

Brand Intimacy

An Interview with Mario Natarelli, Managing Partner, MBLM

EDITORS' NOTE *With early career training as an architect, Mario Natarelli uses these fundamentals to balance the art and science of brand building. In addition to building a successful digital marketing business that was acquired by Interpublic and later became part of the formation of FutureBrand, he is keenly aware of the role that digital plays and he has pioneered software as a digital operating system for optimizing and managing brands. Over the past 17 years, Natarelli has led teams across three continents, working for clients of varying sizes and industry focuses, mostly in the areas of technology, real estate, travel, sports and hospitality. His love of architecture has inspired his work in destination, real estate, and luxury categories where he has helped shape a quarter-trillion dollars of value. Natarelli earned a bachelor of architecture degree from the University of Toronto.*



Mario Natarelli

FIRM BRIEF *MBLM (mblm.com) has invented a new marketing paradigm, Brand Intimacy, delivering expertise and offerings across three areas of focus: Agency, Lab and Platform. With offices in five countries, its multidisciplinary teams help clients build stronger bonds and deliver optimized marketing outcomes and returns for the long term.*

What was your vision for launching MBLM and how do you define its mission?

I built a digital marketing company into a major holding company and then sold it. The vision of the partners in creating MBLM was, and still is, like most start-ups or spin-offs – to create a better, more nimble company.

The timing was also key, as the world of brand building and marketing was dramatically evolving and we saw an opportunity to define a new paradigm.

How do you describe MBLM's culture?

MBLM is familial and professional. We are diverse in that we speak 15 languages and represent over 20 countries. The focus is mainly on serving our clients and generating the best outcomes for them, while creating an exacting and yet still collaborative environment.

Will you discuss the concept of Brand Intimacy and how this is at the foundation of MBLM's work?

Brand Intimacy measures emotional bonds we form with the brands we use and love. Behavioral scientists have proven that we make decisions based on emotion, yet most of the ways we measure, build and manage brands don't reflect this. Brand Intimacy creates a new and more elevated form of loyalty, built for our modern times and underpinned by the connections formed between brands and all their stakeholders.

The benefits of Brand Intimacy are numerous. Our decades of research have proven the more intimate the customer, the more engaged they are and the more they are willing to pay for a product or service. Top performing brands from our annual study also significantly outperform the Fortune 500 and S&P 500 indices in annual revenue, profit and stock price.

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Will you provide an overview of MBLM's service offerings?

We help clients transform their brands. From research and insights to brand strategy naming and brand identity or logo design, we ensure a brand has a compelling promise and focus.

We then help the brand shape a strong narrative or story for its brand. Here the work involves content creation and merchandising, and integrated campaigns. We also help clients orchestrate their brands across touchpoints and channels and specifically around helping them design and build their digital presence.

How do you define the MBLM client and how broad is your target market?

We work with businesses and institutions of varying sizes. We intentionally work across industries, and with both B2B and B2C brands. The range of brands and businesses helps us to learn and improve while keeping the work fresh.

MBLM has expanded internationally. Will you highlight MBLM's global footprint?

We have offices in five countries – U.S., Canada, Mexico, UAE and Korea. We recently added the Seoul office, and we couldn't be happier with how business is progressing there.

How critical is it for MBLM to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

MBLM, since its inception, has been global in perspective and diverse in make-up. Like most professional services firms since the Black Lives Matter movement, we've renewed our commitment and provided more focus, resources and effort in this area. In a matter of months, we've organized local and global teams that have enhanced our hiring processes, increased our transparency, and further improved our team diversity and a sense of inclusivity.

Since we are a relatively small team, we have been agile and quick to act. With that said, we have much more we would like to do and see this as a continual and ongoing process of improvement and enhancement.

MBLM is headquartered in New York. What are the keys to New York's recovery and rebuilding from the pandemic?

I wish we had the answer – we desperately need and want our vibrant and inspiring city back. As New Yorkers, we know you can never count the city out. We are confident of a rebound and we see some promising signs.

What advice do you offer young people interested in a career in the industry?

A career in branding is thrilling. We collaborate with strategists, namers, designers, developers and numerous other disciplines to shape and transform a business and a brand. My advice is to stay positive, hungry and open. ●