

ADVERTISING STAR



Cramer-Krasselt President and CEO: Peter Krivkovich

[By Robin Salisian]

"It's a funny story," starts Peter Krivkovich when asked how he got into advertising. "When I was in college, I was sitting in a bar with a friend and we were looking for a one-hour college course to fit into our schedules. It had to be between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., and we decided the first thing that fit, we'd take. Advertising starts with an 'A,' and that's how we picked it."

"I remember telling my friend that I had no idea what advertising was all about," he continues. "I can't write jingles and I don't know how to sing," I said. [But] [o]nce I got into the course, there was a natural discovery of 'wow — this fits.' I was immediately hooked."

So hooked, in fact, that he graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a degree in Advertising. And after a stint as a bartender at Butch McGuire's in downtown Chicago, he landed his first advertising job as a copywriter.

"At 25, I became a partner in a creative boutique, where in a span of two years, we drove the business from zero to \$50 million, and then right back down again. It taught me a lot about how not to run a business," admits Krivkovich. "From there, I went to Leo Burnett on the account management side."

He opened his own agency, Hackenberg, Normann, Krivkovich. But in 1980, Cramer-Krasselt (C-K), founded in 1898 by Fred Cramer and William Krasselt, "opened their Chicago office by acquiring [his] agency, which in those days was seen as a creative boutique." In 1998, Krivkovich became both President and CEO.

Headquartered in Chicago, Cramer-Krasselt is the third largest independent agency in the U.S. Its creativity is illustrious, winning C-K two Gold and one silver Effie, two bronze Lions, the 2005 Athena campaign of the year, and the 2006 ADWEEK BUZZ Award for the

Best Overall "Buzz" Campaign of the Year. With offices in New York, Milwaukee, and Phoenix, Cramer-Krasselt demands attention from advertisers everywhere.

C-K's mission? "To be among the nation's most valued creative companies serving clients that demand quality, fascination and first place."

"A typical day involves a series of strategy meetings about our clients, our campaigns, and our own company goals," says Krivkovich. "It's fascinating, and I wake up

every day excited to get to work." Mostly, the "strategic aspect," thrills him, "both in terms of where C-K needs to go next and in terms of what opportunities [their] clients have to outflank and outmaneuver the competition."

And what a client list they have. From AirTran Airways, Benjamin Moore, Corona Beer, and CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, to Dex Yellow Pages, H.J. Heinz Co., Hyatt Place, and many more, C-K represents major brands "across virtually every industry."

"Many of our clients came from the challenger position and now are number one in their categories," he says. "We do it all — from ads to a 13-episode TV series, from street teams to the most popular viral campaign of the year, from placements on hot TV shows like *The Sopranos*' (three in all) to wild postings — whatever it takes to move a brand and crush the competition."

But what Krivkovich is most proud of is his work that "absolutely changes the category conversation."

"Our creative breaks through the advertising clutter because we counsel clients to speak in a different voice than their competitors," he says. "A classic example is our work for Corona. Beer industry advertising tends to be homogenous — the ads are often loud and sophomoric humor. Corona's campaign is about the spirit of the getaway and has an entirely different look and feel: instead of dance music, you hear seagulls; instead of being inside a nightclub, our TV commercials

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. I love skiing in Telluride, Colorado, where I have a second home. On vacation, I tend to go to historic and archeological sites in far-reaching places like Indonesia and Turkey.

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

A. *'Breaker' Morant* — it has incredible dialogue.

Q. What was the last book you read?

A. *I Am America (And So Can You!)* by Stephen Colbert

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

A. I'm all over the place from Janis Joplin to Bonnie Raitt to the White Stripes.

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

A. I'd spend it in an Asian art gallery — I collect Asian art and antiques.



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take place on the beach. This strategy is one of the reasons Corona is the number-one imported beer in America.”

Krivkovich’s excitement for his work is palpable. Even when asked about challenges, he addresses them as a way to grow the company.

“In terms of challenges, our industry is in its most dynamic phase since the early ’70s, when television hit its prime. With the Internet, cell phones, small screens, large screens, even no screens — this is one of the most exciting times our industry has faced, and it’s morphing very rapidly. Those who can figure out where it’s going next are going

to win, and those who miss the direction are dead.”

And specifically, Krivkovich addresses the advent of TiVo: “Advertising will have to become a much more nimble industry involved in the more encompassing concept of communication interaction rather than the narrow concept of advertising, and will have to be able to react to the enormous changes that are rewriting the rules of consumer contact.”

From running a small boutique, to presiding over a renowned agency, Krivkovich subjugates the advertising world. His ideas are fresh, purposeful, creative, which have

not only helped grow Cramer-Krasselt, but have also helped shape his advice. “Don’t think of it as advertising,” he says. “That’s old hat. Think of it as connecting. How do you connect people and products to each other?”

Who knew that an advertising elective chosen at random would lead Krivkovich to the top? Thankfully, for brands everywhere, it did.

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