

Multifaceted Financial Solutions

**An Interview with Bill Georges,
Global Chief Operating Officer, Active International**

EDITORS' NOTE *Bill Georges joined Active in 2007, bringing more than 20 years of marketing, advertising, and sales leadership experience to the company. He was previously Senior Vice President, Advertising and Affiliate Sales for Comcast Networks and Senior Vice President at Liberty Media, spending 10-plus years at both companies. Earlier in his career, Georges played competitive tennis, competing at the U.S. Open and playing on the ATP Tennis Tour. After a sports-related injury, he transitioned to the business world, becoming Vice President of Sales and Sponsorships for the ATP tour.*



Bill Georges

How important has it been to engage Active's workforce on this new direction and have you had to bring in new talent to help with this transition?

While we have brought in some new talent mainly in the technology area, we find that most of our people here have embraced that we need to help our clients gain a better understanding of our capabilities and help clients navigate ways to achieve more in their businesses.

For instance, one of our clients in the fast-food industry wanted to try out some different meals. The CMO told us

Bringing multifaceted financial solutions to brands so they are able mitigate their risk and achieve more is a far different solution than we may have been considered for in the past.

Have new players entered the space and how do you define the Active advantage?

A few new companies have popped up, but most of them are small. Their models are also somewhat different than what we do. The holding companies used to tell their clients to avoid us and now every one of them has what they're calling a barter or corporate exchange or some form of discounted media.

It's great that they have entered the space because it validates what has been going on here for 35 years. My fear regarding where they're taking it is that they're dumbing down the business and making it all about getting discounted media. They're not creating leverage or value like we do or creating value for the other side of the equation – they are just doing what they have always done – aggregating and aggravating.

The direction Active is heading in is a client-focused approach of creating measurable value, as well as helping them talk to the audiences they need to reach through technologies like AI. By doing this, we will not only be able to analyze our clients' current customer base, but also deliver like-minded incremental audiences to truly increase reach and sales.

How much of a need is there for Active to educate clients about these solutions and innovations?

Our clients are having a fuller understanding of all of the different ways we can apply our model to help them add measurable value to their business. As each client experiences the value and the efficiencies others just can't provide, they have become great evangelists and our business continues to grow.

New partners are beginning to understand just how much our model can improve their business results and how many different products we have. Many are surprised at how far ahead we are with AI and even more are using our unwired platform, XACTV. Whether a long-term client of 10-plus years or a new client, all are clear that with Active they achieve more. ●

How has Active's business evolved from its early days and how do you define the company today?

When many people hear the word "barter," they lump us into the category of being a private method of getting themselves perks. That's why we transitioned from barter into corporate trade. That jump separated us from that exchange of goods and services to a place where we were viewed as helping entities with balance sheet problems.

However, we don't want clients to feel they should only be talking to us when they have a dire need. Since we were typically introduced to clients when they had a problem that they didn't have a solution for, we got tied to that problem, rather than being viewed as a firm that was so creative it could proactively help them in ways that few other firms could. No one wanted to talk about the fact that they were using corporate trade because it insinuated that they had some big problem they were trying to get out of.

Overall, Active is evolving to the partner our clients turn to in order to help them be more agile in the marketplace and achieve more in their businesses, beyond just solving their inventory problems.

We have also made large investments in technology to have the tools to be trading more astutely than anyone else in the space, and guide our clients to the best business solutions for them.

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that if they didn't have Active providing a safety net and Active helping them promote the meals in a cost-effective manner so they could reduce their risk, they would never had taken a chance on these new meals.