

# The Power of Creativity

An Interview with Michael I. Roth, Executive Chairman, Interpublic Group

**EDITORS' NOTE** Prior to serving in his current role, Michael Roth was Chairman and CEO of IPG for 15 years. During his tenure, Roth righted the company's financial course and moved to make it an industry leader by defining new models that provide value to clients in a rapidly changing media and marketing environment. Before becoming Chairman and CEO of IPG, Roth was a member of the company's Board of Directors. Earlier in his career, he was Chairman and CEO of The MONY Group Inc., a financial services holding company. Roth is a member of the Board of Directors for Pitney Bowes Inc., the Ad Council and Ryman Hospitality Properties. He is also a member of the boards of the Lincoln Center Corporate Fund, Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (CECP) and the Center on Addiction. In addition, he is a Director of the Baruch College Fund and the Partnership for New York City. He is a member of the Business Roundtable and New York-Presbyterian Hospital's Heart Steering Committee. A certified public accountant, Roth holds an LL.M. degree from New York University Law School and a J.D. from Boston University Law School. He is a graduate of the City College of New York.



Michael I. Roth

**COMPANY BRIEF** Interpublic (*interpublic.com*) is a values-based, data-fueled, and creatively-driven provider of marketing solutions. Home to some of the world's best-known and most innovative communications specialists, IPG global brands include: Acxiom, Craft, FCB, FutureBrand, Golin, Huge, Initiative, Jack Morton, Kinesso, MAGNA, Matterkind, McCann, Mediabub, Momentum, MRM, MullenLowe Group, Octagon, R/GA, UM, Weber Shandwick and more. IPG is an S&P 500 company with net revenue of \$8.06 billion in 2020.

**Will you highlight IPG's history and heritage and what have been the keys to the company's growth and success?**

IPG is a company that has long been about client service, a commitment to shareholders, as well as being a responsible citizen of the communities where our employees live, work and vote. We are a values-driven, future-focused company that is marked by vibrant agency brands and the value it places on its people. These have been the keys to our success for many years now.

**How do you define the IPG difference and what sets the company apart in the industry?**

IPG combines the power of creativity and our storytelling craft skills with the precision, accountability and scale of data and technology. We are attuned to the powerful currents that are transforming consumer behavior and are required for business relevance, and delivering differentiated and higher-order services that help our clients win in a world of accelerated technological and societal change.

**How do you describe IPG's culture and what have been the keys to maintaining culture with IPG's size and global footprint?**

This has been an interesting year when it comes to maintaining culture. Culture is about our people and our values: caring for each other, ensuring an inclusive environment – even when we are remote, being transparent and providing an environment that is supportive of career as well as personal growth. I believe it is largely our strong culture fostered over many years, coupled with the most talented workforce in the industry, that enabled us to perform as well as we did during an extraordinary year full of unprecedented challenges.

**What has made IPG's agencies so successful at building long-lasting client relationships and client loyalty?**

IPG's success with long-term client relationships is also rooted in our people and in our culture as a company. It is based on our ability to understand our business and changes we need to make to ensure that we live into our value proposition as

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a future-facing company. A big piece of this for IPG has been understanding the critical importance of data and technology to all of our clients. Our acquisition of Acxiom has played a key role in ensuring that we are on our front foot when it comes to providing best-in-class data-driven solutions for our clients.

**How critical is it for IPG to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and will you discuss the company’s efforts in this regard?**

Diversity, equity and inclusion have been priorities at IPG for years because we know that building a diverse workforce, and an inclusive and equitable culture, are critical to our success. We have been working on DE&I for 15 years and have seen some good progress, although much work remains to be done.

We have very active business resource groups that include our Black Employee Network, the Asian Heritage Group, SOMOS for our Latinx employees, the IPGLBT and the Women’s Leadership Network. IPG’s DEI team has led programs including a Juneteenth conversation with Professor Imani Perry, a panel confronting attacks on trans youth, bystander intervention training in response to the rise in Anti-Asian/American and xenophobic harassment, and a social media challenge for International Women’s Day. The team has also created bespoke content for its Inclusive@Work site, launched to support employees through COVID-19, that includes guides such as Juneteenth:

Opinion vs. Knowledge, Manager’s Guide to Initial Responses to Times of Racial Turmoil, Mental Health During a Crisis, and Parent Center.

In 2020, we became the first company in our industry to release statistics around gender and race in our executive ranks, with our peers following suit. This type of transparency is a critical step toward ameliorating structural racism in our industry.

**What do you see as IPG’s responsibility to the communities it serves and to being a force for good in society?**

Our responsibility as a global corporate citizen is important to all of our stakeholders – our employees, our investors and our client partners. Being a force for good in our communities has long been a very important value for IPG, and is part of our overall ESG (environmental, social and governance) strategy. Our companies around the world work in areas that include climate change, responsible consumption as well as diversity, equity and inclusion. IPG has recently created its first-ever human rights policy and has also recently committed to major efforts around climate change.

We know that companies that have strong ESG programs perform better in the marketplace, have better retention rates, and are stronger partners to their clients. Our efforts in this area have only grown in importance over the last 17 months, as culture and purpose have helped maintain ties between employees, teams and clients.

**IPG is headquartered in New York. What are the keys to New York’s recovery and rebuilding from the pandemic and how critical is a strong public/private partnership to New York’s future success?**

As a lifelong New Yorker, it was very difficult to watch the city suffer during the pandemic, as it was also difficult to watch embattled communities around the world take the hardest hits of the virus. But in each of these cases, resilience has prevailed. New York is coming back. It will certainly take commitment to ensure the strength and vibrancy of all of our big cities – commitment on the part of business leaders and public officials. It will also take a belief and a willingness by our employees to return to our offices which have long been the cultural hubs of our business. I know New York is headed in the right direction. I’m looking forward to its full return.

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

Find a company whose values align with your own and where you are supported in your work and in being yourself at work. It’s worth waiting for the right job and the right fit if at all possible. If you find yourself in a situation in which you don’t feel comfortable, or where you don’t share an organization’s values, it’s time to find another place to do your best work, grow your career and make a difference. ●

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