



Jorge A. Plasencia

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to Republica Havas, Jorge Plasencia served as vice president and operating manager of Univision Radio, a network of 72 radio stations across the U.S. Earlier, he held the role of vice president of marketing, corporate communications, and public affairs. Before Univision, he was vice president of entertainment conglomerate Estefan Enterprises. In addition to leading marketing and communications, he was on the management team of several major artists including Gloria Estefan and Shakira. Plasencia was also the first director of Hispanic marketing for the Florida Marlins, and during his tenure the team won its first World Series Championship. A former board chair of UnidosUS, at age 17 he co-founded Amigos For Kids, a non-profit that advocates for child abuse prevention and assists underprivileged children and families in South Florida. Plasencia was nominated by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the advisory board of the Broadcasting Board of Governors' OCB. He has been the recipient of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year™ Award, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce CEO of the Year Award, HPRA Pioneer of the Year Award, and March of Dimes Humanitarian of the Year Award, among others.

COMPANY BRIEF Republica Havas (republicahavas.com) is one of America's most prominent creative, communications, and media agencies providing services to clients from an array of industries in the U.S. and around the world. The agency provides integrated marketing services including strategy, creative, media planning and buying, analytics and consumer science, public relations, social, and experiential to numerous blue-chip clients including Walmart, Toyota, and Nielsen to name a few. Founded in 2006 and based in Miami, Florida, Republica Havas is the lead U.S. multicultural agency partner of Paris-based Havas Group. Havas is a division of Vivendi, a global content, media, and communications group with assets that include Universal Music Group, Canal+, Gameloft, and Dailymotion, among others.

Multicultural Communications

An Interview with Jorge A. Plasencia,
Co-Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Republica Havas

Will you discuss your vision for creating the company?

In 2006, I was an executive at Univision, working on the radio side of the business. At that time, Univision was the largest Hispanic media company in the country. I was doing well there when they announced that the company was going to be sold to a private equity firm that still owns it today.

Since I was a little boy, I always knew I was hard wired to be an entrepreneur. I was the kid with a lemonade stand outside of my house. I remember thinking at that time that I needed to either invest in staying at Univision with the new ownership or venture and go on my own.

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My business partner, Luis Casamayor, and I were good friends and had been talking about doing something together. He had a creative shop called Cosmyk which was doing great work, but like me, he was also ready to make a change. At the time, the U.S. was undergoing a seismic multicultural and digital shift that most agencies weren't addressing. With this in mind, we set out to build a new kind of agency that would speak to the ever-evolving consumer in the U.S. As the saying goes, opposites attract, and this couldn't be truer for Luis and me. With our complementary backgrounds, we set out to build something special.

During this time, multiculturalism was starting to take off. In 1999, Ricky Martin performed on the Grammy Awards, which was a pinnacle moment in Latin culture in America, and then there was Shakira and Marc Anthony and Jennifer Lopez. We felt it was time to create an agency that would not only address multicultural marketing, but would also just be a great mainstream agency. It didn't matter if you were U.S.-born, Hispanic, African American, or Asian American. Our goal has always been to build enduring relationships between brands and people across a spectrum of cultures, traditions and languages.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Republica with Havas?

When Havas approached us, we weren't looking to do a deal at the time, but Havas made sense because it's such an entrepreneurial company. It's very nimble. It's not only big in the U.S., but also in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. We felt that with Havas, we would be able to take what we built and add firepower to it, and that's what we're doing.

What is the target market for Republica Havas?

If you look at our client roster, about half of our revenue is general market, and the other half is multicultural. For a number of clients, we do multicultural work targeting various segments, such as Hispanic, African American, and/or Asian American marketing. Our client portfolio really runs the gamut, including global agency of record assignments. We work with some of the largest, most well-known brands in the world, and we also work with entrepreneurial companies.

Do you take moments to reflect and appreciate what you have built?

I recently turned 45 years old, and it has been 13 years since we started the company. I live with an attitude of gratitude. I wake up every morning, and I'm grateful for what we've been able to accomplish alongside our team. I'm always grateful for where I'm at, but I am also looking at the future since there is still so much great work to be done.

My brother and I were both born in the United States, but my parents were exiles from Cuba. They raised us to be grateful to this country and to be humble about everything in life. I never want to lose that humility, yet always remind myself to take a break, to give back, and to appreciate what we've accomplished. ●