



Dr. Sven H. Becker

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State of Marketing: Germany



1) What is the key to creating effective marketing communications in Germany?

We believe very strongly that the days of traditional campaigns are over. For a long time the industry talked of a 360 degree approach to marketing. But even that it is not enough. Here at TBWA, we take a 365 approach. In other words, we enable brands to converse with their customers 365 days a year, using the wide variety of tools that are now available to us. Once you embrace this idea, it radically changes the marketing process and even the structure of the agency itself. The old-fashioned model insisted on spikes of activity, usually in the form of TV campaigns, supported by lower levels of activity using other media. But in a world where consumers seek constant engagement with the media, wherever they happen to be, that approach is no longer relevant. We must provide constant high-quality content.

2) What strategies are working? Which are failing?

But I can tell you that those that fail are those that insist on seeing customers as “targets”. Advertising today is not about picking out targets and “shooting” information at them. The power has been reversed – I think the entire industry has accepted that consumers run the show now. Brands should think of themselves as performers on a stage, using various forms of entertainment to attract the attention of consumers. If we provide content that is banal and unsophisticated, they will look the other way. And we can’t do anything about it. Consumers have such a vast choice of media these days that we are obliged to be creative. In fact, we must be incredible, stunning, enthralling. And we must do that 365 days a year. It’s a huge challenge but a wonderful one. This is a great time to work in advertising.

3) What trends do you see? What do you feel will be next year’s trends?

Obviously “social media” has become the phrase of the year. Agencies and brands are all grappling with the implications of Facebook, Twitter and so on. But I think they’re missing the point somewhat. Digital media are merely tools. The big idea is still the thing that counts. Only once you’ve reached that idea – disruptive, entertaining, exciting – do you open your toolbox and decide what you need to bring it to life. Advertising has changed in many ways, but it is still essentially about telling stories. The trick now is to tell stories in a non-linear way, while remaining faithful to a core idea. That’s what we call Media Arts. I hope we’ll see many more examples of it next year.

4) What technology has impacted the way brands in Germany effectively engage with their targets?

There have been a number of phases. We shouldn’t forget that even way back in the 1990s, cable and satellite television were already fragmenting audiences. Obviously the emergence of the internet was the next phase, followed by what became known as Web 2.0. More recently, mobile

technology has changed everything again. The success of the iPhone and its many applications has proved beyond a doubt that there is a tremendous demand for mobile content. The iPad is the latest iteration: a whole new medium that rejuvenates the world of magazines and books, while offering high quality access to the universe of the Web. It's interesting, though, that all these forms of entertainment boil down to the same two things: words and pictures. People remain quite elemental. They just want to be entertained.



Dr. Sven H. Becker

- Dr. Sven H. Becker is CEO and Chief Strategic Officer for all agencies within the TBWA\ Group Germany.
- Sven studied Business Economics and Marketing in Münster, London and Glasgow. He graduated with a Masters Degree in International Marketing and a PhD in International Brand Strategy.
- Before he joined the TBWA\ Group, he worked for Red Spider, DDB London & Düsseldorf and for Springer & Jacoby.
- Sven is Visiting Professor for Communication Strategy at the Berlin University of Arts.
- Dr. Sven H. Becker was born in September 1966 and is living with his wife and two daughters in Cologne.