

Creating Synergies Across Borders

An Interview with Darren Riley,
Senior Vice President, Director of International Media, Active International

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to his current 21 years with Active, Darren Riley was with Time Buying Service, a major domestic buying service, where for eight years he served as Account Manager in New York and General Manager in Los Angeles. Prior to that, he worked as a media manager at CSI International, a Corporate Barter Company. Riley has over 30 years of advertising and corporate trade experience, and has worked with most of the world's major media companies.



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trading relationships. Once the trade credit is transferred, they will work locally with Active in whatever country they are in. The local agency also gets involved. Basically the client is working in markets just as they normally would, but with the financial benefit of corporate trade.

From a clients' perspective, they need to determine how they want to handle the transfer of the trade credit. Typically, companies need to charge an internal transfer fee to the receiving division. We suggest they charge

as little as possible so that the receiving division also has a benefit from using the trade credit.

From a process perspective, usually finance makes the decision so that the company receives the overall financial benefit. They initiate the transfer, and then we engage with the Marketing and Media teams, or the agency in the local market. Just this year, we've completed about a dozen cross-border transactions. It's a very accepted practice.

Will you discuss Active's differentiation within international media and how you define your role?

I oversee the international media departments around the world and serve as the liaison among our offices. Many times we have clients in one part of the world that we're not engaging in another part of the world, or we have clients who are interested in extending the benefit of trade to another office. I help bridge those gaps.

I provide a similar function to our media partners. In traditional media, TV, radio, print, and other media, this has its challenges. Media companies typically operate in individual markets and they have separate functionality. To work with one market and try to expand that relationship deal to other markets is difficult. In the digital space, those barriers are fewer since digital media tends to be more global in nature. Therefore, a big part of my job is working with digital media providers, creating relationships and trade arrangements with media companies who operate in multiple markets.

A key differentiator, and the thing that makes Active unique, is that we hire local media professionals in all markets. Our media teams are comprised of local experts with many years' experience across all disciplines of the advertising business, including full service agencies, media agencies, media providers, and clients. Whenever we open a new office we always look for local, well respected, and knowledgeable media talent.

Is there a process for working globally?

Our operating infrastructure makes it seamless for a multinational client to work with us. For us there are no borders. A relationship may have started in one country but our clients can easily use their trade credit wherever we have

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Is traditional media going to remain relevant in some form?

It is a fact that younger people are viewing less television and listening less to traditional radio, but there is still a large part of the population for the foreseeable future who will continue

to turn the TV and radio on. Advertisers are going to want to be there. In general, television (in some form) and radio are going to remain relevant. Additionally, outdoor, an industry that has done a great job reinventing itself over the past 10 years, will remain significant.

I don't believe that print as we know it today is going to survive unless they do something to reinvent themselves. Having said that, in certain markets, print media remains important. In places like Latin America, people still want a newspaper and they still pick up magazines.

Will the true value for Active come from larger multinational companies?

We have clients of every size and scope in all of our markets. It's really about creating value. As long as a client has excess inventory and needs to advertise, we can create the added value they want.

In local areas, do you seek out employees who have come out of other media companies or do they have to know and understand corporate trade?

Outside of the U.S and U.K, there are very few people who understand the mechanics of corporate trade. When we hire, we look for people with a skill set that fits the job we need them to do. We can train them on how corporate trade works. More recently, having an analytical skill set is important given everything going on the digital space.

How important is the global footprint and will you need to bring on more offices over time?

There is no other corporate trade company that has a global footprint that can compete with ours. It's an aspect that makes us more relevant to both clients and the media.

We can manage many more markets. There is unlimited opportunity for us out there. There are many countries around the world where our business model doesn't exist and we have no competition. I feel very excited about Latin America and Southeast Asia, in particular.

In leading international media, how important has it been to maintain an entrepreneurial mindset that allows executives to innovate?

It's the reason I've been here for 21 years. I love working here because the executive management team trusts people to run their businesses, make decisions, and bring in fresh ideas and opportunities. ●