



MARKETING STAR



Eduardo Casas: Vice President of Mexican Brands, Heineken USA

[By Anique Gonzalez]

“My destiny was the beer business. My father worked for a beer company for 20 years in Colombia, which really has nothing to do with the fact that I ended up in the beer business, but that’s why I say somehow my destiny was genetically driven,” Eduardo Casas quipped.

From a professional perspective, the link between Casas, vice president of Mexican brands for Heineken USA, and the beer industry began while attending Northern Illinois University. As vice president of the inter-fraternity compound, he created an event for which he was able to obtain a beer sponsor. The brewery was so pleased with the outcome of the event that they hired Casas as their college representative. After two successful years, he changed his major to marketing and ultimately took a job with the brewery when he graduated.

Before joining Heineken USA, Casas held various positions that dotted the preeminent corporate landscape. “The uniqueness of my career is that I think it is well balanced...I’ve always managed my career in a way that when I take on a new job, I’m always thinking about how that job is going to prepare me for the following job,” Casas explained.

This unparalleled foresight has allowed Casas to become a well-rounded and effective marketer, as he has gained valuable insight into numerous facets of the field with each new job. Gradually building upon what was learned in a previous position, Casas developed a great understanding of the operational side of the business at Strohl’s, brand and consumer marketing while with Coca Cola, niche and influencer marketing while at Nike, and how best to develop business and marketing strategies aimed at the Hispanic market while with Miller Brewing Company. “Each company, the way they function and how they focus their efforts, has been different, and as a result, I

Q: What do you like to do in your free time? Any odd hobbies/interests?

A: As a father with young kids, I like to spend as much time as I can with them. Secondly, I have a passion for certain sports, soccer and golf, either as a spectator or participating in those sports. Then reading—reading periodicals like *Harvard Business Review*, marketing books, books about new techniques, information about what’s going on in the marketplace, consumer trends. And then a little politics on the side.

Q: What was the last CD you listened to?

A: I’m listening to a book by Deepak Chopra; he’s a motivational speaker on self-development, self improvement. And I love African music.

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

A: *Patton*. I just admire the fact that he was a man with a great deal of passion, and he had great instincts about how he led his people. He had the kind of charisma that generated passion for what he was about and what he wanted to accomplish.

Q: What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

A: Raspberry.

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

A: Playing with my kids.

think that has allowed me to have a well-balanced experience.”

However, it was not this alone that helped shape his views of the field. In addition to the great companies for which he has worked, Casas also counts former colleagues as those who have influenced him and aided his growth as a marketer. Bonnie Garcia, Coca Cola and Charlie Frenette, Miller, for example, are among those who Casas now considers influential mentors.

While Frenette is credited with teaching Casas how to effectively collaborate with upper management while developing business strategies, Garcia gave him the opportunity to make decisions without fear of negative consequences. Casas explained, “If you’re going to grow in this business, you have to think outside of the box, and thinking outside the box sometimes means managing risk. She [Garcia] was good about encouraging that kind of thinking and supporting it.”

Frenette and Garcia both allowed Casas to progress, while gently nudging him in the appropriate direction. Fortunate enough to have received such support in his career, Casas expressed concern for the inexperienced marketers of the future. “In corporate America, there are few mentors left because there’s so much movement within the senior ranks, and as a result, there’s really not a lot of relationships or deep relationships that you can say are mentor-type relationships.”



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In the end, though, what ultimately determines success has nothing to do with what companies a marketer happens to work for or who he or she may or may not have been influenced by. The biggest determinant of success is whether the marketer in question is pursuing a career in an industry that he or she is passionate about.

According to Casas, marketing is about understanding the consumer and making decisions based on that understanding. So if you are a member of the consumer base that you are attempting to target, understanding them becomes much easier. This allows

you, the marketer, to transfer those insights into effective business strategies. Conversely, if you are not familiar with your consumer, then it is highly unlikely that you will understand the role of your brand, the brand's positioning, or what information should be leveraged in order to be successful with that brand's target market.

So while it may be that Casas ended up in the beer business because of some type of genetic predisposition, it is his talent and passion for the industry that have kept him there.

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