

A Dynamic Industry

An Interview with Dennis Quinn,
Executive Vice President, Chief Media and Digital Enterprise Officer, Active International

EDITORS' NOTE Dennis Quinn has more than two decades of experience running traditional media and digital businesses. Prior to joining Active in 2010, he was President, Sales and Marketing, for Channel M and previously Executive Vice President, Business Development, after serving as EVP/GM of TBS at Turner Broadcasting. Earlier, Quinn served as a Captain in the United States Air Force.



Dennis Quinn

How do you define Active's business today?

A corporate trade company, which was traditionally what Active was defined as, is too limiting of a definition. Active is a company that works with clients and partners to help them achieve more. It may still be a typical trade transaction that helps a client take older, undervalued assets and have them work to lower the cost of operating expenses or it could be having us run their digital platform and their digital advertising in a way that is much more efficient.

How is Active leading in regard to digital and will you discuss these capabilities?

When you talk about digital, there are a number of different ways to look at it. How has the digitization of processes helped make people much more efficient and achieve more? How do our digital advertising strategies help advertisers achieve more?

Active's DNA is in corporate trade. So the question is how do you do this in a digital advertising environment, where most things are now purchased programmatically, whether it's social, or whether it's normal programmatic advertising in an bidable market environment? We need to create an opportunity to create leveraged inventory for our clients in this marketplace so they can apply trade to these transactions. We achieve this by trading with publishers and put those inventories into a private marketplace we built. This enables us to transact on a transparent basis, buying it in an open marketplace, and allows our clients to pay differently.

Is corporate trade well understood or is there still an education process?

I think in some regards it's more important to explain our differentiation versus what people believe corporate trade to be. This is important since there's been a proliferation of non-disclosed media groups formed within agency

holding companies. These entities provide some media cost savings, but few are providing true trade solutions.

We are helping clients with media efficiencies as well as creating solutions with their procurement, facilities, and real estate departments.

How important is the entrepreneurial spirit at Active?

We do a pretty rigorous job of evaluating the type of people we hire and bring on board. We seek individuals who have been either entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs with the

dexterity to be able to examine and identify opportunities and exploit those that best fit into Active's culture.

We continue to fuel that type of talent and caliber of people in the company in order to sustain that entrepreneurial spirit.

What has been the key to Active's ability to retain talent?

When you look at the employee tenure here, it's unlike most companies. I think that the average tenure is close to 20 years. There is no typecasting here. If you excel and do a good job at what you're currently tasked at, you're not locked into that area.

I have media people and new salespeople working side by side to bring on new customers. When you develop a proclivity in those skill sets, Active is very good at moving you around to leverage those skill sets.

What do you tell young people about the industry and the opportunities that Active offers?

If you're a new person coming into this business, of the 370 people we have on staff today, probably 230 of them are in media. That is one of the most dynamic industries today. You are constantly seeing changes, you're learning, and you're being challenged. As more and more media is being digitized and affected by digital, there is a chance to learn more and grow. You get a chance to broaden your horizons and make yourself a much more well-rounded media executive.

That gives you the opportunity to move from one platform to the next. We're challenging folks and giving them plenty of opportunities. Those people who are good get a chance to move up rapidly. Those people who are interested in broadening their base to determine what they want to do for the rest of their career will find ample opportunity for that here.

We have a great young staff that's really committed and works hard and I'm proud to work alongside them. We have some of the best and the brightest and one of the benefits that we offer a young person here is that they don't have to worry about the cost of living or commuting in and out of the city. It's an easy commute here. The cost of living is lower.

Young talent at Active get a chance to gain a significant amount of learning and is treated as a person, not as a number. ●

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