



FingerPaint Marketing
Ed Mitzen

Success Magazine: Ed, you have been very successful in starting and leading new companies to becoming profitable entities. To what do you owe your success?

Ed Mitzen: I honestly feel my success has been due to aligning myself in business with some really talented, passionate people. Hiring people smarter than I am, giving them the tools and work environment to flourish, and empowering them to make decisions has been a big reason why our companies have done so well. I also try to make sure we always focus on customer satisfaction. Happy clients make for great long-term business success.

SM: Palio Communications was your greatest success thus far. What made Palio so successful?

EM: Palio continues to be a great company because of the people that work there.

They are a bunch of really talented individuals that work together so well. In addition, when we started Palio, we instilled a sense of appreciation for the clients that hired us. Advertising is a very

competitive business, especially healthcare advertising, where Palio competes. Clients feel valued and understand that doing great work is a constant goal of the company.

SM: What skills do you have as a leader and business owner that have helped you to become successful?

EM: I always try to be nice to everyone I meet, and treat people as friends as well as business colleagues. I'm a firm believer that people choose to work with people they genuinely like and trust. We all like to think our businesses are the best... but the truth is, there are a lot of wonderful companies out there that do great work. Whether you are a restaurateur, accountant or advertising executive, I feel kindness goes a long way in building your company, establishing a positive culture, and earning and keeping clients.

SM: How do you build a team from scratch? What do you look for in an individual that will help you form your new company?

EM: I look for people with passion that have a strong work ethic, and are trustworthy. I also look for people who are kind to others. In the past, when I have interviewed potential employees, I would often ask their car service driver or the receptionist at the hotel where they stayed how the person treated them. If a candidate didn't treat everyone with the respect and class they deserve, I wouldn't hire them. Life is too short to work with talented individuals who don't play well in the sandbox.



SM: What is the concept behind your newest company, FingerPaint Marketing?

EM: I really love to create businesses, and enjoy watching teams of people work together to build a company they love. I miss the days of working on card tables, slugging it out for business, and that thrill you get when you succeed. My goal with FingerPaint is to build a hot creative shop focusing on consumer and business-to-business advertising. I also want to leverage all of the new and exciting interactive technology to seamlessly integrate it with more traditional marketing vehicles, such as television and print materials.

SM: How did you develop the name FingerPaint Marketing?

EM: We wanted a name that symbolized the joy of creative expression we all had as children. Often as we age, life has a way of trying to force us to conform. The desire to color outside the lines seems risky to us, and often times we lose our individuality. The great thing about finger painting, along with the pure happiness we get from it, is that every work of art is an original... just like advertising should be.

SM: What learned skills will help you to develop and expand your new company?

EM: I've learned over and over that attracting and keeping customers is in large part due to treating them how they deserve to be treated. Businesses often fail because they take their eyes off the customer, taking them for granted,

and servicing them poorly. None of my businesses will ever be known for poor customer service, lazy attitudes, or unfriendly employees. I always want our clients to feel like they have a true business partner, not just another firm looking to make money from them.

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SM: Who is your target market?

EM: FingerPaint is targeting businesses in the Capital Region that truly value an advertising partner. I have learned over the years that some companies appreciate solid marketing assistance, and others don't understand or value it. We want to work with companies that consider us a true ally in growing their business, rather than just a cost line item on their financials. Lastly, we want to work with companies that provide us the freedom to do great work, leveraging our years of experience.

SM: What territory will you be concentrating on?

EM: With my first few businesses, many of the clients were both national and global. Therefore, my travel became quite excessive. This took a toll on my family life, and I've made a conscious decision with FingerPaint to work with clients closer to home. Plus with air travel such a tremendous pain in the ass now, I'm looking forward to working with more New York based firms. There are so many wonderful companies in the area that can benefit from a top-shelf advertising agency.

SM: You acquired B-Squared Marketing to launch FingerPaint Marketing. This is the first time that you have acquired another firm in order to launch a new company. Why did you acquire B-squared as opposed to starting your company from scratch?

EM: B-Squared was founded by Jaime Binley, who used to work with me at Palio. She is a tremendous creative talent, and even more importantly, a truly wonderful person. We always worked so well together in the past, and I was very impressed with the group she assembled at B-Squared. Jaime was looking for someone to help her grow the company, and I was looking to build another agency. She and I complement each other very well in terms of skill sets, and because we get along so well, it made for a really perfect situation.

