

Laying the foundation for the leaders of tomorrow

As managing director of Leo Burnett Dubai and Kuwait, Kamal Dimachkie watches over the Leo Burnett family, which consists of over 200 employees from many different nationalities and backgrounds. The numerous companies represented by this agency span the broadest range of industries and include some of the most famous brands in the world. Dimachkie was kind enough to answer several of AcademiX's questions on the running of an international advertising agency.

1/2

“In order to run a creative organisation of this magnitude, highly versatile and comprehensive leadership is required. I am called upon to get the best out of the people who work under me, and that means management of personalities and facilitating creativity. In order to best serve our clients' vision, we need visionaries and great ideas at a moment's notice. My job is not only organisational in nature, it is also motivational.

My major responsibilities are in the area of sustaining and increasing development and expansion against growth targets for our offices, as well as acting as a steward to our clients' businesses, reputations, image and relationships. But more importantly, my key role is to cultivate a culture and an environment that inspires ideas that create enduring belief, the centrepiece of our philosophy at Leo Burnett. We make use of considerably talented human capital and use it to expound on the communications and branding message of our clients. In short, I lead the gateway between our clients and their interaction with media and society.”

Do you offer internships to recent graduates? Do you have any agreement with universities in the region?

We have a very interesting program with the American University in Dubai, as well as other universities in the region. One of our goals is to make full use of the rich talent pool that is available to



Sometimes we need great ideas at a moment's notice

us here in Dubai, and our close relationship with AUD allows us to do that. The students at AUD are of a high calibre and our internship program has allowed us to pick some of the best and brightest from this institution.

Through our program with the American University in Dubai, students have been chosen from the 90th percentile of their class, as well as those who have engaged in a varied number of extracurricular activities. The students are seniors, and are chosen from the business school. They are required to be leaders, to have great written and verbal communications skills. These are qualities we insist upon for all our employees, and young interns are held to identical standards in that department. We also want students with many outside interests because these are students who really have something to add to what we do. At the end of the day, the more experience we can draw upon from every facet of a person's life, the stronger the message we can pass on from our clients to our international audience. After all, we are in the business of communication, and who better to communicate than people who have something to say.

Recently we have decided to hire an exceptional intern by the name of Gayatri Talwalkar from the American University in Dubai. Gayatri is originally from India but has lived in both Europe and the United States and is fluent in English, French and Marathi. She graduated with a degree in business administration and has started work with us as a junior communications executive. We are quite happy to make her a part of our team and look forward to finding new young talent like her from the universities of this region. She is not the first student we have brought on board from AUD, and I am quite confident she will not be the last.

Do you think that implementing specialised courses in the curricula of advertising programs would reduce the amount of time spent to train students in their junior year of university?

We can add to regular courses by giving students a chance to work in a “real world” environment. By “real world” interaction I mean supervised interaction within the advertising industry that supplements what is being taught to the students by the professors themselves. We can build a bridge between the experience and

teachings of academia and the experience of the business world through programs like this. The classroom gives students a tremendous foundation to build upon, and regular visits by students to agencies can only benefit the educational experience of all marketing and communication students.

Learning doesn't stop in the classroom or after internships. When a young graduate joins our company, we take it upon ourselves to continue where they left off at university. Training is of such high importance that at Leo Burnett we spend a full 2% of our entire revenue on training, which is a considerable sum.

I think one of the goals of specialised courses that supplement regular courses is that when a student enters Leo Burnett to begin his or her career, and they are trained further, the training can be more advanced and more will be learned.

How, in your opinion, can the advertising industry help to improve the quality of advertising graduates in the region?

The industry can take the hands-on approach we advocate and practice by directly recruiting from the universities in the region, and fostering and mentoring the talent that is recruited. Ours is an industry that relies quite heavily on a constant injection of young talent into our midst, in order to gain new insights, new ideas, and to find common ground with a vitally important demographic we often create advertising for. Furthermore, we are giving young communication talent the foundation necessary to become the leaders of tomorrow's communication industry, by creating for them an environment where they can grow, learn and mature into the role they are meant to play.

But internships and recruitment are not enough on their own. Once we have gained interns, we don't leave them to their own devices and ignore them. We work closely with them and give them access to a multitude of areas within our company. It is a hands-on approach that not only benefits us, but gives young minds the chance to try out various areas and see which one they might best fit in. And if we end up continuing our relationship with a student beyond an internship and into a career, our enabling that individual to look at several different areas will give them the chance to choose a path that will work for them for years to come. 🍀

A quick glance at Leo Burnett

Leo Burnett Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was created in 1974 and has grown to become a central catalyst and driver of a comprehensive range of communications solutions, including advertising, media, public relations, digital and CRM. The group offers both specialisation and holistic integration to answer the ever-changing needs of both clients and the marketplace.

As an advertising agency, Leo Burnett is at the forefront of

media and communications in the Middle East region, and is a company that young people looking to work in the marketing industry take notice of.

It acts as brand custodians and guides for its clients, moulding their image in such a way as to create a unique reflection of their own innate value. The agency build brands that are already established into powerful entities, as well as working with brands that are just beginning to

register on the public's consciousness, so that they can become household names.

Leo Burnett's clients in Dubai include such major multinationals as General Motors, Procter and Gamble, Samsung, Gillette, Braun, Kellogg and Philip Morris. In addition to this notable group, Leo Burnett also represents such pre-eminent locally established companies including but not limited to Emirates Airlines, Dubai Holding, du, NBD, Dnata,

Tatweer, Dubailand, Dubai Properties and Oasis. Major campaigns have been created for all these brands for the region, and the results have led to success across the board for all involved. Many of Leo Burnett's campaigns have garnered international recognition and plaudits.

The company is the world's eighth largest agency network (as ranked by Advertising Age in April 2005) and is a wholly owned part of the Publicis Groupe.