

Global Solutions

An Interview with Dean Wilson,
Chief Executive Officer, International Division, Active International



Dean Wilson

EDITORS' NOTE *Dean Wilson joined Active International in 2002 and in 2016 became Chief Executive Officer of the International Division. He has worked in the media industry since graduating from Leeds University in 1994. Prior to joining Active International, he held various commercial roles at Television Sales and Marketing Services Ltd., Channel Four Television Corporation, and ITV Digital.*

Will you provide an overview of Active's international operations and where you see the greatest growth opportunities?

Active's headquarters are in New York and we currently have offices in 15 countries around the world. We've invested heavily in our international division and the scope of our international operations gives Active a footprint that none of our independent competition can match.

We expect our growth will come from our top markets, which are the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, and Mexico. We also have smaller operations in some of the Latin American countries like Chile, and we're also in Spain, but growth will primarily come from Europe and North America.

Are the services and solutions that Active is offering in each of these countries consistent or are they tailored to the individual markets?

In terms of the business solutions, we offer very similar services across our markets. Australia and the U.K. have some client solutions that are a bit different, but our core business model is consistent across all of our markets. Whether we are helping our clients to optimize asset value, extend and optimize a marketing budget, or realize incremental sales, we are focused on enabling our clients to achieve their specific business outcomes.

Media is our core practice area, with about 90 percent of our revenues coming from media. Our global media teams are fluent across linear and digital media, across adtech/martech, and fully utilize programmatic and other platforms to deliver media efficiently and effectively for our clients. We hire local media professionals in each market, experts who come from media agencies as well as media companies.

From an asset disposition perspective, we are able to purchase and redistribute assets globally. This provides local brands, as well as multinationals, with the opportunity to benefit from our business model no matter where they are located. This is a significant benefit of doing business with Active – we are not limited by borders.

Do the international markets have the same level of understanding of Active's products and business?

The U.K. stands out as being the most sophisticated European market because clients and agencies have already invested a lot of time into understanding and promoting our business model. Markets like Canada, Australia, and France are just behind the U.K. and are growing in their understanding of the benefits of our business model.

How do you work with multinational brands?

When working with multinational companies, we usually partner with corporate headquarters to manage inventory or asset shifts across multiple markets. Our clients are able to utilize our services globally, regardless of where the relationship or transaction was initiated. This includes the purchase

and resale of an asset to the placement of media or other services such as retail marketing, travel and hospitality, freight, and lighting.

While having a local office in a particular market is beneficial, we don't necessarily need an office in a particular location to work with a client there. For example, in Germany we service Switzerland and Austria. From France, we work with clients in Belgium, and from Spain we offer services in Portugal. Of course, in addition to our multinational capabilities, we do business locally in each of our markets.

Thanks to technology, the world is a much smaller place and we are able to work with our clients wherever they are located. Our infrastructure, our footprint, and our experience make it seamless for our clients, and on a global basis our focus is on helping our clients achieve more.

What opportunities does China offer for Active, and is that a focus for you as you look for future growth?

China and Australia are two important focuses for us in the Asia-Pacific region. China, in particular, has provided a great opportunity, especially around asset disposition, and they also have a growing and developing media ecosystem that offers great opportunity for us. These two markets offer bigger opportunities than any other international market.

When it comes to hiring talent in these countries, what do you look for, and how important is the investment that Active makes in training its people?

Finding the right talent to lead our businesses is based on a few core skills and values, such as a real passion for our clients, and a desire to be part of the team and get everyone motivated around our clients goals. It also requires real resilience. It takes a lot of effort to be a pioneer and to establish and grow a business.

It also requires training and development. Over the past couple of years, we have put global training programs in place. This resulted from a recognition that the global marketplace is no longer siloed and that as an organization, we could no longer be siloed if we wanted to deliver the best outcomes for our clients and for our own business. We committed to increasing the relationships between our global offices to increase the collaboration and communication.

There has also been a large investment in leadership coaching and training people, as well as on general sales and business processes. We have also raised our game as it relates to investing in talent for our business for the future.

Do you look to hire nationals within those countries who can grow and run the businesses?

Ideally, we would hire the head of a local business unit who has a very strong understanding of media in that market and a very high degree of credibility.

We're always looking at developing leadership, which comes from the media sales side of the business. With our international business, we look for those with the tenacity to reach the goals that we set.

Leadership and experience are both equally as important when it comes to hiring.

How has Active's focus shifted to help clients achieve better results?

We've instituted a shift toward a more solutions-based model to assist our clients on a broader level. We have also seen more creativity in the types of solutions we can offer clients and how quickly we can offer them. Our focus has always been, and will be, on helping our clients achieve more. ●