

Honoring the 2009 Agency Innovators from around the World

SKY NEWS

The Internationalist is grateful to **SKY NEWS**, who has been the exclusive sponsor of Agency Innovator activities since 2007. **SKY NEWS** celebrated a landmark 20 years of breaking news earlier in 2009, and in this year's agency Innovator it will be underwriting a newly-created social network micro-site containing profiles of all Agency Innovators so far (from 2006 through to 2009), as well as updates on where they are today.

The Internationalist is excited about highlighting such talent and thanks **SKY NEWS** for helping to provide a useful new tool.

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This marks the fourth annual feature devoted to showcasing international Agency Innovators, and in a year of economic challenges for many parts of the world, we are delighted to report that there are numerous passionate individuals with innovative ideas who continue to drive growth.

Our 19 winners also underscore how innovative thinking is not limited by geography, age, company size, or one's position in a company. These expansive individuals think about advertising in new ways, and are today's breakthrough communicators, champions of multinational strategy and advocates of international brand-building. Candidates were chosen by industry nominations with final selections by our Innovators Committee and **The Internationalist** editorial team.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in 2009 may be the new geographic mix of individuals. This year, the largest number of winners came from Shanghai and Chicago. There is no question that China is in growth mode; however, Chicago is also fast-becoming a significant U.S. hub for international media planning and marketing strategy.

This was also a year when many seasoned professionals attained new heights and innovative thinking paid off significantly. Who says that recessions curb the need to break through?

Congratulations to all of the 2009 Agency Innovators.





Bianca Baltrusch
Communications Manager
DAVINCI Selectwork
Germany

CURRENT CLIENTS: BRAUN
BORN: Bremen, Germany
WORKED IN: Germany

Bianca Baltrusch may consider herself a “new kid on the block,” but DAVINCI’s management, including Zoja Paskaljevic, Executive

Chairman Worldwide and Dirk Fromm, CEO Europe, see her as a rising star. Part of Omnicom, DAVINCI Selectwork’s focus is communication planning for integrated campaigns—whether their clients are local retailers or multinational corporations. Their Selectwork™ process underscores both integration and efficiency through the campaign management process.

Bianca Baltrusch may come from a Masters of Arts background in German languages and literature, followed by a stint in publishing; however, she is now working on a global level with a belief in “Yes, we can” when it comes to clients’ work. She is the first to say, “I will not bury any idea before someone can prove to me that it cannot work.”

Name an innovative idea or business solution for which you are most proud. The Digital Integration program for BRAUN is a great example. As a Communications Planning Agency, we are responsible for gaining a deep understanding of the needs and desires of our target group. Nearly all of BRAUN’s consumer segments are becoming more digitally involved, so we created a digital “WHO” profile in collaboration with BBDO Düsseldorf, and recommended shifting budgets from above-the-line media into more engaging touch-points.

What role does innovation play in your marketing strategy today? Innovation right now — in my business of Communications Planning — is synonymous with digital media solutions. We already know that consumers’ lives are strongly connected to the digital world: Facebook, myspace and youtube. But the most important question may be: What is coming next? As the world becomes more digital, how do we continue to touch our consumer? When will be the future moment when he or she is most receptive?

What is the biggest challenge you face in applying innovative thinking to international projects? The requirements of global markets are simply not universally the same. Even something as basic as technical solutions (such as high speed internet access) is not available in the same way in each country; this makes our planning suggestions difficult to adapt for some markets. Matters of cultural diversity are even more complex. While it is critical that individual cultures survive in a globalized world, it is challenging to create an innovative concept that brings about the same results everywhere.

Dictionary definitions aside, how would you characterize innovation in the work you do? When working in Communications Planning, one quickly realizes that the real innovators are our consumers. They change their beliefs, their needs, wishes, shopping and media behavior all the time. To understand them and engage them, we have to follow their changes constantly. Whether today’s trends range from wellness & yoga to self-fulfillment or from cocooning to lone wolves — is the consumer still digitally-connected? We need to be part of their process to better learn what different consumers really want.

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Brandon Starkoff
Senior Vice President/Director
Starcom Worldwide, Chicago USA

CURRENT CLIENTS: Research in Motion (BlackBerry™) and Sun Microsystems
BORN: Cleveland, Ohio USA
WORKED IN: Always based out of Chicago, but extensive travel to Beijing, Singapore, London, Germany and Canada. Studied international business, economics and marketing in Luxembourg.

As the mobile space has continued to grow exponentially, Brandon Starkoff has managed to stay ahead of the medium’s trends for the benefit of full-service media communications agency Starcom Worldwide. His role requires technological acumen and innovation to orchestrate global media campaigns that help clients engage consumers in meaningful ways across different regions, languages and cultures. He currently oversees media strategy and investment for clients Research in Motion (BlackBerry™) and Sun Microsystems, two of the world’s most powerful international tech brands.

Name an innovative idea or business solution for which you are most proud. As Starcom’s mobile media guru, he focuses on leading and developing the worldwide agency’s mobile standards, communication strategies and best practices. His pioneering initiatives often become widely-accepted programs that benefit Starcom’s partners. For example, while it is typical for media agencies to send out RFPs to media vendors, Starkoff and his team have flipped this model and instituted an Open Source “RFI” or “Request for Ideas.” Not only does his team ask for open source ideas rather than mechanisms for distribution, but he encourages vendors to collaborate with each other to create more robust programs that leverage the strengths of each property— whether via audience, content or technology.

Why do people see you as an innovator? Brandon Starkoff likes to break rules. In his account leadership role on Sun, his team goes beyond its media strategy duties (and industry norms) by overseeing overall account management for the client’s global advertising efforts, which includes coordinating both the creative and media elements of the account for optimal campaign integration. Starkoff seeks out opportunities to break down barriers and allow collaboration to benefit all entities involved in a campaign.

How would you characterize innovation in the work you do? He admits that an mentor introduced him to the “Three I’s” — Innovation, Integration, Intimacy — as key criteria to evaluate programs. Since then, innovation has remained at the top of his personal list. And given his role managing global technology clients, innovation tends to be deeply rooted in their DNA and must be demonstrated throughout his team’s strategy and campaign activations.

What is the biggest challenge you face in applying innovative thinking to international projects? While the idea of innovation is universal, implementation, according to Starkoff, often differs by country based on capabilities and infrastructure. It is necessary to understand each individual market in order to successfully carry out global initiatives. For example, 3G is the dominant channel of wireless communication in Japan; however, in the United States, 3G penetrates only a fraction of the population. This challenges any agency’s ability to deliver rich, dynamic programs over mobile devices on a broad scale.

How would you characterize innovation in the work you do? According to Starkoff, innovation should solve a consumer challenge. It doesn’t always have to be a “first-ever” idea to be innovative. Rather, innovation is achieved when it addresses a core consumer insight that helps to deliver against a marketing objective. He is in the business of solving problems and addressing challenges on behalf of brands and he believes that the people who do that most effectively are the most innovative.

Other International Trivia: In an effort to embrace his global team’s requests to try eccentric foods from their cultures, he has had the opportunity to eat chicken heart, frog ovaries and the dreadful smelling Durian Fruit (from Singapore).