



SARAH PULS

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INDUSTRIAL KITCHEN EQUIPMENT DOESN'T SELL ITSELF. PRODUCTS ARE SOLD BY PEOPLE, AND MADE FOR PEOPLE. AND SO SARAH PULS CONSTRUCTED A CAMPAIGN CENTERED ON END USERS, NOT DEVICES, AS VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING FOR FOOD SERVICE EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER HOBART CORP., BASED IN TROY, OHIO. THE RESULT: A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN PERSUASION SCORES, PULS SAYS.

Such risky undertakings lead to big rewards, and last November, Puls' promotion. She is now vice president of brand management for the North American food equipment group at parent company Illinois Tool Works Inc. "I appreciate everything that's happened to me prior to this," Puls says, referencing not only her job at Hobart, but also her marketing positions at baby product manufacturer Evenflo Company Inc. and a decade-long stint at Whirlpool Corp. "I couldn't have done this job 10 years ago."

Based on one of her Backpage answers, it sounds like Puls isn't going anywhere for at least the next 10 years.

Q: In your lifetime, what was the first marketing campaign you can recall being exposed to?

A: Barbie, and there are a lot of pictures of me as a child that document this.

Q: What made you decide to pursue marketing as a profession?

A: I was the advertising editor of my high school yearbook and loved it. Most of the businesses that advertised were owned by parents of my friends and they took the time to teach me about their approaches to advertising. It was fascinating, and I thought it was fun to combine business with creativity. To please my Dad, I attempted two semesters of college in engineering, and then transferred to the management school when he felt sorry for me and let me switch schools.

Q: What qualities make a marketer great?

A: Empathy, persuasiveness, open mindedness and flexibility. Being a businessperson first and a marketer second. Analytical skills.

Q: What qualities undermine an otherwise talented marketing executive?

A: Failure to listen and understand. Inflexibility, complacency.

Q: Pick your poison: Hard and fast ROI, or experiment and see what sticks?

A: Of course I want both. I have learned a lot from engineers who design experiments to solve complex problems, which combines experimentation and analysis.

Q: What inspires good marketing ideas?

A: There are no great marketing ideas without great customer insights that no one else has.

Q: If—as the saying goes—you are your own brand, then what is the tagline for a brand campaign for you?

A: The combination of self-awareness and spontaneous creativity required to answer this resulted in me asking my coworkers for help. They came up with "Makes Everything Taste Better," "Now Trans Fat Free!" and "Now with Sprinkles!" I can't decide which one to use, although I do love sprinkles.

Q: What do you point to as your greatest single marketing accomplishment?

A: I am most proud of the work our team has done to redefine the Hobart brand. The work is grounded in great insights and was truly a team effort with our product lines, sales organization and HSR, our ad agency. Our positioning leverages what has been historically great about Hobart but articulates those qualities in a way that is meaningful to our customers today. Several of our sales reps have told me that they feel the positioning articulates how they work with our customers ... and a positioning that our people can embody on a daily basis is the holy grail of marketing!

Q: What do you point to as your greatest single accomplishment outside of marketing?

A: Being the best wife, sister, stepmother and coworker that I can be. Of course, this is a work in progress and some days are better than others.

Q: Ten years from now I'd like to be _____.

A: I'd like to be still doing what I am doing now. I have my dream job!

Q: What profession, other than marketing, would you most like to pursue?

A: As a child, I wanted to be a sportscaster. **m**