

Alumni on the move

MARTY ROTHSTEIN: LEADER OF THE PACK

By Karen Christensen

Marty Rothstein (MBA '64) knows branding. A decorated veteran of the advertising business and a pioneer of industry consolidation, he spent many years in the trenches, helping build MacLaren Advertising (now known as MacLaren McCann) into one of the world's leading advertising conglomerates.

What makes for a successful brand? According to Marty, "great brands have the ability to satisfy the consumer beyond just the functional attributes of the product. And of course, in most cases, they are unique and superior products."

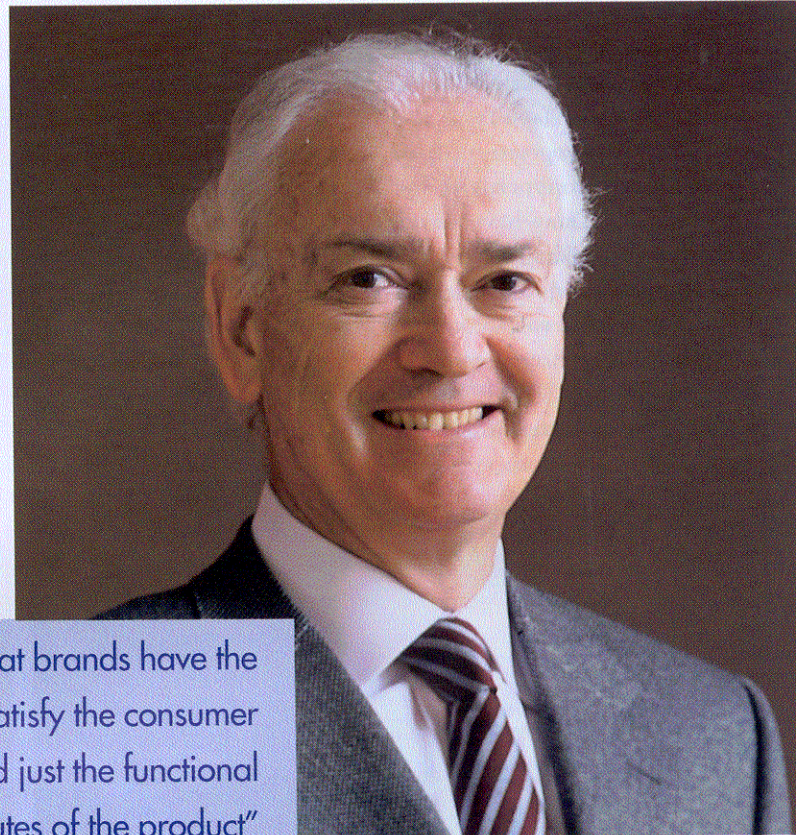
After 30 years in the advertising trenches, Marty has moved on to a new venture with an entrepreneurial flair. His new company, Centrsource, is capitalizing on the experience economy, new technology, and the age of interactive multimedia to create a revolutionary new portal that evolves traditional media advertising into a targeted, one-on-one direct marketing tool. Marty is executive vice president and chief operating officer of Centrsource. His partner **Bob Westrope** invented the idea.

Here's how it works. Say you're reading *The Globe and Mail*, and you see an advertisement for Volvo. In the corner of the ad, you spot a Centrsource logo and a locator number. You now have a choice to make: "You can go to the Volvo dealer in person; call the 1-800 number and potentially get stuck in endless audio menus; go to the Volvo Web site and risk getting lost after 20 or 30 clicks. Or, you can go to Centrsource, either on your PC, laptop, or handheld device," explains Marty.

Upon arriving at the site, you will be asked for the ad's locator number, and a menu will appear, allowing you to select from the following options: 'More information'; 'Have a qualified sales rep call me on Thursday night'; 'Print out the special-offer coupon offered in the ad'; 'Book me for a test drive later this week'; or 'Purchase the advertised car in silver'. "Your transaction is complete, and you've only been on the Centrsource site for about 45 seconds."

Marty has no illusions that every customer will choose to do business this way. "Our business model is based on one or two per cent of consumers choosing this option. But, as any direct marketer knows, that is still very substantial."

Thanks to technology, the power is no longer in the hands of the advertiser, or the channel of distribution, says Marty. "At Centrsource, we work for the consumer," he says, "even though they don't pay us.



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That's the way it is now."

What if Volvo doesn't show up for the test drive you've booked for Thursday at 8:00 pm? "You contact us, and we advocate on your behalf, not Volvo's. If they don't perform, they definitely won't last on our site."

Until now, gauging the effectiveness of advertising has really been "hit and miss," according to Marty. "This is why Centrsource is so powerful, and why I was attracted to it," he says. "When you click on that logo, you've basically told everyone in the mix that the advertising worked."

At the moment, Marty is looking for financing. "We've been in business a year and have spent \$4 million preparing our systems, to the point that we can now demonstrate the product. We're currently working on securing the next phase of our funding, and hope to launch in the fall of 2001."

In addition to his business endeavors, Marty spent 11 years as volunteer president of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. When he's not devising inventive new ways to reach consumers, he enjoys traveling and going to the movies. "My wife and I are off to the Carolinas in April, and will also be spending a week in Florida with my grandkids." One of his favorite hobbies is photography. "When I travel, I try to capture the mood, history, and uniqueness of each place I visit in photographs." **RM**