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News Column

Ad Agencies Turn to New Media

November/December Issue

Rob Kuznia - HispanicBusiness Magazine

The current economic climate has toppled many a titan, and the advertising industry is no exception.

In November, for instance, the legendary Cliff Freeman and Partners — creator of iconic campaigns such as "Where's the Beef" and "Pizza Pizza" — shuttered its shop.

But while the advertising industry as a whole has felt the hard knocks of the recession, studies indicate that the downturn has been slower to hit the Hispanic-owned agencies. And anecdotally, many of the shop owners themselves insist that the blow to the Hispanic segment of the industry hasn't been as severe. In fact, for at least a few Hispanic-owned shops, the year 2009 has been a time to thrive.

"It's been an excellent year for us," said Daisy Exposito-Ulla, owner of D Exposito & Partners. In the past year, Exposito-Ulla's four-year-old business has landed several major clients — such as Amway and a piece of the U.S. Census campaign — and doubled the size of the staff. "We've outgrown our office space," Exposito-Ulla says. Similarly, Acento Advertising, a Hispanic-owned agency based in Los Angeles, doubled its full-time staff in two years, from 27 to 56. Revenues in 2009 are on track to be up 30 percent from the year before.

This year's HispanicBusiness magazine focuses its annual media report on Hispanic-owned ad agencies.

Market understanding The strong performance of these companies in the face of a historic economic downturn is telltale evidence that more companies are coming to understand the value of reaching out to the ever-growing U.S. Hispanic market.

To reach those consumers, companies are increasingly using digital technology to reach the sea of untapped market potential.

In July, Advertising Age released a report concluding that ad revenue in Hispanic media outlets grew by 1.9 percent in 2008, even while revenues shrank by more than 4 percent in the general media market.

The report went on to say that of the top 50 Hispanic-owned ad agencies, just seven posted a drop in revenue.

"We are still in many ways in growth mode," Gisela Girard, chair of the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies, and herself the president and COO of the Texas-based agency Creative Civilization, told HispanicBusiness Magazine. "It's fascinating to me to see how major universities across the country are offering degrees in Hispanic marketing. That tells you it is a segment of the industry that's solid, continuing to show growth, and that has a tremendous amount of longevity."

To be sure, the advertising in Spanish language media has experienced its share of pain. Industry analysts forecast that revenues in Spanish-language media outlets will be down by 11.2 percent in 2009, according to Jack Myers, a media advisory group. But he projects that general-market revenues will drop an even steeper 14.1 percent. By some measures, Spanish-language media outlets have been hit about as hard as general-market outlets.

In the first half of 2009, revenues in Spanish-language newspapers were down 20.5 percent, compared to an industry-

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Anita Santiago Advertising employees on the job, hashing out ideas.

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wide decline of 24.2 percent, according to a mid-September report by TNS Media Intelligence. But the report also showed that revenues in Spanish-language TV dropped 12.7 percent, a slightly worse decline than the industry-average decrease of 10 percent.

The majority of the ads in Spanishlanguage media outlets are produced by Hispanic-owned ad shops, said AHAA spokeswoman Elinor Kinnier. But not all ads from Hispanicowned shops are aired on Spanishlanguage mediums.

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I WANT TO CONGRATULATE GISELA AND AHAA FOR THE GREAT JOB THEY ARE DOING TO ACHIEVE THESE IMPORTANT RESULTS FOR THEIR CLIENTS. ONE DOESN 'T MAINTAIN AND GROW MARKET SHARE FOR THEIR CLIENTS BY SHEER LUCK, MUCH LESS IN A SOFT ECONOMY. MY HATS OFF TO AHAA FOR A GREAT JOB. LEO LOBATO KELLY VP. AMCHAM MONTERREY MEXICO

Al Bresloff

11/18/2009 9:39:23 PM PST

Why no mention of Spanish yellow pages or internet? Aren't these important factors in ad revenue. Yellow pages in the Hispanic community is far stronger then that of the general market and I would think internet , on the rise. Everyone speaks to newspaper, Tv and radio- isn't "directional" advertising more important to the advertiser- after all, these are buyers looking to BUY instead of advertisers seeking customers. N o one ever mentions these media- isn't it about time they did?

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