



## MYLES BRISTOWE

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**MANY MARKETERS ATTRIBUTE** THEIR ENTRÉE INTO THE MARKETING INDUSTRY TO AN INSPIRING PROFESSOR OR A LOVE OF ADVERTISING. FOR MYLES BRISTOWE, IT ALL STARTED WITH A HOT DOG.

As CMO of Commonwealth Creative Associates Inc., a Framingham, Mass.-based B-to-B marketing firm with clients such as Harvard University and United Way, Bristowe is working to expand the firm's digital and interactive services, while also handling positioning and messaging with a unified approach. He has more than 15 years of interactive Web marketing experience working with companies such as the Greater Boston Food Bank, Ralph Lauren Footwear and Reebok. He founded two Web marketing and design firms and now serves as president of the American Marketing Association's Boston chapter.

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

**A:** For me, it is an even toss-up between Domino's 'Avoid the Noid,' [the red character] who always tried to make people's pizza cold; the dancing California Raisins singing *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*; and the three silver-haired, elderly grandmothers who asked, 'Where's the beef?'

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

**A:** I began my marketing career in the meat deli of an IGA grocery market, located in the tiny town of Wilmore, Ky. To promote some great lunch specials, I drew a picture of a hot dog using crayon on deli paper. The sign somehow caught the eye of a successful businessman who owned a database of every thoroughbred horse that had ever lived. He stepped up to the counter, pushed his cowboy hat back with his thumb and said, 'Who drew this here hot dog?'

'I did,' I said. He removed the stub of a cigar from his mouth and said, 'You should work for me.' On Monday morning, I traded my deli apron and pricing gun for a necktie and a desktop computer. I had no prior Internet or computer experience but learned quickly, and I soon designed my first corporate Web site.

**Q:** What qualities make a marketer great?

**A:** Be creative, well-read about your targets and a good listener. ... Even more basic than that, I've found three important ingredients required in the recipe for success: hard work, a sense of humor and a little luck. If you are willing to work your tail off to exceed expectations, not take yourself too seriously and enjoy a few laughs, good things are sure to come your way!

**Q:** What qualities undermine an otherwise talented marketing executive?

**A:** Complacency. Good enough is never good enough. Do your homework, put in the extra effort, believe in yourself and take unreasonable risks.

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

**A:** I'll recommend blind experimentation and spaghetti-throwing over careful measurement. A mentor of mine, once a three-star general in the U.S. Army, taught me to 'fail quickly.' He said that you can advance on your competition by trying several tactics more rapidly than they can. While they're all still busy in the map room thinking through their options and arguing about their risks, you can be making several small moves to advance your cause, and feed what works and starve what doesn't.

**Q:** What inspires good marketing ideas?

**A:** Relevance. Whenever you can discover the context of your target's unmet need, you have an opportunity to hit pay dirt! All that's left is to figure out how you'll get your message out to them in a way that is relevant, distinctive and memorable. We are always overflowing with ideas once we understand our target.

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

**A:** I've adopted Ted Turner's slogan as my own: 'Early to bed, early to rise, work like hell and advertise.' I'm typically asleep by 8 p.m. and up at 3 a.m. ... My children

make fun of me for having a bedtime that's earlier than theirs.

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

**A:** In the early '90s when I went from behind the deli counter to building online enterprises, 'the Web' was not widely known and everyone around me was still quite skeptical. After a few years, 'dot-com' was on billboards [and] on TV commercials, and the world was literally rushing to what I do.

In 1995, we flew home for the Thanksgiving holiday and my father-in-law threw open the front door with the widest of smiles, embraced me with both arms and said, 'Son!' That's when I knew I was doing something important. Any number of industry awards and gushing client accolades will never top that moment!

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

**A:** My wife and children are remarkable individuals and I am very proud of my family.

**Q:** Ten years from now I'd like to be \_\_\_\_\_.

**A:** A published author, speaking to marketing professionals the world over about how to leverage and measure unified marketing strategies.

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

**A:** I would like to pursue acting again. My wife and I first met in a play in New York. I was an angel and she played a cherry tree. We were married exactly one year later. When we had our first daughter, we realized that acting was not going to pay the bills. So we did what any logical and responsible adult would do in need of revenue: We moved far away from the biggest city in the world and went to Kentucky for our next opportunity. I have not been on stage since. **m**