

Fully Integrated Local and Global Advertising



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CEOCFO: *Mr. Ritter, would you tell us the relationship between Team One and Saatchi & Saatchi?*

Mr. Ritter: Team One launched at the inception of Lexus as a dedicated agency to that brand. The mission was different than the Saatchi & Saatchi Los Angeles operation that was, and still is today, connected to the Toyota brand. Team One was a special agency from the start, as it did not get the Saatchi & Saatchi name. Now, 25 years later, we are a fully integrated agency servicing a number of global clients, including The Ritz-Carlton, Häagen-Dazs and HSBC Premier.

CEOCFO: *When you are developing campaign, what might Team One look at that other agencies do not realize is important?*

Mr. Ritter: The media world has changed so rapidly over the last decade that before it was OK to understand where people consumed media and basic demographic information. Now we need to understand more the motivational levels behind why and how people consume media. At Team One, we have a proprietary research process that we use to understand that at a fundamental level. We treat strategic planning very seriously in understanding consumer needs, wants and worries, which allows us to have a higher batting average in terms of connecting with consumers. The intersection of those two groups at Team One allows us to provide more consistently effective communications for our partner brands.

CEOCFO: *How do you combine research, technology and trends?*

Mr. Ritter: Smart marketers have to distinguish between fads and trends. Fads can be a slippery slope; they can take a brand to an area that is unnatural. Research teams are trained to spot trends, and those can make your brand contemporary in the eyes of current consumers, but marketers also have a responsibility to maintain consistency with brand tonality.

CEOCFO: *Your website indicates that you are passionate about discovering the truth of a brand rather than inventing the truth. Will you explain how that develops on a daily basis when you are working with a company?*

Mr. Ritter: Consumers are smart. They realize when a brand is stretching beyond what the content and what the product communicates on its own. Uncover the essence of your brand rather than trying to invent something new and risk coming across to the consumer as inauthentic. I give the consumer a great deal of credit that they will distinguish brands that are authentic from those that are not.

CEOCFO: *Do you typically work with a company from soup to nuts on their advertising or is it more often a specific campaign?*

Mr. Ritter: Team One is an integrated full service agency. I think it is a throwback to the future approach to advertising. Twenty years ago it was print, television, radio and outdoors. Now with the advent of technology we have digital, social, search, among others. Our typical engagement with our principle clients would involve all of the communication platforms that would be out there. We come up with higher level concepts and ideas can be translated into various platforms cohesively. No longer can you just have a great television spot. Today, you need strategic positioning at a fundamental level that is also useful in social and other areas where you might want to communicate messages. We also have media planning at Team One, and that is an incredibly powerful force. Where messages reside is a process now almost as creative as the message itself. Being integrated across platforms and having media planning and buying a part of the planning process is a great aid to our clients.

CEOCFO: *Do you think that companies are coming back to understanding that concept?*

Mr. Ritter: Yes, I do. I think they understand that effectiveness has to be at the forefront as well as efficiency. Many clients took media planning outside as a separate entity and tried to manage that connection point between media and creative agencies themselves. Clients are now realizing that we have to have creativity and media planning working in lockstep.

CEOCFO: *Is there a common thread among your clients?*

Mr. Ritter: Team One clients tend to be more aspirational. We have done significant proprietary research on behalf of our clients on a group we call the Global Affluent Tribe. Today's evolving affluent consumers are increasingly defined and connected by the things they share in common, regardless of distance, culture and creed. The people in this influential group are brought together by their beliefs about wealth and the world they share. We are also exploring the theme of legacy in the modern world—the lasting marks, impacts and traditions that are passed down, and the ones currently being created for next generations.

CEOCFO: *How has the company grown and developed under your leadership?*

Mr. Ritter: My proudest contribution to Team One is the development of great leaders who appreciate that we need to care about the work, how the work gets done and the people. The first is obvious, if we do not care about the work, we are not going to be in business very long. Beyond that, the how and who are crucial. When you have people that agree fundamentally with that message, they will, in turn, hire people that are good collaborators, treat people with respect and keep little things little and big things big. Team One is full of smart and amazingly talented people and we have had success in those areas.

“Uncover the essence of your brand rather than trying to invent something new and risk coming across to the consumer as inauthentic.” - Kurt Ritter

CEOCFO: *Why did you decide to go to this side of the business?*

Mr. Ritter: When I was General Manager of Chevrolet, Fridays were my favorite days. That was the day that I spent with design staff to look at new designs and concept vehicles. I was also able to spend time that day with Campbell Ewald (the creative agency at the time) to go to and look at ad concepts. Fridays were a special day and I enjoyed them because of the creative process. When I had the opportunity to come here, I felt like it was Friday everyday. A better fit for me to utilize my skills and passions. I truly enjoy what I do, whom I do it with and whom I do it for.

CEOCFO: *What might be different a year from now at Team One?*

Mr. Ritter: I think Team One will always evolve. We see where people are moving in terms of spending their time and consuming messages, and we will continue to evolve alongside consumers. I would expect we are going to see more digital, and a larger emphasis on social. We will continue to believe in the unreasonable power of creativity. We will also be opening a Dallas office to support Lexus in their transition to Plano, Texas.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Team One?*

Mr. Ritter: Team One is a special place where the leaders are naturally collaborative, support each other and care deeply about business results for our clients. They understand that as leaders they have not just a responsibility to their area of expertise, but also to a greater cause in Team One. I have found that collaboration is a hard-to-teach skill, and I need to credit our hiring managers and colleagues that find those people.

For more information visit: www.teamone-usa.com

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine
