



Marwan Kai, media representative

## A philosophical approach to the ad game

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Marwan Kai is “your average product of the Lebanese Civil War,” as he described himself. To those who know him and have worked with him, Kai is a lively, good-humoured fellow, and wise beyond his years. With both feet solidly on the ground, Kai turned a critical – though very sound – eye on his profession. As CEO of MIS Gulf (Media International Services), Kai is what is known in advertising terminology as a media representative.

When we asked Kai whether his degree was helpful on his road to success, this advertising professional's answer was so atypical of the industry that it took us completely by surprise.

“I don't know about success! Success, in our business, would be a measure of satisfaction that our media partners should relate to,” he said. “Moreover, life

is about ongoing goals and objectives and only after one is gone from this life should his peers determine the relativity of his or her success ... I would rather say that my academic degree and background have been very instrumental, on many levels, as far as my professional life has turned out."

"My school days in Beirut were a fantastic base that covered a wide spectrum of topics and were a door opener for a general knowledge base," he continued. "The schools days in London opened the door for specialisation and college was a mixture of preparation for the real thing professionally, and more importantly, a networking base that was and still is very useful."

Kai said his job entailed more than making people buy products.

"The mission of a media rep is not confined to advertising sales," he said. "I believe that the term media rep does not, in a way, reflect what we do, or at least what most of today's reps should be doing. We are in fact consultants to the media owners and, more importantly, we

are really marketers for their properties ... Today, a medium is very much a product that needs to have a proper manufacturing base; in a magazine that would be an editorial team and content, distribution which is equal to circulation and, last but not least, a sound marketing strategy ... to ensure the required success!

"Media owners call on us for our experience in this, as well as our existing relationship with advertisers that could become potential partners," he added.

#### **The importance of a strong academic background**

What about one's academic background? What role does this play in determining whether or not one becomes successful? With regards to the importance of an academic background for someone to excel in his career, Kai strongly recommended some combination involving marketing, for all the reasons mentioned earlier, as well as finance, because, as he said: "Things in the end need to make financial sense, no?"

"Talking about academics, I believe practical and real-life simulations are a

great addition to any curricula that will help improve the preparation period for students ... Case studies and internships are the way forward," he added. "That is why basic academic qualifications are essential and, in today's world, a master's degree is counted as basic; as well as someone with the right attitude, objectives and expectations!"

But, as he put it with an apologetic smile, "We are very much guilty of not offering internships to students. Soon we will be taking the necessary steps – thanks for the reminder, AcademiX! We do have something in place, and this started when the company's founder, Elie Kai, passed away five years ago. We put in place at several universities in Lebanon many scholarships in his name for outstanding and needy students in the field of communications. This, we felt, rewards and encourages excellence in the mentioned field, and also continues the spirit and conviction that Elie Kai, a pioneer in the field of communication in the Middle East, strongly thrived to encourage and achieve." 🍀

#### **The inside scoop on Marwan Kai**

I started my academic career in Lebanon, and stayed there until 1981 (with all the short and long breaks that went along with the Civil War), when the family finally moved to London. I concluded my O and A levels (yes, they existed then!) in London and moved on to college to graduate three years later with a double major in economics/finance and marketing. I joined the family firm right after graduation, in June 1989, and have been doing that ever since ... the path has been very interesting and always changing, reflecting the market dynamics. Today, at MIS, we proudly handle an extensive portfolio of specialised media, some covering the whole Middle East region and some confined to the UAE. In audio-visual, we represent the Grand Cinemas circuit that today represents over 80% of total cinema business in the UAE and the region, and CNN for all the advertising emanating out of the Middle East. On the print side, we handle Alam Assayarrat (the World of Cars), Zeina, Alam Assaat Wal Moujawharat (the World of Watches and Jewelry), Boutique (the in house magazine of the Villa Moda group), T3 (the world's leading gadget magazine), ELLE (Gulf), Campus Journal, The Buzz, and last but not least, the Grand Cinemas Movie Guide.



Stoooooop! Im not that photogenic!