

Ashish Sawhney

IDEA GENERATOR | STORYTELLER | CREATIVE STRATEGIST

With 16 years in the industry, Ashish is an award-winning idea generator, storyteller and conceptualiser with deep craft knowledge of brand planning, marketing, creative strategy and communication development. Having played many roles in his career - Creative Director, Strategist, Consultant, Content Producer, Digital Transformation Officer, Agency Head to Idea Generator – he's now ready to bring all of his experience and learning to your organization.

Ashish is a master interpreter and multi-dimensional thinker synthesizing organisation goals, complex data & consumer insights into brand strategy. Leading a team of art directors, copywriters and interaction designers, he has given shape to new brands (personality, identity and architecture), strategized ATL, BTL and Digital campaigns, led the development of go-to-market materials, product packaging, storyboards & brand films, e-commerce & conceptual photoshoots and managed communication & engagement portfolios for measurable impact on brand awareness, preference, sales enablement and demand generation.

He has held dual and parallel roles on the client and agency side. On the client-side, he has held the Marcom mandate for India within a global ecosystem comprising of HQ Marcom (based in Vancouver), Worldwide Marcom (Western Canada, USA & 12 other Regions) and 50+ local partners. He has delivered in research & implementation capacities while evolving and amplifying the brand's creative voice to suit changing consumer needs, attitudes and buying behaviours across India and mature markets.

In his career he's also been the owner of creative workflows with experience in setting-up and developing a creative studio that defined and evolved the brand story for its many local, national and global clients. In doing so, he brings a deep understanding of the agency and advertiser market to recommend, build and drive adoption of marketing solutions in both the digital and traditional media space. He is passionate about marketing to consumers (B2C) and enterprises (B2B) with a proven track record of nurturing business/trade channels.

With deep expertise in creative strategy production with a sharp and refined understanding of design principles, design systems, prototyping, iteration processes and strong fundamentals involving mood boards, storyboards, creative briefs and design intent; he strives to deliver big ideas, understand needs and lend strategic insights to help smart owners, peers and geographically dispersed stakeholders leverage creative media to express and celebrate their brand story.

KEY SKILLS

1. Lead idea generation with the ability to provide creative vision, strategy and execute ATL, BTL campaigns, digital, mobile programs and projects requiring integrated creative development

2. Not just another creative – Possess a proven ability to intersect & synthesize consumer insights & marketing goals to develop/refine creative strategy, key messages and content.
3. Deep setup and workflow-orientation to lead a creative ecosystem. Skilled in developing capabilities of a creative department, monitoring client budgets and managing priority engagements.
4. Skilled at putting the consumer at the centre of the brand strategy - mapping the consumer's journey of intent, consideration and purchase cycles with brand interactions.
5. Experienced at sculpting long-form content (case studies, whitepapers), real-time content (social media), key messages (for retail, packaging etc), script writing for videos, storyboarding, casting, location, post-production editing/finishing and event production.
6. Kaizen practitioner with deep project management skills to maintain schedules and deadlines within ongoing campaigns. Anticipate bottlenecks & put contingency planning in place to mitigate risk.
7. Media planning (both traditional & new) with account planning expertise.
8. Managing creative staff, delegating duties and developing talent with incremental/challenging assignments, encouraging innovation and experimentation. motivational leadership and removing productivity barriers. Experience of setting goals, running 1- 1s, development and disciplinary reviews.
9. Setting-up KPIs, developing detailed dashboards and performance narratives for reporting and response modeling. Fluent with key metrics and marketing dashboards such as A/B variates, Google Analytics, Insights etc.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR MARKETING UNIGLOBE TRAVEL SOUTH ASIA

May 2006 - March 2018

\$5 Billion | 8000 Employees | 60 countries

Life as a guardian of the brand

1. Chaired the Marcom Committee and owned the end-to-end brand development function for UNIGLOBE in South Asia region. Interpreted business goals (of Regional scale) and managed all investments for the brand including surveys, creative/communication planning, promotions, platform development, production and media buy.
2. Launched a series of multi-channel, brand campaigns that delivered exceptional results in media buy (impressions), placement optimization and lead volume (30% extra lead lift through a centralised brand website) and brand recognition scores (moved the needle from a baseline of 2% to 8%, drove over 370Mn impressions and 4Mn unique visitors in the enterprise business travel segment). This included campaign monitoring, iterations

and refocusing advertising through TG-rich online & offline channels such as Airports, In-flight, Google Adwords, Remarketing, Facebook, Youtube & broadcast media.

