

Interview

Realizing A Vision

An Interview with Timothy P. Andree,
Chief Executive Officer, Dentsu America, Inc., and Executive Officer, Dentsu Inc.



Timothy P. Andree

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming his current post in May 2006, Timothy Andree was Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications, for the National Basketball Association. Andree had also served as the Vice President of Corporate Communications at BASF, Vice President and General Manager of Corporate and Marketing Communications for Canon U.S.A., and head of External Affairs for Toyota Motor North America. Andree was drafted by the Chicago Bulls following graduation, and played professional basketball overseas for seven years. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame.

COMPANY BRIEF Dentsu America (www.dentsuamerica.com) is the fastest-growing advertising agency in the United States, with clients including Canon U.S.A., Toyota Motor North America, ExpressJet Airlines, Bandai Toys, Sage Software, and Domaine Chandon. Dentsu America is owned by Japan-based Dentsu Inc., the world's largest advertising agency brand. Dentsu offers a range of in-house services, from traditional marketing and creative services, to sports marketing, entertainment rights, public relations, digital content, and other communications services.

Is the market sufficiently aware of the Dentsu America brand and the strength of its offerings?

Dentsu's awareness is pretty universal in advertising and marketing circles, but our

operations in America have been an enigma for a long time, partly because of our focus on serving Dentsu's global clients. I am trying to establish Dentsu's reputation as an organization with the best talent and an extraordinary commitment to client service. *AdvertisingAge* had us as the 125th largest advertising agency in the U.S. in 2006, and in 2007, we were listed as number 57. So the growth has been good, and the key to it has been the creative reputation that we're developing, the changes we've made, and the work we're producing, which is getting attention from the creative community and attracting new clients across the board.

Have the services your clients look for changed or evolved in recent years?

Yes. We're investing heavily in our in-house digital and interactive capabilities – the fastest growing part of our business. We have a full-fledged interactive department. Additionally, in October 2007, we acquired ATTIK, a full-service agency that has always had very strong digital and interactive capabilities and a real connection with the Generation Y and youth markets. So we're filling out our portfolio, and I'm still looking at acquisitions to further develop the capabilities of the organization.

What sort of companies would be considered Dentsu America's target clients?

We have grown our business with our existing clients, and adding more U.S. businesses to our client portfolio has been important to us. About 30 percent of our growth has been organic. We just became the agency of record for ExpressJet Airlines, which is a tremendous creative opportunity for us. We work with Sage Software, a leader in the individual and small business software category, and we have a wonderful creative account with Domaine Chandon wines. So our clients are both large and small companies. We'll focus on some of the larger marketers out there, particularly those headquartered in the United States, but at the same time, we love working for clients that allow us the opportunity to really push the boundaries and deliver cutting-edge creative.

Do you coordinate closely with the global Dentsu organization?

Dentsu is 107 years old, and there are things at the core of our DNA whether I'm in Brussels, Sao Paulo, or Tokyo. We believe in focusing on solutions that help our clients best achieve their objectives. A lot of agencies fall into the trap of first developing a 30-second spot and working

backwards from there, while we don't necessarily believe that television or any medium is the prescribed solution. We consistently start from a very neutral point. That said, while Dentsu is the dominant player in Japan, with more than 30 percent market share, we're less robust in the United States, but I think the DNA that drives us is the same. Everything starts with the client's need.

Are you pleased with the level of talent you've been able to bring into the Dentsu America organization?

The agency business is almost purely about talent and how you can build chemistry among the talent. We had some good building blocks to start with, but we had to recruit on the creative side and in the digital area to augment the strength that was already here. We're getting recognized by the industry as a shop that produces great creative. I've been fortunate to hire some people who could work anywhere and who have chosen to work at Dentsu America.

How much time do you get to spend in the field with clients?

I am in a unique position as a former client running an agency, and I'm trying to build the kind of agency I always wanted working for me. So face time without value is a waste. My interaction with clients is always intended to be content-filled. It's critically important to be engaged in what's happening to our clients, their business, their sales, and their brands, because what matters here is influence. It's not about doing news releases, ads, or Web sites, and it's not about an interactive marketing program. It's about moving their audience to action – selling something to somebody. My interaction with clients has been critical to understanding how to run the agency and to developing a sense for where they're going and what they need before they ask for it.

When the opportunity to lead Dentsu America came up, what enticed you to take on the role?

I took the job because of three names: Dentsu, Toyota, and Canon. I had worked at Canon and Toyota – which are tremendous companies and brands – and I was pleased to have the opportunity to work with them again. I'm in the rare position to be the CEO of an agency of which I was once a client. I know the company, and I have tremendous respect for it. I could never understand why Dentsu had never risen to a place of real prominence and significance in the U.S. advertising market. So I see that as a tremendous opportunity that is achievable. ●