

ADVERTISING STAR



Advertising Freelancer: Alex Grossman

[By Robin Salisian]

Alex Grossman, a freelance advertiser, says his favorite types of ads are the ones “where the client kill[s] round after round of work, but [he and the client] finally reach a consensus and [come] up with something great.” In other words, perseverance *works* and this Ad Star is living proof.

In 1993, Grossman graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.A. in English, ventured out to New York, and began working in a position for Sony, which, he admits, “[he] thought was a job in advertising.”

“Then one day the actual ad agency came by and presented Creative,” he continues. “I was blown away. I moved down to Atlanta to attend the Creative Circus a month later.”

Located in Atlanta, GA, Creative Circus offers four programs ranging from art direction to copywriting and from graphic design to photography. The 200-plus student body is comprised of students across the nation. And from 1995-1996, Grossman called Creative Circus home.

“Our approach is to offer the student the best possible individual attention we can,” says the Creative Circus’ website about its philosophy. “Individuality is the very thing that makes one successful in this business. So we try to stress one-on-one attention as much as possible.”

“‘Nice’ is a big one here,” the site continues. “No one wants or likes people who are not nice. So we stress being as nice as possible. Who defines nice? It’s in the soul of the beholder [employer]. But we try hard to make sure that each person who leaves here — as a Grad or [not] — knows that as good as

they might be, they’re not LeBron James or Eli Manning or Britney Spears. That before they can become ‘stars’ they have to rock. And if they do become celebrities, not to take it personally.”

Today, Grossman works as a freelancer and has acquired, over the past five years, a rich clientele list. From USA Networks, WWF, FEARNet, and The Jewish Film Festival to eBay, T-Mobile, and Jack in the Box, Grossman’s done it all, or close to it. “I’ve worked on just about everything,” he says.

But how, without a boss consistently

assigning work, does Grossman avoid unemployment? A flexible schedule and opportunities to travel *do* sound appealing; however, so does a steady paycheck. Grossman provides an explanation.

“Essentially it works like this: I sit around on my ass playing scrabble on Facebook waiting for the phone to ring. It does. An ad agency asks if I’m available. I am,” he says. “Sometimes I’ll fly out there and work for a week or so and then fly home and continue working. Sometimes I never have to leave home. This is preferred. Some days I’m working on three assignments at once [Shhh]. Other, less hectic days, just one.” Once again, Grossman proves his persevering nature.

And while Grossman prefers working from home, his job has taken him to San Francisco to work for ad agency Goodby, to Chicago to work for ad agency Leo Burnett, and to Seattle, to work for Publicis, an agency network.

When asked where he thought the future of advertising was headed, Grossman puts it simply: “Live TV.”

“I hate to say it, but I truly think this is the future. Things like sporting events where it’s impossible for viewers to turn away from the communication,” he says. “Also, 50’s style

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. I currently play way too much Scrabulous on Facebook.

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

A. *Annie the Musical*. My daughter demands it.

Q. What is the last magazine you read?

A. *Guilt and Pleasure*, a really good magazine if you can find it.

Q. What is your favorite TV show?

A. I am currently Netflixing Season 2 of *Arrested Development*. Genius.

Q. Who is your role model?

A. My art director, Tim Delger.



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TV where, we see more shows brought to us by a particular sponsor. Things are already heading in this direction. For example, 24 Hour Fitness plays an integral part in *The Biggest Loser*.”

Grossman also believes some of the best advertisements “sneak up on people.”

“Don’t let them know it’s an ad until it’s too late. Assume people are smart.”

“Also, push your clients to do better work,” he continues. “I’ve always believed that good advertising is kind of like spinach. They’re not going to like it when you’re giving it

to them, but later on down the road when their business is healthy and strong, they’ll thank you. The problem is that clients love ‘candy.’ Work that’s easy to digest reminds them of other work in the category, and it won’t offend any of the higher-ups in their company. This work will kill them.”

What advice, then, does this persevering freelancer have for eager new advertisers?

“Get along with everyone you work with. I mean everyone. You never know when that junior account guy is going to open up the next great shop.”

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