3. Conceived and developed UNIGLOBE's *first* "made for India" TVC including writing the script, storyboarding, casting and post-production to create brand awareness and preference for the UNIGLOBE Business Travel proposition.
4. Drove consumer insights through surveys to analyse the evolving needs and buying behaviour of consumers. Distilled these insights to reinforce/shift brand strategy and positioning, frame new communication drivers for advertising (brand promise, key messages, look & feel) along with refining various go-to-market materials (inserts, decks, presentations, whitepapers, newsletters).
5. Tracked and reported performance of all brand building campaigns (all channels - digital, offline, print, TV, tactical promotions) via detailed performance dashboards using KPIs and industry averages to track return-on-investment (ROI) for response modelling and future planning.
6. Managed the end-to-end marketing budget. Tracked, monitored and reported on all spends - (actual vs. planned including recommendations for reallocation of funding).
7. As a brand custodian, ensured all content and creatives are on-brand, consistent in terms of style, quality and tone of voice, and optimized for all channels of content including online, social media, email, mobile, video, live and digital activations, print, and presentations.
8. Hired and developed an in-house team of producers including designers, copy-writers and developers along with creative & media agencies, freelancers and third-party vendors.
9. Launched a leisure brand in the South Asia Region which included conceptualization of brand & identity, positioning along with mood-based brand personas. Strategic tie-ups with Airlines & Tourism Boards (contracting and product) were struck to develop a digital acquisition model centred around product & content, email promotion, A/B variate testing and a concept of micro-sites.
10. Responsible for building & maintaining brand presence on various Social Media Channels for new customer acquisition as well as brand awareness. This included maintaining a calendar of "digital experiences" including content creation (crisis, duty of care, tips, tricks, explainer videos, education) and response management.
11. Delivered various presentations and conducted workshops on "new propositions" to build stakeholder focus and attract funding for new developments e.g. Programmatic and highlight synergetic opportunities with other Uniglobe Regions for development e.g. website, agent platform, video development and go-to market materials.

12. Oversaw production for monthly email marketing campaigns to generate brand awareness (e-newsletter) & lead generation through a calendar of scheduled promotions. This also included A/B testing, monitoring, tracking & reporting on the performance of each campaign.
13. Provided high level vision, branding and communication for over 50 events including Conferences (300+ attendees), workshops and Product Launches (e.g. Carbon Neutral). This included directional leadership for pre-event communication, promos, teasers and content creation, sponsorship decks, AV programming, media interactions and coverage.
14. Acted as a knowledge partner and provided advisory support and production to over 50+ franchise owners and stakeholders in building brand acceleration for local/micro markets, across India.
15. Conceptualised (UI/UX, feature development & story) of Uniglobe's multi-site CMS 150+ websites for India and Western Canada to better reflect the ever-evolving capability and promise of the UNIGLOBE Business Travel and Leisure Programs.

AGENCY HEAD

CREATIVEIQ (CIQ)

September 2013 - March 2018

Start-up | Design Studio | 15 Specialists

Life as a Creative Strategy Producer

1. Built the operational model of CIQ as a design studio to offer multi-channel creative strategy, development, strategic account planning and consulting/advisory services for all in-house companies and clients of the Modi Group.
2. Distilled the business concept into actionable outcomes – created structure (process, people & technology), defined the CIQ value proposition, and monetisation methodology where applicable (products, projects, retainers, hourlies and/or an exclusive pay-for-use menu).
3. Led consulting sessions with priority clients (questioning/active listening) – acquiring business insights, crafting optimum creative strategy, consulting on the right media mix, spinning off project briefs and action items, setting the right expectations using deep knowledge of performance benchmarks and nuances of creative production.
4. Monitored the expense budget (resources, recruiting, tools, licensing, G&A etc). Introduced Brightpod to automate intake of traffic, identify & assign resources, set milestones, monitor production and fulfilment of all assets (digital, video, print, TV) and track client billables against scope of work.
5. Generated ideas for creative assets (all forms of broadcast, print, e-com, social) and creative strategy for campaigns. Led the creation of mood-boards, concepts for pitches

