

Title:

Profiles of the Powerful: Advertising Exec Mary Austen

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Summary:

When you spend time with Mary Stengel Austen, you come away with one feeling. "That woman is affable." After thinking it over, you might find other words which describe her: smart, realistic, enthusiastic, tough minded...

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Article Body:

When you spend time with Mary Stengel Austen, you come away with one feeling. "That woman is affable." After thinking it over, you might find other words which describe her: smart, realistic, enthusiastic, tough minded, determined, articulate, strategic, focused. But you'll always include affable in your memory of her because that's what she is.

Perhaps she has to be that way because of the two most significant challenges in her life: managing five small children and managing one of the largest ad agencies in this part of the country, Tierney Communications. Affable is good, perhaps necessary.

Having grown up in this area, she then graduated from Lafayette College and was directed to a job in sales for age copier company. Quickly convinced that she was not made for a direct sales role, she found her way into the former Spiro agency and found the career that challenged her, enthused her and excited her. Obviously, she loved what she did and, after a few other steps forward, she still loves what she does as president and CEO of Tierney and its 135 employees.

Mary sees great opportunity for the advertising business but she insists that success will come to those who understand that it's a "time for new reality." That's her way to acknowledge and respect change which is happening faster and faster. She believes that agencies must adapt more quickly to market changes, technology changes and even to the changing expectations of employees. More than ever before, she hopes that Tierney is understanding and respecting clients' perceptions of their own needs which often change with the speed of light.

Her concerns for the overall health of the agency business are partially based on the pressures clients feel in these changing times. It's not a new thought that solid relationships with clients are vital for ad agencies. However, those relationships are harder and harder to develop because of the pressures of time and the pressures of the bottom line. However, she says the key to a superb client relationship is no different today than it was ten years ago. Just remember that "It's not about you, it's about your client." Good advice.

When pressed, she has some advice for clients, too. Directed to clients in just a few words, the "wisdom" of Mary Stengel Austen is simple to state. She would ask them to be careful about articulating the business plan and the marketing objectives to the agency. She would urge them to have realistic expectations about their marketing/advertising efforts. She would hope for an open, honest working relationship with the agency and a consistent viewpoint about image, brand and sales. She also fully understands that clients have their own pressures and sometimes are forced to abandon well thought out plans.

A consistent lesson has guided her in her home life, in college and in her career. She has learned the importance of being able to multi-task. She says that learning to "juggle" has helped her in her career and in her role as a Mother. According to her, "Kids and clients have helped me to learn how to prioritize and have forced me to remain focused." She further explains, "Both clients and children need to feel as if they are the most important thing in your world." In these two separate situations, they are, so it's working out quite well for Mary, for Tierney and for her family.

Predictably, her hopes for her own career cover a broad spectrum of topics. When she thinks about her life in ten years, she first mentions her family and its importance. Then she talks about continuing to enjoy her work, about continuing to learn and grow and continuing to do the things she does best. She is quite comfortable and enjoys managing good people and hopes to continue that function. She also wants as much strategic involvement as possible, both in her own operation and in the operations of clients.

She gives an interesting example. When a client crisis occurs, she hopes to contribute to the strategy/solution and to "Slow things down when others are compelled to speed things up." She seems calm and, apparently, is convinced that calm and smart is better than frenzied and active without a good plan.

Mary Stengel Austen is even more than a busy, successful executive at Tierney and a busy, effective family woman. She is also a committed supporter of the community, serving on many boards including the Please Touch Museum, Bryn Mawr

Rehab Hospital, Maternity Care Coalition, Philadelphia Ad Club, Lafayette College Advisory Council and as Chairperson of the Pennsylvania Economy League.

She lives in Radnor with her husband, Peter, who is an Insurance Broker and her five children: Thomas(8), Andrew (7), Christopher (6), John (4) and Sally (2).

Affable? Yes. Successful? Yes. A nice combination!