

ADVERTISING JOB STAR



How Advertisers Can Thrive in the Advertising Industry: An Advertising Profile on Todd Grant, Creator of the Budweiser Lizards Campaign

[By Robin Salisian]

In this article, you'll discover how advertiser Todd Grant shot to the top in his profession by studying hard, becoming an executive creative director, and creating award-winning campaigns.

"I graduated from college with a degree in art and art history, which set me up perfectly for a career as a picture framer," says Todd Grant, executive creative director at the ad agency Cole & Weber United. However, he soon realized something. Long-term picture framer wouldn't cut it. So, he went back to school, acquired the skills to "tackle pop culture headfirst," and eventually became a creative director. Today, he's been in the industry for over 20 years.

An Advertiser's Educational Journey

After graduating from the University of Washington in 1986 and the Art Center College of Design in 1989, Grant freelanced for three years in Los Angeles, California. Next, he headed east, and in 1992 worked for Chiat/Day on accounts for Reebok and New York Life. Soon thereafter, he returned to California, working for Goodby, Silverstein & Partners in San Francisco and, between 2000 and 2004, teaching at the Miami Ad School/ San Francisco.

All of this *before* arriving at Cole & Weber United? Clearly, Grant's got plenty of energy.

New Beginnings and New Responsibilities as an Executive Creative Director

"I started in May of 2006," he says of his arrival at Cole & Weber United. "[The

agency] was looking for a seasoned creative director who was interested in creating truly integrated and innovative work, which matched my interests perfectly."

Today, Grant is the agency's executive creative director.

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. I play the baritone ukulele, watch movies, read books, and listen to a lot of music. I also spend as much time with my kids as possible; they make my brain explode in ways I never thought possible. Which is a good thing.

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

A. *Spinal Tap*. It makes me laugh.

Q. What was the last book you read?

A. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. A wonderful and mysterious book my daughter and I read together.

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

A. The Long Winters, a Seattle group. They put on a great show and make excellent music.

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

A. Sleeping!

"A typical day here is one full of hope, problem solving, spontaneous solutions, long-term thinking, laughter, pain, high-fives, head scratching, and hopefully a couple of smiles here and there before heading home to get a good night's sleep," he says.

At Cole & Weber United, the agency's team offers services ranging from brand planning and media planning to buying, integrated production, and more. Its website is full of day-glow colors, funky images, and catchy slogans. How, then, did this creative shop begin?

"Two men had a Baby in 1931 and they named it after themselves," or so the company's website says. "Seventy-four years later Cole & Weber became Cole & Weber United." Unique? Definitely. Creative? Obviously. It's no wonder then that this agency has acquired high-profile awards like the Clio, Best of Show from Yahoo's Big Idea Chair; a Grand Prize from the Ad Age Battle of the Brands; and multiple IAB Mixx Awards.

A Clientele List (and Team) Worth Touting

Along with helping to win such awards, Grant has worked with many high-profile clients. Currently, he works with Nike, Jones Soda, Mio Technologies, Capella University, Getty Images, Devon Energy, and the Vancouver

ADVERTISING JOB STAR

Film School. In the past, Grant's client list has included HP, Sega Video Games, Got Milk?, Adidas, Levis, and Anheuser Busch.

While Grant thrives on interacting with clients, he also enjoys working with his surrounding team.

"I really enjoy the folks who work alongside myself. They are a diverse bunch with myriad interests and talents.

"The biggest challenges [, however,] are trying to nurture, protect, and produce the ideas created here so that once out on their own, they do what they are capable of in the public space," he continues. "Not always an easy task but an objective and ideal we all keep close to our hearts."

Award-Winning Campaigns (Budweiser Lizards, Anyone?)

Possibly the most noteworthy campaigns Grant has worked on are the Budweiser

Lizards Campaign, which he created with his partner, Steve Dildarian, and the "Invent" campaign for HP. The comical lizards, Louie and Frank, ran for several years, appeared during two Superbowls, and became a phenomenon — there were t-shirts, talking beer mugs, towels, and Nascar paints. Louie and Frank — or rather Todd and Steve — had hit the big-time.

"I'm happy with a lot of different projects I've guided and/or created," he says. "That probably sounds like a cliché, but it's true. I'm genuinely fond of all my pop culture children."

When it comes to the advent of TiVo, Grant exudes confidence. "I think it's headed towards a place our company is particularly adept at: integrated and innovative projects that are idea-driven [and] open to new media and original thinking."

However, he humbly accepts that other agencies also do great work, admitting "I like

work that surprises me and makes the hair on the back of my neck bristle with jealousy. Nothing drives creativity more than good old-fashioned envy."

But it should be the *others* who envy Grant. With his list of noteworthy clients, awarded-winning ads, and popular campaigns, it's obvious that Grant learned how to "tackle pop culture headfirst."

Advertising Advice

"Learn as much as you can, be constantly curious, and follow through. You will need these skills and traits as you enter an industry that changes exponentially year to year. And learn to take it easy every so often: enjoy your friends, family, and yourself."

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