and authored copy & content (print ads, blogs, manuals, brochures, decks, landing pages), gave shape to new brands (architecture, brand extensions, personality & visual identity) to create an award-winning body of creative work (AFAQS Foxglove Award Winner, 2016).

6. Managed priority production budgets and delivered performance reviews based on industry benchmarks, spend analysis (vs budget) and recommended optimization strategies to multiple stakeholders (often CXOs).
7. Hired internal team members to develop a winning team of 15 specialists content, editorial, digital media, web, art, communication and design producers designers to service ever-evolving client needs across the full spectrum of channels and brand touchpoints.
8. Owned and monitored a schedule of priority marcom deliverables to track project progress, turnaround time and quality to ensure client objectives.

BRAND TRANSFORMATION OFFICER

UNIGLOBE MOD TRAVEL

March 2018 - March 2019

INR 200 Cr | 115 Employees | 3 Locations

Redeveloping a brand from within

1. Set-up an intense, organization-wide program to strengthen brand drivers, namely brand perception, NPS, brand competence and rebranding.
2. Spearheaded a Pan-India consumer research initiative to baseline brand perceptions, consumer expectations and opportunities. Distilled this data to build brand vision, product and service design based on identified value triggers.
3. Created a 'client journey map' and designed brand experience touchpoints across presales, initial sales contact, onboarding, voice, query intake and fulfilment with a focus on mobile centricity.
4. Spearheaded the optimization of an end-to-end brand experience system by analyzing HCI and tweaked UI for a superior user experience to optimize and drive brand adoption in agent-driven and self-service environments.
5. Set-up SOPs and defined the brand's go to market strategy, built-out the full portfolio of client acquisition, servicing & engagement materials while expanding and aligning key messaging and the overall brand story to value triggers.
6. Developed an evolving narrative that conveyed why the organization needed to transform and educated stakeholders at all levels of the organization through teaser eDMs, conferences and an internal communications engine.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

1. Always start with consumer motivations - what do they need? What do they expect? What do they value? What do we know about their buying behaviour? Is it enough?
2. When hiring, don't look at the number of years or the degrees a person has. People can often be theory rich, practice poor. Look at deep experiences and watch-out for major learning cycles. "On-the-job" trumps "in-the-classroom".
3. Practice active reflection at-least once per day - what could I have done better? How would I do it differently? Practice it at the end of a presentation, campaign or project delivery ... so that real, intellectual growth can happen.
4. Hire for curiosity and cultural fit. People who ask questions and listen actively will always add value
5. Ideation should start in quantity, not quality.
6. Work from a plan but make room for experimentation - remove the dowry of the Indian education system (i.e. the fear of mistakes).
7. Teamwork can be a myth when viewed from the lens of happiness. If the "work" in "teamwork" is taken care of, then the "team" will be happy.
8. Research, ideate, strategize, review and then execute. Be it a P&L or a campaign - target and measure often but never at the expense of micro-managing. Iterate often, making smaller course corrections along the way.
9. Changes have consequences. Communicating them is key.
10. The job of a leader in 2 words - Continuous Improvement.

EDUCATION & BACKGROUND

Bachelor's in commerce, the University of Delhi.

Lifelong learner with deep career experiences and learning cycles. Early experiences (pre-2006) involved content production, brand design as well as a brief product development role at Thomas Cook and Dnata (Kuwait). While engaged in the family owned footwear business, managed product photoshoots, cataloging and spec-to-spec production for packaging and labeling for North American retail stores like JC Penny and Hudson Bay.

Up for a hot cup of black coffee? Call or email me!

+91 9599933418

Skype: ashish.sawhney | LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/a-sawhney

a.1.sawhney@gmail.com

Portfolio: www.ashishsawhney.com