



## MARKETING STAR



# Harvey Hoffenberg: Founder and President of Propulsion, LLC

[By Anique Gonzalez]

It was a conversation with the dean of the architecture and fine-arts school at the University of Florida that had a direct impact on the trajectory of Harvey Hoffenberg's career. Before this conversation, Hoffenberg was unsure of his educational and career paths. His first year of college was spent at a small school in Chicago which he attended under the auspice of a sports scholarship. After injuries derailed the possibility of a career in sports, he transferred to the University of Florida. Throughout his sophomore year he experimented with various majors, including architecture and pre-med. However, it was that conversation, and a subsequent job with a small advertising agency, that made Hoffenberg realize that he wanted to pursue a career in advertising and marketing.

Hoffenberg, president of Propulsion, LLC, has had a major impact on the marketing and advertising fields. In addition to contributing to several famous advertising campaigns such as Pepsi's "Choice of a New Generation" campaign with Michael Jackson and General Mills' "The One and Only Cheerios," he has also directed commercials with various celebrity personalities, including Donald Trump and Mike Tyson, and founded his own marketing consulting firm. In his current position as president, Hoffenberg views himself as the "shepherd of a client's brand."

His goal, and that of his company, is grounded in the aim of providing strategies to businesses in order to help them re-invent, re-energize, and/or re-launch their existing brands. "My theme line is high-performance brand solutions. And it really means exactly what it says. Every marketing challenge requires different solutions...it's not just solutions for the sake of solutions; it's solutions that, as designed, will perform in the marketplace and be successful," Hoffenberg said.

According to Hoffenberg, there are several factors marketers should consider when promoting or advertising products. In school, everyone was taught and became extremely familiar with the four Ps. Hoffenberg also has a four-pronged approach to marketing that he feels is vital to success. "To me it has always come down to three or four words:

the who, the how, the what, and the where. You know who you're talking to, which is the most important one; what you are saying, which is your strategy; how you're saying it, not just in substance but in style; and the

fourth, which is probably more important than ever today, is where you're saying it."

In order for an organization to enjoy higher profits and increased growth, these four pieces must come together in all marketing communications with consumers. Success is entirely dependent upon the ability of the marketer to assure that the who, how, what, and where are suitable for the product, company, and the consumer. A marketer may have targeted the right group of people, developed the appropriate strategy, and said the right thing, but if they try to present it to consumers via a medium that will not reach them, all has been for naught.

With the increasing abundance of substitute products, Hoffenberg explains that brand personality is also becoming increasingly important in the battle for consumers and market share. For example, your chief rival may discover what it is that makes your secret ingredient so special, they may produce similar packaging, or even introduce a new product before you are able to, but, Hoffenberg said, they will never steal your personality. A company's personality is not only what sets it apart from its competitors in the minds of consumers; it's also what will motivate them to pick that product when there are a plethora of others.

Above all else though, every marketer knows, or should know, the consumer will ultimately be the decider of the company's

**Q. What was the last thing you ate?**

**A.** The last thing I ate? I'm eating it right now! It's a Zone Bar.

**Q. What is the movie that you have watched the most?**

**A.** Well, it's got to be *The Godfather*. *The Godfather* is not just a movie; you can find a metaphor for just about anything in that movie if you watch it hard enough. It's just a brilliant film.

**Q. What was the last book you read?**

**A.** *Manhunt* by James L. Swanson. I've always been interested in Abraham Lincoln, and the book is the account of tracking down John Wilkes Booth. Ever since I was in high school I was interested in Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, and how that changed the country.

**Q. What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?**

**A.** Pretty much anything chocolate. If it's chocolate, chocolate chip it's even better.

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

**A.** I'd probably try to spend it bonding with one of my kids because there's never enough time to do that. They grow so fast, and you can never really recapture those moments; so if you can do that, it's great.



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success or failure. This is one reason why it is so important to remember the needs, wants, and desires of consumers when making marketing decisions. "Every time I refer to somebody as a marketer, I feel that number one they understand that the consumer is the foundation around which they're going to build their brand. What that takes is understanding what their needs are as opposed to the product or service you have."

And the best way for marketers to become intimately familiar with the needs of consumers is by getting to know them. "The most important thing is to learn from people, from normal consumers out there. Learn and observe. If those are the people you have to connect with, you have to know them better than anybody," Hoffenberg said.

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