I just finished two books at the same time: *Sharp Objects* and *The Tipping Point*.

Q. What music is on your iPod/in your CD player right now?

A. Bangerter: Lots of REM, Death Cab for Cutie, Smiths, Audioslave, They Might Be Giants, and The White Stripes, to name a few. Goodwin: I have been bingeing on The Dear Hunter for weeks now; I think I'm addicted.

Q. If you had an extra hour in the day, what would you spend it doing?

A. Bangerter: Hanging out with my family. Goodwin: I read books with the appetite of a gorilla, so an extra hour would be spent soaking in as much as I possibly can.

graduated in 2002 with their B.F.A. degrees.

"One day we were sitting around in class, and our professor asked what we wanted to do with our careers," says Bangerter. "After listening to several lame answers, Ryan jumped out of his chair and decreed, 'I want to make cash!' I knew who I wanted as my partner when I started my company, then called Struck Design, in January 2003."

Their first taste of advertising came when energy drink producer XanGo asked Bangerter to build its visual brand. Undertaking the project on his own seemed overwhelming, so he and Goodwin teamed up and began a studio together.

"They liked the work we did for them so much they called us their brand managers and began pumping us full of work," says Goodwin. "We managed to make a name for ourselves pretty quickly with the interactive mini-sites that we were doing while building some of the fastest-growing visual brands to come out of Utah in the past decade."



In 2006, STRUCK merged with W Communications, "a boutique advertising agency...in Salt Lake City," which, as Goodwin

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describes, rounded out the entire creative-service package. The once two-man ad agency now consists of more than 40 people and more than \$15 million in annual billing.

"We plan on growing as long as we can continue to produce stellar work," Goodwin says. "It's all about the work."

"Struck started like most businesses do. With a hankering, an idea, and a whole lotta guts," says the company's website.

"Regardless of the assignment, regardless of the medium, regardless of the budget, we strive to create materials that turn ordinary people into brand evangelists," the site continues. "And what's more, we flex the research, strategy, and media capacity to make sure those people are the right people for the job."

Officially, Bangerter's title is president; however, he'll do just about anything to "navigate the ship" and keep the company on target—such as donning the maintenance hat.

"This morning, I cleaned out the storage room," he says.

Goodwin, as the executive design director, "oversees the entire creative product on the design and interactive teams, while doing the normal executive sales that most agency owners are involved in...and help[s] out...with client services [and] project management processes, while contributing to the overall direction of the agency as a whole."

In other words, these ad stars are *busy*.

Over the years, STRUCK has acquired

numerous clients, including the Utah Office of Tourism, Deer Valley Ski Resort, XanGo, Ski Utah, and Sweet's Candy. Working for the State of Utah has proved to be interesting, and while pairing advertising with politics might sound odd, "it's a cool thing to see your work get featured on the front page of the business sections of local newspapers each time you launch another national campaign," admits Goodwin.

One particular ad Goodwin takes pride in was for a street-soccer startup called Calle; STRUCK developed Calle's visual brand on the "thinnest of shoestring budgets."

"We developed a simple, black, round sticker that is then applied to crosswalk signs," Goodwin says. "Just enough civil disobedience to help young soccer-playing skaters to make a subtle shout-out to other brand evangelists on their own turf: the street."

When it comes to recalling the best advertising tactic, Bangerter agrees with Goodwin. The tactic? "Brand-centric," a device that gets the message across that's appropriate for the audience and the company.

"It's rare these days to actually break through the monotone buzz that the average person is inundated with, so whatever manages to actually steal your attention long enough to be heard is really great," says Goodwin. What's even better? "To do something so memorable that your audience starts talking about it with their circle of friends."

Other tactics Bangerter sees in advertising's future include product placement and integration. TiVo, too, which may intimidate less-experienced advertisers, is something Bangerter accepts and embraces. He even admits, "I am a huge fan of TiVo. [There's] [n]othing like fast-forwarding through all the mundane stuff people want you to sit through."

And Goodwin predicts that "the role digital will play is clearly going to continue to grow."

These STRUCK creators make conquering the advertising world appear easy with their exuberance and passion for crafting scintillating campaigns. So what do Bangerter and Goodwin advise eager advertisers to do?

"Make sure that you have enough time to pursue your interests outside of work. It will make you more creatively productive while you are at work," says Goodwin.

Couple that with Bangerter's hearty "Do it!" and you'll be well on your way to subjugating the ad world, too.

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