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"Reverse Transculturation" - Passing Fad Or Here To Stay?

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It starts with an idea, and then it morphs into an entire campaign.

For Chicago-based Hispanic advertising agency **San José Group,** there's a key element that needs be present in order to foster an idea from conceptualization to execution.

"It starts with an understanding of the consumer - and understanding them well, on all levels," says **Jim Legg**, the agency's vice president of client services. "You then need to segment the consumers properly, and look at them beyond ethnicity."

Legg believes a multicultural agency like his is well-equipped to handle such tasks, which can benefit both the client and its total-market agency. By closely examining a brand's strength by ethnic breakdown, the lead agency can then enter the picture and "apply its lens." The result can be a multi-level campaign that targets various consumer segments with the same basic message.

Such is the case with **American Family Insurance (AFI)**, which has been engaging multicultural marketing since early 2008.

"Like most organizations, senior management challenged its marketing team to prove that the Hispanic market or multicultural arena is something they should pay attention to," says Legg.

This was 2 1/2 years ago, when AFI first engaged San José Group to develop a pilot plan and convince the insurer that talking directly to Hispanics was the right thing to do.

The team at San José Group developed a 360-degree Spanish-language marketing approach that saw the launch of radio, television and online creative and community-level events in the Phoenix market.

The pilot program brought such strong return on investment to AFI that Legg says a culture change transpired at the Madison, Wisconsin-based company.

"The Hispanic budget increased dramatically, and resources became more 'culturally purposed,'" Legg notes. Among the changes was the addition of Spanish-speaking call center representatives.

In particular, AFI vice president of marketing **Lisa Bacus** set out to embrace "cultural convergence." Doing so meant wrapping her company's arms around the idea that knowing what her company was, what its target audience was and how to apply that cultural lens to its marketing messages was key to AFI's long-term success.

When it came time to develop concepts for a campaign, Bacus and AFI advertising director **Telisa Yancy** wished to test them in multiple languages. One of San José Group's concepts tested the highest, and resulted in the "Batazo" spot.

The commercial opens with a father pitching a baseball to his young son, who is learning how to hit but not having much luck. When he finally connects with the pitch, the boy sends the baseball soaring - right toward the family's direct broadcast satellite dish, which snaps loose and comes crashing down on the hood of the family car. A slightly upset mom is met with mild, apologetic shrugs from the dad and son.

Rather than showing the family members get visibly upset or enter a state of worry, the next scene shows a repaired dish and an AFI representative handing a baseball to the boy. A narrator explains that the insurance company is there to help - and protect your dreams, your family and your world.

With non-Latino agency **Element 79** at the table, San José Group was then asked by AFI to create a version of the spot for the non-Hispanic audience.

The result - a slightly different take that eliminates the shrugs of the dad and the son. Instead, as the spot closes with a narrator explaining that American Family Insurance can help you "get back on your feet and back in the game," the family is shown on a baseball diamond at a park, with the boy connecting on a hit.

Legg explains, "There is a difference in the value of insurance when seen from a Hispanic point of view."

While San José Group executed both the Hispanic spot, which aired in Chicago, Denver and Phoenix; and the non-Latino spot, which appeared in 72 markets across 19 states, it's far from a sign that Element 79 is heading to the back burner for the insurance company.

"Everybody conceptualized on this, and there are multiple messages at any point in time from American Family," Legg says. "I give them a lot of credit for fostering an environment of collaboration."
CMOe

- *The Spanish-language spot for American Family Insurance has been posted to YouTube and can be viewed here. The English-language spot, created following a reverse transculturation process, also lives on YouTube and can be seen here.*

In Defense Of The Total-Market Shop

CMOs live in an environment of efficiencies, thanks to the lingering recession. San José Group vice president of client services Jim Legg sees his work for AFI as a case study in how thousands of dollars can be saved by having the multicultural agency guide the total-market shop on the "big picture message" - rather than doing things the other way around.

"We don't want to see all general-market agencies go away," Legg says. "But most of the people who have multicultural agency shops have worked on general-market side. We've lived in both worlds and know how to manage for both sides of the fence."

Legg also notes that, given the high percentage of multicultural 18-to-44-year-olds in the nation's top 25 markets, perhaps it's time that the total-market shop yield to the Hispanic, Asian, African-American or Gay/Lesbian (GLBT) specialists to help form the overall marketing message.