

# Of roots formed in the past, and routes leading to the future...

*He has spent 38 years in the global advertising industry and his experience ranges from working in markets such as Saudi Arabia and Kenya to Tokyo and New York. He belongs to the pure-thought advertising generation that spoke of creative ideas that challenged and changed the world and he also saw the business transition into a play of money and scale. Tim Love is amongst those few advertising leaders who understand the nuance of a market, the role of collaborations and the dos and don'ts of global brand building. He was appointed the Vice Chairman of Omnicom Group in 2006, prior to which, in 2004, he was President, Global clients at Omnicom's TBWA Worldwide. Before TBWA, he was Vice Chairman, International, at Publicis Groupe's Saatchi & Saatchi, and served as Relationship Manager for the French holding company's global portfolio of Procter & Gamble business.*

*Tim Love became very important from an India viewpoint in July 2009, when in addition to his role as Vice Chairman of Omnicom Group, he was also appointed the CEO of Omnicom's APIMA (Asia Pacific India Middle East Africa) region. If his designation was not enough to indi-*

*cate the role that India as a market plays for Omnicom, Love reiterates it by ensuring that he regularly visits the country. In his recent visit, Noor Fathima Warsia, Deputy Editor, exchange4media Group, caught up with him over lunch. Tim Love looks back at his early days in this conversation quoting instances from his experiences as an advertising entrepreneur and professional that formed the roots of the advertising business today. He also speaks on how Omnicom has grown in India, and how it intends to battle WPP here. Excerpts:*

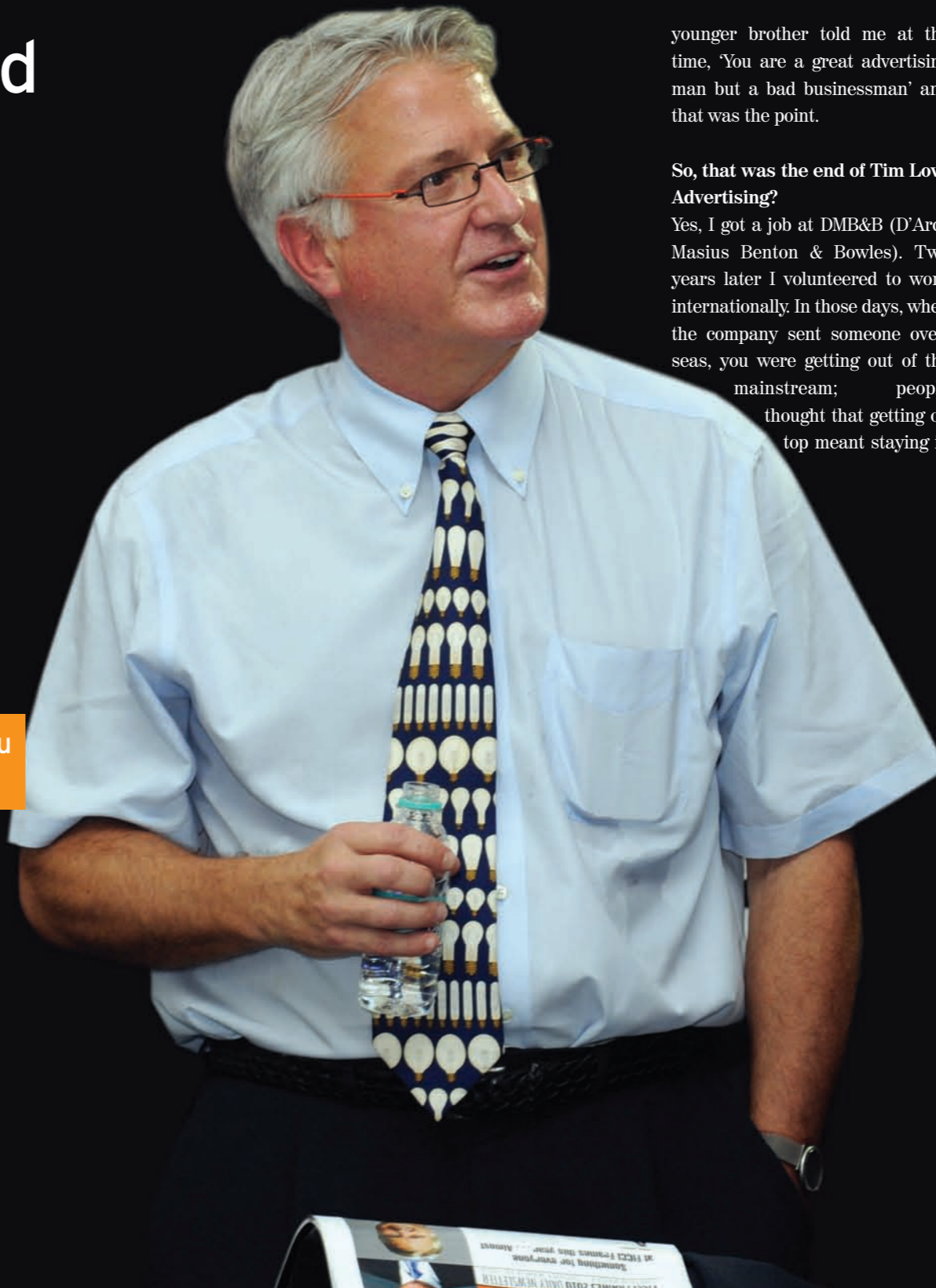
“Jack Schwartz's younger brother told me, 'You are a great ad man but a bad businessman'.”

