
STEVE BABB

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INSIGHTFUL LEADERSHIP THAT DRIVES STRATEGIC CLARITY, INNOVATION & VALUE CREATION

Senior Executive, Critical Thinker & Trusted Advisor who views strategy through a market-informed filter to straightforwardly outline the impact of growth initiatives and influence go/no-go C-level decisions. Evaluates opportunities as trade-offs to optimize outcomes and create a holistic view on business impact. As an influencer at the forefront of significant product/service/brand launches, engages an agenda-free curiosity to stretch innovation and brand value beyond previously accepted limits.

Mentors senior leaders in defining priorities at the intersection of traditional and digital strategy, asking the right questions, anticipating emerging issues, differentiating between current state and long-term potential, and removing distraction. Engaging communicator who leads with emotional intelligence, integrity, responsiveness, and a sense of humor. Experience includes:

- ▶ **Business Size:** startups to newly launched divisions to Fortune 100 industry leaders (private and publicly traded companies)
- ▶ **Industries (B2B/B2C, free/regulated markets):** technology, SaaS, healthcare, telecommunications, consumer packaged goods, automotive, food and beverage, professional services, advertising and marketing communications, and nonprofit

Open to board, consulting/advisory, and leadership opportunities.

SELECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Played an integral role in the ongoing transformation of managed-care leader's underperforming and at-risk mental health division. Hand-picked by senior executives to create and lead strategic market-facing initiatives to gain critical insights. In 2019, this division received the highest-possible rating from the state for mental health clinical effectiveness.
- Architect and leader of 5K+ customer-facing market tests for hundreds of product, service, and marketing/brand concepts (organic development & M&A). Work has spanned North America, Europe, Asia, and Latin America.
- Selected by State Farm CMO to lead a 3-day executive workshop to contemporize execution of the 30+-year-old "Like a Good Neighbor" brand positioning.
- Advised companies in continuing, course-correcting, or disengaging from a wide range of growth strategies. Among these is the recommendation that a tech company withdraw from a social media deal that threatened consumer control and privacy.
- Led startup from concept to 2 client engagements within 1 day, immediate profitability, and long-term/deeply rooted client relationships. Built and maintains multinational partnerships to scale the business as needed.
- Conceptualized, launched, and spun off business that transformed traditional operating model into a scalable and cost-effective streaming model.
- Earlier career highlights include strategic planning for world-class consumer brands including Discover Financial Services, Rubbermaid, Clorox, Anheuser-Busch, The Dial Corporation, and Volkswagen.
- Original board member of nonprofit that has distributed 1.3B+ liters of safe water to 240K people on a global scale since 2009.

BOARD, EXECUTIVE & CONSULTING COMPETENCIES BACKED BY SUCCESS ACROSS INDUSTRIES

Executive Leadership – Strategy Design/Execution – Innovation Governance – Market Insights/Trends
Customer Behavior/Experience – Research/Discovery – Decision Support – Brand/Product Positioning
Leadership Development – Mentoring/Coaching – Value Creation – Strategic Communications

CAREER HISTORY

VERUS GROUP, Evergreen, CO/Lawrence, KS, 1998 – Present

(boutique firm providing qualitative research and other consultancy services to clients across industries)

President/Strategic Advisor

Launched and leads firm. Manages P&L, team, client strategy and engagement design, global partnerships, and communications. Clients have included Microsoft, Kaiser-Permanente, HP, Sprint, Johnson & Johnson, Verizon, State Farm, Craig Hospital, LucasArts, Zulily, PayPal, Interface, and The Pokémon Company.

VERUS GROUP, cont.

- ▶ Leveraged economics, market research, and brand-building background to identify and fill a gap in the global market.
- ▶ Quickly earned a reputation as a strategic advisor to a wide range of stakeholders, including the C-suite, IT, R&D, product management, innovation management, and sales/marketing.
- ▶ Built and continues to grow a portfolio of qualitative client solutions, including focus groups, online research, semiotics, intercultural development inventory (IDI), ethnographies, and psychological analysis.
- ▶ Face of the client brand to research participants. Recognized as an invested communicator able to quickly engage existing and potential consumers/customers to gain meaningful insights about product/service development, brand positioning, and advertising as well as consumer attitudes and buying behaviors.
- ▶ Navigates highly regulated industries (e.g., healthcare, HIPAA) to gain access to value-creating business intelligence.
- ▶ Traveled extensively and secured agreements with partners to lead client engagements worldwide.
- ▶ Conducts partner training/onboarding. Mentors and coaches client stakeholders.
- ▶ Participates in trade shows as a client representative to gain additional insights.

US West, Denver, CO, 1993 – 1998

(telecommunications company serving 14 western states; NYSE:USW; merged into Qwest/CenturyLink)

Brand Director/Associate Director, Market Research

Recruited to join research organization to help shape company's response to deregulation. Promoted to lead Brand & Advertising Research Group, then to Brand Director reporting to the CMO.

- ▶ Led execution team for the Salt Lake City Olympics brand partnership. Developed campaigns and brand assets to support Denver Broncos sponsorship.
- ▶ Created brand strategies and campaigns that appealed to consumer emotions and protected market share.

DDB, Chicago, IL, 1990 – 1993

(worldwide advertising and marketing communications company; owned by Omnicom Group Inc.; NYSE:OMC)

Strategic Planner

Developed and reported data-driven market research insights to inform stakeholders' consumer knowledge and embed voice of the customer into brand growth strategies.

BOARD LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

HEALING WATERS INTERNATIONAL, **Member, Board of Directors**, Golden, CO | 2009 – 2014

Member of the original board that supported the launch and growth of this nonprofit organization committed to providing safe water and sustainable purification systems to communities in need worldwide.

KITCHEN ONE FOR ONE, **Member, Board of Directors**, Arvada, CO | 2017 – 2019

Served in a governance capacity for nonprofit, buy-one give-one food truck business. Success of the business had led to expansion into a permanent retail space.

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, **Guest Lecturer**, Lawrence, KS | 2019

Developed and taught course for business school's Capstone MBA program. Topic: Net Neutrality and the Opposing Interests of Network Operators and Consumers.

SEEDS OF HOPE, **Volunteer**, Evergreen, CO/Lawrence, KS | 2008 – Present

Member of this nonprofit organization's grassroots network of volunteers serving the needs of the community.

EDUCATION

M.S./B.S., Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Ph.D. Studies, U.S. and Brazil