

## Title:

Profiles of the Powerful: Advertising Exec Dudley Fitzpatrick

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## Summary:

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## Article Body:

In a sense, the entrance to SFGT is a window into the person who leads the company, Dudley Fitzpatrick, CEO. Open the big front door of the old town house on Walnut Street and the first thing you notice is three old stone steps. Couldn't they afford new steps?

Then you see the second door. It's all glass and through it you see the modern reception room, the classic furniture, the attractive receptionist and the small oriental rug in the center of the beautiful wood floor. "I get it," you think to yourself.

When you meet Dudley and chat with him, you really get it. He's a traditionalist, like the steps and the beams on the ceiling. He's confident and assertive, like the stately furniture and the offices themselves. He's tasteful, like the oriental rug and like the conference room on the fifth floor. You go there for the interview after a trip on the modern elevator.

And Dudley's a trip.

This is a man who knows where he's going, who wants to do it the right way, who has strong feelings about his beloved business. Notice that I didn't say "his beloved advertising business." He has different views about that way of looking at the business of marketing and advertising.

Life and career are quite different than he would have anticipated when he graduated from Miami University in Ohio. He got a degree in Mass Communication even though he says he went there primarily "to play hockey." While there, he discovered that "movies were more fun" and decided that he would like to write

movies. Off to New York, he "bummed around for over two years" trying to connect in the film business and finally had to get a steady job.

He decided to settle for "30 second movies" and he landed a job in the creative department of one of New York's biggest agencies, now known as Ammirati Puris Lintas. There, he worked exclusively on television and participated in network spots for Heineken, Diet Coke, Lysol and Mennen.

The agency was account-service dominated which influenced his firm belief that "strategy and creative are really the same thing." That is an idea which continues to drive his work and the agency's intentions.

While in New York, he was recruited to a Los Angeles agency, Dancer Fitzgerald-Sample. He took the job and became their youngest ever vice president but he admits that he probably took it because making movies still had some intrigue for him. At D-F, he worked on their efforts to get accounts to supplement their Toyota business. The agency landed Pioneer Electronics which became one of his proudest successes. His campaign, "Catch The Spirit of a True Pioneer," led Pioneer to great success.

Dudley created and produced the first music-video commercial in the industry for his client, Pioneer. It was a takeoff on West Side Story. Because it reflected the social realities of that era, it was selected to be part of the permanent collection of the Smithsonian's Cultural Mores Section.

Both Dudley and his wife, Tanice, were raised in New Jersey. They live there now, in Pennington, with their three children: Aubrey, Drew and Tess. The two older children go to The Lawrenceville School, Dudley's alma mater. The proximity to New Jersey was one of the reasons he responded to an opportunity at Lewis Gilman and Kynett (now Tierney Communications.)

He was very impressed by the quality of LG&K's work. As vice president and group creative director, he participated in what he calls their "glory years" but was one of the victims of one of their many top management changes.

He and a good friend at LGK, Bob Schell, were both let go with quite limited severance. Fortunately, they were contacted by Herr's Potato Chips which offered them the account if they wanted to start an agency. That was in 1992, the beginning of what is now SFGT. Herr's was with them for 12 productive years. Today, the agency has 30 people and serves eight accounts. Interestingly, two of their accounts, Tylenol and Sunoco, are deeply involved in NASCAR racing.

Dudley feels that their work with NASCAR is one example of why he prefers not to

be thought of as a traditional advertising agency. He insists that the agencies which rely primarily on "advertising" for success are on the wrong track. His vision calls for an agency which is deeply involved in all aspects of a client's marketing communications activities. For SFGT's clients, NACAR is one (important) ingredient in all-inclusive programs for the clients' core consumer markets, for clients' public relations focus and for clients' employee pride.

When asked about the account he is most proud of, he winces and reminds me that he's proud of every account. Prodded, he volunteers that he is particularly proud of the work SFGT did for the opening of the Constitution Center. His feelings of patriotism seem to be reflected in the positioning they created for the Center, "The Freedom To Be You. It All Starts With The Constitution."

Oddly, he says that the "dumbest" and the "smartest" things he ever did in business are actually the same thing. "The smartest thing I ever did was to surround myself with my two partners: Sarah Lenhard, Managing Director and head of Account Service and Dan Reeves, Managing Director and Executive Creative Director." The dumbest thing? "Not bringing them on board sooner."

That supports his conviction that the toughest part of the ad business is finding, hiring, nurturing and growing with good people. He worries about that because he finds it difficult to find candidates with outstanding talent, valuable experience and a good cultural fit. He also worries about the possibility that good clients may be losing confidence in agencies. He says, "Agencies have to be emotionally able to have complete confidence in themselves in order to be secure enough to warrant meaningful collaboration from clients and in order to provide optimal service."

Dudley Fitzpatrick is confident. It's apparent. Think about the old stone steps leading into the agency. Sure, they could afford something new but "old" has character and character is what he wants to project. It's apparent when you take the elevator to the spiffy conference room on the fifth floor. That's another, positive message to visitors. It's apparent when you hear his straight forward answers to direct questions. Yes, Dudley Fitzpatrick is confident about his agency, about his vision of the business he's in and about himself.