A Workshop On ‘Brand Engagement In The Digital World’



Bates Strategic Alliance recently celebrated their 20th anniversary with a workshop themed ‘Brand Engagement in the New Digital World’. Having initiated in 1993 with ten people, Bates Strategic Alliance has grown from strength to strength to encompass nearly 60 employees. Partnering with well known affiliates, the company has been able to create a name for itself through the years. “Firstly I must thank all our clients, some who have been there from the early days,” said Nimal Gunewardena, CEO of Bates Strategic Alliance addressing the gathering during the workshop. “I am touched and proud that we have long standing clients.”

When celebrating their anniversary much emphasis was put on the growth of the

digital world and its role in advertising. Therefore, though they have been working with digital media for nearly six years, with the current expansion of digital media, Bates Strategic Alliance hopes to broaden their approach. Having taken a prominent role in introducing new strategies to the advertising market in Sri Lanka, Gunawardena said that in addition they hope to take a significant role in promoting digital media in the country as well. “We are taking the same role here in asking all of you to consider digital if you haven’t already. Sometimes people present many reasons as to why not to get into digital. But I think the time is now to get in, experiment and learn; because things are going to turn around fast. I think we are going to be evangelists and this is part of spreading the message of digital,” the CEO affirmed.

He further mentioned that the company has many plans in store to develop the knowledge and know-how related to digital media of the workers as well as their clients. Word of mouth, not only through physical actions, but also through social media sites help to contribute to the popularity of a brand and the CEO attested that “this is our new story and our new promise, it is a challenge. We will strive to deliver and generate positive brand conversations for your brands rather than just broadcasting messages. I think that is the future and if we can achieve that, we would have done something really great.”

The workshop was led by a presentation done by Josh Sklar, President/Creative Director of Heresy from Austin, Texas. He brought in a wealth of experience that spans over 30 years and has held positions such as Chief Creative Officer, XM Worldwide (now part of Ogilvy and JWT) at Bates Advertising/Cordiant Communications Group and Chief Executive Officer/Executive Creative Director, XM Asia Pacific (now part of JWT) to name a few. He has further authored an e-book with John Lambie, Founder and Director at dextr by the name of Digital Doesn’t Matter: Reinventing the Advertising Industry.

Explaining the concept behind the book, during the presentation, Sklar said, “it’s about the transformation of traditional agencies and marketers and the fact that most agencies have been very slow about embracing it. There’s been a lot of fear and a lot of confusion. So focus is about getting the insights of people from all over the world to portray the actual situation. What we found is agencies that had not turned to digital have not earned their clients trust.”

He further said, “15 years ago companies questioned the need for a website, but in this day and age if you don’t have a website, clients question your credibility. Now people question about social engagement, online reputation management, authenticity and social media.”

The presentation introduced novel concepts of advertising through digital and social media while depicting success stories of various strategies used by international brands to stay ahead in the prevailing competitive market.

