



Dovya Friedman: Advertising Job Star

By Douglas May and Robin Salisian

Dovya Friedman is currently working as the Director of New Business at McKee Wallwork Cleveland, and she has had a career that has seen many tangents, as well as many pleasant surprises. She came into the world of advertising almost by accident, and says she fell in love with it and has stayed with it ever since. She has held a myriad of jobs in advertising and marketing communications, and has a vast and thorough knowledge of the business.



Although starting off on a very different course, Dovya has worked in highly creative jobs for the majority of her career. She states:

I thought I'd be the next great Indie film triple threat when I first graduated NYU Film School...I didn't take my student

loans into consideration, nor the fact that I'd find myself living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where (horrors) I needed to drive myself to location shoots — all I knew how to do was hail a cab or take a subway. Driving? Never. So I cold-called an advertising agency, thinking it was a good stop-gap measure to make some money as I learned to drive. The agency actually agreed to meet with me and, as luck would have it, they had an entry-level position as a traffic coordinator. It took me a little under five minutes to get over the shock of them not wanting me to immediately begin directing commercials.

Little did Dovya know that this would be an entryway to a whole new career:

I was glad for the opportunity and realized, with surprising logic for me, that it would be a great introduction to the world of advertising. I was sure that, once I learned the ropes, I could try to move into a position more in keeping with my creative training. While I ended up leaving that company before transitioning into the creative department (that would happen by switching jobs), I absolutely fell in love with advertising and marketing communications. That was 14 years ago. Since then, I've worked as a copy writer, magazine

editor, journalist, public relations account executive, and director of branding and advertising. I've owned my own small graphic design and MarCom firm. I've raised chickens, had two children, produced a short film, and been president of my neighborhood association. Life happens, and it's a lot of fun.

Certainly a varied career path, but one that always carried with it a creative flair. We asked Dovya some additional questions about her past and present, and the following are some of her responses.

What is your educational background?

Bachelor of Fine Arts, New York University Tisch School of the Arts (Film and Video).

What is your current title/position at the company you are currently working at? What are some of your responsibilities? What is a "typical" day like?

My current title is Director of New Business. It's not a very accurate title (which would be more along the lines of "relationship builder and rain maker"), but it paints a good general picture. My responsibilities are, primarily, twofold. The first aspect of my job is logistical and linear: to build and maintain a pipeline of potential clients. The second is less than empirical, and much more intuitive. It involves figuring out how to build relationships that will get us hired. Beyond all that is my commitment to keeping the company true to its own branding and positioning. A "typical" day involves reading a lot of news sources, scouring

Q. What do you do for fun?

A. Read, hang out with good friends, and play with my kids.

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

A. *Bladerunner* and *Finding Nemo*.

Q. What was the last book you read?

A. *Perfect Pitch* by Jon Steel.

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

A. John Coltrane.

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

A. Playing with my kids.



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(and updating) databases of information, making a lot of calls, writing a lot of letters and emails, and pulling together information about our company and other companies of interest.

What do you most enjoy about your job, and what are some of the challenges you face?

I enjoy learning about other companies, other industries, and trying to “crack the nut” of how to get through to potential clients in a way that makes them want to get to know us better. I am overwhelmed with a deep appreciation for the company’s partners and my co-workers. The challenges I face mainly involve sustaining a belief that for each organization that doesn’t respond to us, there are others that will.

How and when did you arrive at the company where you are currently working?

My first day at McKee Wallwork Cleveland was March 17, 2008. Steve McKee was president of the company that first hired me as a traffic coordinator and, over the years, we had stayed in touch. When this position became available he thought of me and gave me a call. I had watched as, over the past eleven years, Steve built his company from the ground up, and I’d been a huge fan throughout the process. When he offered me the job I was initially conflicted — I had just accepted the position of Director of Branding and Advertising, a position I’d worked hard to reach. Would I walk away from a decade of building a creative leadership portfolio to jump tracks and recreate myself as a new business development professional in a new company? What ultimately swayed me was the culture that Steve and the partners had created at McKee Wallwork Cleveland, one where a commitment to quality of life, quality of work, mutual respect, and profitable growth was reflected in every employee’s work and attitude. I realized how greatly I longed for such a work environment, combined that with how much I admired the work the agency was generating, and eagerly accepted the offer.

With the advent of the Internet and TiVo, where do you see the future of advertising heading?

Cross media, highly targeted, wholly integrating PR tactics,

and mainstreaming many tactics currently considered “guerilla.”

How did you get your first job, second job, etc., eventually leading to where you are today?

My first job was based on a cold call and the willingness to learn what I could. From there I took a job as the managing editor of the city’s monthly magazine (I had approached them about doing some freelance writing of film reviews). They promoted me from within, first to editor of the magazine, then to editor of the entire contract publishing division. I started an online publishing arm for the company and then, with the publisher’s choice to sell his business, the Creative Director and I headed out to start our own graphic design and web publishing firm. We quickly discovered that the market niche we needed to fill involved full-service graphic design and content development services. With my second pregnancy I left the company and (following a small reprise of my writing and editing professional life) accepted a position as an account executive at a public relations firm where I handled accounts with largely creative output and, eventually, formed an in-house branding and advertising division of which I was director. From there, I accepted the offer to become Director of New Business at McKee Wallwork Cleveland, which is where I am today.

What advice would you give to people who are looking into advertising as a future career?

Know what your strengths are and hone them. Know what your weaknesses are and learn to work around them. Learn as much as you can about all aspects of the industry — it’s all related. Be willing to admit what you don’t know or don’t understand. Be willing to take risks. Be willing to play well with others. Remember to respect your clients and respect your co-workers. And have fun.

Is there anything I forgot to address that you would like our readers to know?

I’m sure that many people out there have taken a much more linear approach to growing their careers. By no means do I think that my professional history is an effective model! But I’m lucky to have found my way in a world that’s full of



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interesting things to do. Having fun along the way, and being acutely interested in what I do, is what has kept me going and

makes me love what I do. Hopefully, no matter what path they take, others feel the same.

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