

POWER OF TWO

A CLIENT AND A CREATIVE DISCUSS THEIR WORKING RELATIONSHIP

KULBIR OBEROI, ELI LILLY AUSTRALIA BRAND ASSOCIATE, AND TIFFANY FRECKLINGTON, FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF FRECKLE, TALK WITH GAWEN RUDDER ABOUT LEFT BRAIN/RIGHT BRAIN AND THE ROLE THAT PLAYS IN THEIR EMERGING RELATIONSHIP.

KULBIR OBEROI

No, I'm not related to the Oberoi Hotel family that I know of . . . but I sometimes get discounts. I grew up in Dubai, my parents, culturally, are from Delhi. I moved to India to do my pharmacy degree and found myself challenged by what you might call my left brain/right brain balance (a little like the AFA's freeyourrightbrain website). On the one hand I was quite analytical – maths and science – and at the same time drawn to

the creative side of things – drawing and photography – so I had to decide which to pursue. My parents pointed me toward “a respectable profession” rather than working on the wild side. Anyway, halfway through pharmacy I realised I wanted something else and that ended up being the sales and marketing side of a pharma company.

So that was the direction I took, together with all the integrity, ethics and honesty that goes with a role where the patient and the physician are the core of everything you do. I found myself working for a Dubai-based company – with links to Lilly as it turned out – that satisfied my need to be involved at the creative edge. Then to Australia as a permanent resident and, surprisingly, a job with Eli Lilly in sales. A dream come true.

I only met Tiffany in June/July as part of a three-way pitch. We were searching for a partner to the brand who truly understands what we do, the disease state (diabetes), and what the patients' and physicians' needs are. Also, because I felt we were so close to everything, we needed someone who could bring some fresh thinking to the brand and add value. They needed to appreciate the boundaries of our business but still bring some much-needed

creative flair to our offering. She had done some ad hoc work for us and we settled on her based on gut-feel and process. Our decision proved to be correct; there was a good cultural fit and I liked the fact that she offers simplicity, honesty, passion and no long line of communication. We don't want everything filtered through the AEs with creative hidden behind the scenes.

What I find really interesting is that Tiffany can be quite technical and analytical as well as creative. So we could use each other as a sounding board – in a sense she also has left brain/right brain qualities – so together we can achieve a sort of magic balance. On top of that we both come to the table with a really open mind; too often this doesn't happen in relationships. We have a mutual respect for each other's roles and, as is often said, a good idea doesn't care where it comes from.

We have only known each other four or five months and the interaction started as a very business-like client-agency relationship, but we have a lot of similarities and tend to meet, strangely enough, on the creative side. I do a lot of photography and that gives me a more acute understanding of the all-important visual side of communications. So yes, it's a friendship, comfortable,

shared, easy, with shared passions.

As to conflicts of opinion? Well, that hasn't happened yet. But I do remain objective so far as business decisions are concerned. I remove myself from the issue and can't afford to be too subjective. With diabetes we are dealing with very serious patient and physician ethical issues . . . they shape my decisions.

TIFFANY FRECKLINGTON

For me, creative, in whatever form, was always going to define me. I guess it started when I was maybe two years old; I was always an observer of human nature, fascinated by people, asking questions, solving problems in my own funny way. At school art, painting and everything seemed to be a natural ability, but I didn't focus on it, it was just there . . . no one ever made a fuss, it was just the way it was. “That's Tiffany,” they'd say.

So – no surprises – I went to art college and there my greatest influence was an ex-Clemenger creative director who instilled an understanding of agencies in me . . . then did a bachelor of business advertising at RMIT and again the people and lecturers there were fantastic, like Jane Emery – a mentor and friend to this day – and Scott Bundy, now



with his own agency. These are the type of people who supported and inspired me. As a young business owner in the industry, my network is my lifeline.



Kulbir Oberoi and Tiffany Frecklington enjoy a relationship based on mutual respect and creative understanding.

My clients, too, offer me marketing learning in a strategic and brand sense; after all that's their core skill. In return I give them my creative solutions and

learnings. I guess what all this means is I'm a sort of sponge, a super sponge in fact. Like a child, I'm always asking "why?". I soak up all this incredible learning and honestly, I don't think it'll ever stop. From my first day at uni my thirst of knowledge has driven me to network, and maintaining that network is very important to me. I seek out contacts and continue to ask questions and I'm really grateful for the answers I get. In return I like to think I give something back to the people I work with. Training is so important and I think that's something the AFA is doing with accreditation.

My association with Eli Lilly is still new, so for us as an agency it's our first pharma client and it's been a really steep learning curve. I'm not sure why we were appointed, I think I impressed them with a couple of flyers I'd done for them, but moving from graphics to conceptual was a big step for me. It's all about your relationship and going way beyond what's asked for. Encouraging that direct creative and conceptual contact differentiated us from other bigger established agencies. I guess I have a hybrid advantage having worked with design as well as being an account exec.

After RMIT I worked at every

agency where I could get my foot in the door – full time at Publicis Mojo, work experience at Optimedia, one day a week at Cummins – they all instilled a lot of insights – also Ogilvy & Mather, and when I went overseas at Grey Worldwide in Shanghai, Leo Burnett, FCB . . . you know, everything, everywhere, I never passed up the opportunity to learn and absorb. M&C Saatchi were fabulous too and there were more. I'm also fascinated by PR, DM, you name it. It sounds like I love everything, which I guess I do.

Well, I took a holiday for 10 weeks and on the beach in Thailand it came to me. This is what I wanted to do, to get back to my natural instincts of just doing it. Funny, you know, at Mojo I worked on Nike on the account side and that [slogan] must have been part of it. Starting out as just me was scary . . . but I always have my network and support. And you follow your passion. To be honest, it was the oddest feeling picking up the phone and saying: "Freckle, can I help you?" But here I am, two and a half years later, and we've quadrupled in size to four!

The relationship I have with Kulbir is really turning out well. He has a great visual understanding, so when we talk about creative he adds value and

understands. He sees it. We're both that combination of left and right brain and complement one another. We read the same books and have similar tastes. Creative is really important to him. The fresh perspective, the holistic solution is where we both want to be. Also, we're both perfectionists, which is really nice. As I said, he's held my hand through that steep learning curve on pharma. We're transparent and I think he really appreciates that direct line he has to me, no Chinese whispers.

Yes, we have a great relationship, but, having said that, I take one day at a time. I wouldn't assume anything. I treat each piece of artwork as the last. It kind of keeps me on my toes, and anyway, you should never feel complacent about a relationship. I really value relationships and friendships and try to give something back. In the end I'm doing what I love, and I guess I want to learn and pass that on to the next person who comes through the Freckle door. It's the nicest thing you know . . . when I'm six feet under or something I want to be remembered for the relationships that have touched me and that I've touched back. ★

Gawen Rudder is manager of business services & advice for the Advertising Federation of Australia.