

## Agency 451 Brings Innovation and Deep Consumer Insights to Marketing, PR, and Social Media Campaigns



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**Interview conducted by:**  
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**CEOCFO:** *Mr. Gerritson, would you tell us the philosophy of Agency 451?*

**Mr. Gerritson:** Great question. Our philosophy is one of the reasons why we stand apart from the rest. We believe that all great creativity is based on deep consumer insight. We will not begin any kind of campaign or ideation until we fully understand our clients' customers.

**CEOCFO:** *What do you look at when you are putting together a profile about a customer and what might you look at that less experienced agencies do not take into consideration?*

**Mr. Gerritson:** Many agencies will put a singular focus on just the creative output and not spend enough time to understand what makes their client's customers tick. We want to know everything about our clients' customers. From demographic information to psychographics. We want to know what keeps them up at night and what gets them out of bed in the morning! It is important to understand the psychology and emotion behind how they make decisions. Only then can you understand how a product or service fits into their life. That is where we begin.

**CEOCFO:** *What is an example of finding something elusive about a client's customer and how did you put that into your campaign or what you are creating?*

**Mr. Gerritson:** One time we were working with a large vacuum manufacturer. They had come out with a new super-light product. Their entire premise was that at only eight pounds, it was going to replace all the larger vacuums on the market, for a number of reasons. Their original idea was to market it as the sole vacuum for the household. One of the insights that we uncovered as we started doing research was that their customers were thinking, "We already have this bigger vacuum that we use, but I hate lugging that big vacuum up and down the stairs." Customer insights revealed that maybe this was a better upstairs vacuum, or better for a second home, and then we started marketing it as such. If they had marketed it as a vacuum to replace the larger, heavier vacuum that probably would not have flown.

**CEOCFO:** *What types of companies are turning to you?*

**Mr. Gerritson:** We work on everything. Many of our clients are big consumer brands, consumer packaged goods, and consumer products. We work with big pharma companies, biotech companies, higher education, and large professional service firms. We are an across the board agency.

**CEOCFO: *What might someone search under so that Agency 451 stands out?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** Just Google 'Boston marketing agency' and you will be sure to find us. All the marketing that we do for our clients, we also do for ourselves. This means we have our SEO, PPC, digital advertising, content marketing, and thought leadership going full tilt.

**CEOCFO: *Do companies typically work with you on a range of services?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** Yes, we are a full-service shop, so we handle everything that a company might typically need. A client may come to us and say they need our whole host of services or they might just need a specific service like advertising, events, PR or digital. In other instances, some of our larger brands will work with multiple agencies.

**CEOCFO: *451 Marketing recently rebranded as Agency 451. Why?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** When we started the company 14 years ago "marketing" seemed like a general term that many people would understand to mean that we were doing different things. But what we found was that term was limiting. People would come to us and say they did not realize we did advertising, PR or digital because they just assumed we were only marketing. As we grew, we became a much more robust, full service shop and we understood it was time to make a change. What we did not want to do was lose the equity in the '451' because many people know us by '451'. Agency 451 better reflects who we are as an organization today.

**"We believe that all great creativity is based on deep consumer insight." - AJ Gerritson**

**CEOCFO: *Would you explain the innovation side?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** The thing that we have always done, ever since we started the company, was to make sure that we are always on the forefront. That can be everything from seeking out and using the latest and greatest technology to help solve our client's problem; to making sure that we are trying ideas and pushing boundaries to solve unique and challenging problems for our clients. We have built a strong reputation as the agency that can do things that others cannot; that others have no idea how to do. An example would be how right now we are doing a ton of really far out stuff around things like geo-fencing and mobile. We work with one of the largest furniture stores in the country and if you walk into any of their competitors and open your phone, chances are you will see an ad from our client. Another example would be, for that same client, when their competitors are running large media TV flights, we are using technology that increases (in real time) the frequency and the spend of their online ads. Because we know that when people are watching these ads, the first thing they might do is start searching for stuff online. That is the kind of stuff that we are known for and that many other agencies either do not do or do not know how to do.

**CEOCFO: *Might people get a bit put out when in one store they get an ad from a competitor asking them to come over and see their product offering?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** Many times, people did not realize what was going on. Some people might, and it can be a little creepy, but it is about being in the right place at the right time with the right message and it is incredibly effective. An advertisement might say to check out a certain item for 20% off 1.3 miles away with a bigger selection. You would be very surprised how well this works.

**CEOCFO: *Why the need for presence in the 3 major locations?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** We are a full-service shop offering many services. One of the things that we offer is public relations services. Although we can do almost everything from our Boston HQ, New York and L.A. are epicenters for national media, so it's important to have feet on the streets. Those locations are primarily PR-specific.

**CEOCFO: *How do you know when something is likely to work and when you need to pay attention?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** We have people at the agency dedicated to constantly testing these things – whether it is the platforms or the technology. When you are committed to things like innovation, you must have dedicated resources where this is literally their focus and job. Beyond that, it's really about adoption and usage for platforms. Once they have that, then we recommend them to our clients if it makes sense.

**CEOCFO: *What is next for Agency 451?***

**Mr. Gerritson:** World domination. Kidding aside, we've had tremendous growth with at least 20% growth year over year for six years straight. It has been great. We want to continue to grow, expand and do what we do best, which is servicing our clients, solving their needs, their challenges and doing great work. As long as we continue down that path, we will be very happy.