

Chapter Nine

What's Next?

Strictly speaking I've moved too many times. Most executive recruiters and placement specialists would council that I should "stay put" for a while. I know that's the conventional wisdom. I know it's also probably pretty good advice. Still I'm pretty sure that my variety of experience has given me a confidence that a lot of people in this business lack. Let's face it, insecurity and anxiety are facts of life in the advertising business. Clients come and go and billings go up and down. It's not a predictable business. We don't manufacture anything really. We sell concepts created by people. People become expendable.

I'm proud of my ability to bounce back. I have been clobbered by ridiculous circumstances; mostly beyond my control and I still rebound. I have three prescriptions for becoming resilient:

1. Seek Great Experiences
2. Be Committed to Lifelong Learning
3. Having a sense of humor.

Great Experiences

So far, I've given you some idea of my first decade in my business life. To put it into perspective a little: If all the accounts for which I've been privileged enough to contribute were added up and under my wing at the same time, Wes Morgan would be one of the 100 top agencies in America. The diversity of categories and the breath of experience in categories, billings, media, print, broadcast, trade and consumer communications make me feel pretty confident that I have something to offer almost any prospective client.

I'm a big believer in "making your own breaks." I've been on a wild ride, to be sure. I choose to look at it like I've been playing professional ball with "the bigs" most of my career. Yes, I've

been sent to the minors and done my time in what I call “diner theater” (to mix metaphors). Mostly I’ve made myself a veteran of the big-time. You can’t take that away from me even if I become another statistic, a “has-been” ad guy. (At least you’ll never be able to say I was a “never-was” ad guy.)

Suffice it to say, this was a turning point for me. I looked at my career and decided to take the act on the road. As you’ll see, I did travel. A very good friend and business associate of mine told me I was nuts. Essentially, he said “Advertising is a strange mistress to be chasing around the country, Wes.” Maybe he’s right. It didn’t stop me though.

Lifelong Learning

I’ve already cited several examples of things I’ve tried to do to continue on a mission of lifelong learning. I’ve already said you get so much more than you give when you share with students, practice mentoring, and participate in associations. These efforts are rewarding. They provide benefits that aren’t apparent before you become involved. Learning is the big one. You can always learn new things. But you have to want to grow and you have to seek out the experiences. And you must have an open mind.

Lifelong learning is a natural by-product of being in the advertising business. You can find yourself, as I have, in the beer business one day, in the toy business the next, or maybe in the banking or telecommunications business. You have to be flexible and curious about everything. You have to be a sort of student of pop culture too. Go to movies. Enjoy music. Read. It’s all relevant. It can make advertising communications better.

Alex Bogusky, creative director and partner at Crispin, Porter + Bogusky is one guy who has inspired me. Alex dropped out of college and jumped into the world of work at a young age. He has a natural curiosity and challenges everyone around him. I’d have to say he is a very good example of someone who is committed to a philosophy of lifelong learning.

Alex once suggested that a college would give him an honorary degree someday. He already deserves it for his contributions to the advertising industry. I hope he gets the

recognition he deserves. If I were president of Tapioca College of South Central Florida (or some such place) I'd be more than happy to award Alex a doctor of arts degree just for the intensity with which he approaches each day. I try to do that too.

Sense of Humor

I can't tell you how to have a sense of humor about your life and career. I can only say it's really important. Life is serious. Bad things happen. Good things happen. Try to put into perspective. Advertising is important but, if you make a mistake, no one dies. Earlier in my career, (when I worked on Burger King, I think), someone told me to relax a little. "Advertising isn't Brain Surgery," they said. Years later I saw a cartoon that turned that calming advice on its ear. It showed a surgeon at an operating table with the nurse saying "Relax Doctor, this isn't advertising." Everything is relative I guess.

Dinner Theater

I've tried to explain career moves in metaphors like the profession of acting. If you're an actor, you might pursue the big bucks in Hollywood Feature Films. Or you might prefer live acting on stage in a theater. You might be compromising. Only you yourself, can really know. Sometimes you might not be so sure.

In professional sports (e.g. baseball) you can find yourself moving from team to team in a dizzying series of trades. All the while you have to determine if your love of the game justifies the moving around. I admire those guys. They play because they can make a contribution. They play because they are recognized as guys who add value.

I can relate.