**From ad professional to entrepreneur, and back to being professional — what led to these changes?**

I had started my career at the Dancer Fitzgerald Sample (DFS) agency. They had some big businesses there – P&G, General Mills and then the famous win of Toyota in 1975. It was a great place to work in. After that, DFS was bought by Saatchi & Saatchi in 1984. I didn't like the way it had changed after the merger. There were all kinds of politics – I was asked to pitch for a competitive client of a business that

I was working on. I didn't feel good about that and I told them that that was what was wrong with the industry. If you did not have integrity with one client, the others would question it too. I quit and I started Tim Love Advertising. It was doing well. I had done a campaign for the National Committee of Adoption, for which I had won an EFFIE Award. We had done some great work for British Knights. They were jazzy sneakers for the urban African-American target that had caught on in various Footlocker stores and Footlocker challenged British Knights if they could cross this over to a broader audience,

and that is where I came in. We did some breakthrough work for them but they were paying me a fee of \$2,500 when what we actually needed for that business was USD 20,000. No matter how I spoke to Jack Schwartz (Founder, British Knights), he just wouldn't pay me what was required to stay in the business. Once you set a price and condition somebody to expect a level of service at that price, it is really hard to go back and convince them to pay what they should have had been paying you. I didn't want to work with them anymore. Jack's



younger brother told me at the time, 'You are a great advertising man but a bad businessman' and that was the point.

**So, that was the end of Tim Love Advertising?**

Yes, I got a job at DMB&B (D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles). Two years later I volunteered to work internationally. In those days, when the company sent someone overseas, you were getting out of the mainstream; people thought that getting on top meant staying in

the home market. After the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union dissolved, markets such as Eastern Europe started opening up, and P&G started sending people overseas. Right around that time, which was 1990, this guy who had gone overseas came back to be the CEO of P&G. That changed everyone's line of sight, including mine. I then spent six years in Belgium.

**DMB&B was formed by the merger of D'Arcy Masius and Benton & Bowles, and then later Publicis Groupe acquired the rechristened D'Arcy. That whole period was marked with mergers and acquisitions. WPP built its business on that modus operandi - was it really as fast paced as it appears right now?**

Every bit and more - it actually started in 1984, when Saatchi started going around buying, they bought Compton, Esty, Bates and DFS - their vision was to have five networks. They first bought Compton, which was a big US agency that had the P&G business like Tide and Ariel. It really bothered you if you thought your business was about creating ideas that could change the world, because it seemed more about money and scale. One of the arguments that they should be credited for is that they got the ball rolling for globalisation and agency business.

**But what did one do if they were not toeing that everything-is-merging line?**

Well, there were two companies at the time that had the same feeling about this everything-is-merging - BBDO and DDB. Keith Reinhard at DDB said that they

didn't want to sell but were stuck because a lot of money was thrown at them, and they were told that if they didn't sell, they would be bypassed in the global playing field. They didn't have the capital to go out and buy an agency and they didn't want to lose their independence either. So they took some help from a Wall Street guy. He advised them to set up a holding company that goes public and raises money. That would give them the money they needed to invest in talent and geographies and they would main-

did this with Team Dell, shouldn't you guys be doing that. The truth is that WPP won the Dell business, and told the client, I am going to give you a 1000 of our top people in every discipline you need. They are going to work full time on your business, I am going to be your enforcer and you have to pay only one cheque to me. They bought it, it was a compelling argument. But it hasn't worked, because a creative person cannot just work on any one brand. They want the opportunity to create work that will change the world and win awards.

**So is a media holding company required for the growth of an operating company?**

There are advantages to having a holding company. When faced with complexity or fear, human beings seek some form of hierarchy or centralisation. But the ethic of independence has to be maintained. We tell people that our holding company is a very thin non-hierarchal

**very well in the last couple of years - the latest victory being Unilever handing its digital business to OMD in India. What kind of opportunity do you think that brings?**

That is our whole strategy here. Historically, we didn't have clients like a Unilever or a Coca Cola that made us expand. We don't need to go building infrastructure that they have - theirs is more mature - it was built for a business in the seventies, eighties and nineties. Just like other businesses that have leapfrogged, we also don't need to go with those early iterations. This win on digital is huge because it underscores why we can leapfrog. Martin Sorrell said recently that WPP has 9,000 employees in India, and we have over 4,800 here. Someone told me, you have quite a long way to go, but I am saying we don't need 9,000. We are going to operate more efficiently - what we need is to make sure we have the very best talent in the business. Our motto that nobody has used until recently is 'talent omnia vincit', which means talent conquers all.

**How is Omnicom going to combat Martin Sorrell in India?**

By being humble. Gandhi once said that the seeker of truth should be humbler than the dust. The world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker of truth should so humble himself, that even the dust could crush him. Only then, and not till then, will he have a glimpse of truth. So I am going to be humble and I am going to spend a lot more time here. ■

—noorw@exchange4media.com



“Our motto that nobody has used until recently is ‘talent omnia vincit’, which means talent conquers all.”

tain their independence of running the individual companies as well. So, Allen Rosenshine and Phil Dusenberry of BBDO and Keith Reinhard of DDB decided they were going to have a holding company, and named it Omnicom. That imprint of how we started is still very much a part of what Omnicom is. Our operating people are much closer to their employees and consumers.

We get pushed all the time by journalists that WPP did this - they

group of people, and we want to keep it that way. We have more power when we have people who have more choices and are engaged more in what they are doing instead of just a top-down system. It is tempting in a short term to muffle everyone together and say that this is what we are going to do. I thought at one point that centralisation was the way to go but a lot of things have changed.

**Well the philosophy does seem to work in India. OMD has done**