SM: How will you differentiate your company from others in the region?

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EM: We'll create powerful traditional consumer and business-to-business creative advertising, seamlessly integrated with state-of-the-art interactive solutions. Our teams will be made up of senior level talent, as opposed to the proverbial "B" team.

The staff at FingerPaint Marketing have no titles, no offices, and no private parking spaces. Advertising is a team sport, and that philosophy is embodied in all we do.

SM: What are your 5-year goals for your company?

EM: To have the leading consumer advertising agency within 150 miles. To create one of the best places to work in America, according to Forbes Magazine. To be a leading charitable giver in upstate NY communities.

SM: How will you achieve those goals?

EM: By hiring people smarter than me, empowering them to do their very best, and treating clients with the respect and appreciation they deserve as our customers. FingerPaint will become what all of us there want it to be. I want everyone at our company to help build it and be part of our success.

SM: The economy is in disarray. How will that affect your business plan?

EM: When companies go through times of financial struggle, advertising often can help get things back

on track. Companies that believe in their products and the power of marketing can use advertising to boost sales, capture new customers, retain prior customers, and expand into new markets. While it's easy to rationalize advertising spending cuts during tough financial times, marketing investments, if done well, can mitigate a lot of the challenges firms face in tough times.

SM: You have a wonderful approach to life. How did you develop that positive attitude?

EM: I try so hard to laugh when things get stressful, not take myself too seriously, and appreciate each and every day. I have found that when you have a very positive attitude, others around you elevate their game and smile right along with you.

And when everyone is upbeat, people pull together more, health improves, and the work you all do collectively is much better than when people suppress struggles just to get through the day.

SM: Your family is very important to you. How do you achieve balance between work, social commitments, and your family life?

EM: Balance is something so many of us wrestle with. I have always tried to put my kids first, not missing Little League games or dance recitals due to a work commitment. If you have a company that embodies work / family balance, as well as teamwork and camaraderie, there is no reason why people should be caught between work and family. People cover for each other, knowing the next time they may need some help to attend a family priority. I've also found that employees are usually so appreciative to be in a company that truly embodies these values that they work hard to preserve it, rather than take advantage of the dynamic.

SM: Why have you dedicated so much time to your philanthropic giving?

EM: Growing up, my parents didn't have much money. But they sought to give me a loving, fun filled childhood. I never imagined I would have been blessed with the success I've had so far, and



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I feel so fortunate to be in a position to give back to others.

I've also been so very inspired by other business and community leaders who have given so much to our community. I look at Marylou Whitney and John Hendrickson, the Wait's, Dake's, Riggi's and so many others in and around town, and it motivates me to do as much as I can. I love to get involved with charities not out of a sense of obligation, but because it truly makes me feel amazing to help out in any way possible.

SM: If you had to change one aspect of your life, what would that be?

EM: There are times when I feel I spread myself very thin, and don't have enough time to just sit quietly, read, and relax. I'm always on the go, whether I'm working on the business, spending time with the kids, or attending various board meetings. I am very fortunate to be on the boards of SPAC, The Hyde Collection, Saratoga Care and the Waldorf School, but at times I wish I had an extra hour each day to just swing on a hammock.

SM: What message can you give to the youth in our region about choosing a career path?

EM: Work hard, and recognize that everything you do has the potential to either build or damage your character. As a local Saratogian, I see high school students working hard after school at Uncommon Grounds or Mrs. London's, and I know that down the road after

college these may be future leaders. Conversely, you witness some of today's young adults slacking off, and you get a pretty good impression of where they may be in ten years.

Bust your ass now, go for what you want, and don't make excuses for when things don't go your way. Work harder.

SM: Your father died at an early age what impact did he have on your life?

EM: My dad died at 41 years old. It taught me to live every day like it's your last, tell your kids every day that you love them, and try to be the best person you can be always. My dad was the kind of man that everyone liked to be around, and I try so hard to treat people, no matter who they are, with kindness and respect.

SM: If you had to form a legacy, what would you want to be remembered for?

SM: I would love to be remembered as a truly nice guy, who cared about others, and strived to make a difference in this world.

