

## Marketing Consultants with Expertise to Life Sciences, Healthcare, Software and Energy Companies providing Brand, Market and Social Media Strategies, Public Relations, Web Development, Video and Interactive Applications



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

**CEOCFO:** *Ms. Harrsch, we spoke about a year and a half ago so bring our readers up-to-date. What is the focus today for Brandwidth Solutions?*

**Ms. Harrsch:** I had an interesting opportunity recently where I

was accepted into the Goldman Sachs 10K Small Businesses program. I graduated in December and it was an opportunity as a CEO to sit for one day a week and just pay attention to the business at hand, working on the business and not in the business. As far as Brandwidth's focus, our overall focus is on our core markets: contract pharma, life science, healthcare/ diagnostics and energy, this is still where it needs to be. The change has been in what the customers' needs are. We have clients of large Fortune 100 companies that are creating their own internal creative, but do not have the bandwidth to create the zippy, hot ad titles. They are also not going to the agency to create the whole ad. Content has been king for a while which is a focus for us. We do a lot of PR, a lot of social media and we help them write ads. We also have many clients that need content writing help and we have just added key members on for sales marketing automation because while a lot of our clients have these great tools such as CRMs, marketing automation systems, they often get caught in not being able to use them efficiently or even at all, because they do not have enough hands. So while our core markets have stayed the same, we have expanded our offerings to meet our clients' needs.

**"Trendy is audience relative. It is better to deliver impactful marketing that means something to your audience, which helps you achieve your goals, whether you are trendy or not, it is always about your audience."** - Debra Ann Harrsch

**CEOCFO:** *What goes into creating an effective ad?*

**Ms. Harrsch:** It is the exact same thing for all of our core markets, and that is developing the 'what's in it for me' element. What is going to stop that person? The industry average says you have 4.7 seconds to grab someone's attention but you probably really have even less time. That is not a lot of time. What makes a compelling ad is that it grabs the reader's attention and answers the question, 'what's in it for me?' Once the ad is created it is important to use it in multiple formats to keep honing in on the message. As a society, we are overwhelmed by messaging- its important that an ad speak to your customers pain point and in an eyeeful deliver the reason for them to want to know more.

**CEOCFO:** *Would you give us an example of something that does not work and something that does?*

**Ms. Harrsch:** I think ads that do not work are ads with a lot of content and ads that are too busy, because we have become a scanning generation and are bombarded with information all the time. If I cannot put something out there that is

quick and that I can catch the readers eye, the reader moves on. People need to realize that an ad does not have to appeal to all the readers of a particular publication; it just has to appeal to your target audience. We typically use a landing page when it comes to print ad as well as digital ads so the audience can go get more information. The ad initiates the information and the landing page completes the messaging. For a URL we use the company URL and a fun or catchy word that's easy to remember, whether it is "profitability" or "accountability", "value", or whatever, it relates to that ad. When you put way too much copy in an ad; people turn the page. If it is too busy they miss the message. This is just because we are scanning in everything that we see. Plus, ads need to be used in multiple formats because that enables the reader to see the messaging multiple times. Be savvy about it and if you are going to put an ad in a publication only one time, do not even bother doing it. You need to be in that publication several times for that audience to remember what you do in their market.

**CEOCFO: *What are the challenges today with content?***

**Ms. Harrsch:** There are many regulatory issues and you have to go through regulatory approvals for a lot of the content. Not so much in the contract pharma, life science and energy markets, but definitely in the healthcare space. Our customers are selling to other businesses so it is a little different. They are not advertising directly to patients although patients do see things that you put out there and you have to be aware of that. In the highly regulated markets you have to go through regulatory which adds a layer of time, and that is a challenge, especially with social media. For our regulated customers we have to build in an extra month of production time because regulatory has to approve whatever we are developing. Another challenge is trying to get clients to be less verbose and get to the point quicker. I have said for years if you cannot tell me what the value is of your item whether it is a service or a product in the first paragraph the reader moves on. Many times they start with an intro after leading into a dissertation, and though, I understand why, you do not have that kind of time anymore. I also see another challenge with content is you have to break it up and give the eye a rest, you cannot go wall-to-wall. You have to use bullets and you have to use bold words. Even in web copy we bold words. We do that for the SEO part but we also do that for the reader's part as another way to grab their eye. You can actually measure on the website how long they are spending on your pages because Google analytics picks that up.

**CEOCFO: *How do you help your client understand how they need to present their product/service?***

**Ms. Harrsch:** When we do a discovery session, clients will tell me about their product or service and why they think it is valuable. Usually it is a feature-benefit discussion and not a value proposition. I look at them and say "so what"? I tell them their competitor says the same thing. They get frustrated because they are not used to thinking about it that way. They have a hard time telling me what the value is. We work hard with them to get that messaging where the "what is in it for me?" comes out. Once we help them build their value messaging we make sure it is consistent and everyone is onboard with it. Then we develop the strategy and plan to deliver the messaging.

**CEOCFO: *Are these trends in B2B marketing?***

**Mr. Harrsch:** In our space we are focused on the science side. Even the millennial scientists are looking for data. In our core markets they are looking for information and data. We are less driven by trends because our markets are scientific people who tend to be engineers, scientists, and physicians, so they are in a unique category. The message is that you should really pay attention to your audience and write to that audience. There is a belief that copy needs to be written to a third-grade level. That is harder in science because our vocabulary is bigger and third graders would not understand it. What they are basically saying is that it has to be easy to read and deliver what the reader is looking for. An interesting trend was to communicate in digital email marketing. I would say the new trend is to go back to direct mail, while combining it with email, and not a lot of it, but very targeted and specific. This gives your target audience something that their clutter folder is not going to shove to the side. Many people are weighing in on conversations and there is so much email in our in-box that readers are missing some of the email and the digital direct mail pieces. I would back it up with something different. Develop something outside the box like a direct mail piece. We are doing one for our client base where there are five deliverables with this direct mail piece and the recipients are actually going to build a marketing puzzle. You do not have to do it for thousands of your customers, you need to do it on your targeted low-hanging fruit and then you can do something else top level when you have a bigger audience. Trendy is audience relative. It is better to deliver impactful marketing that means something to your audience, which helps you achieve your goals, whether you are trendy or not, it is always about your audience.

**CEOCFO: *How do you reach out for potential new customers?***

**Mr. Harrsch:** It is funny. We just had this conversation as a team. Many of our clients have come to us because people know us in the industry. Many of them are from referrals from other clients. Some of them move from company to company, just walking up and shaking hands at a tradeshow, and sometimes it is from professional organizations like the Diagnostic Marketing Association where I am President- Elect. There are also opportunities from publications who let us

know if they have somebody who needs some help and they give our name, so that is one type of referral. Even for us, we are the “Cobbler’s Children” as we tend to take care of our clients before we take care of marketing for ourselves. We are going to take our advice to start doing some targeted, small, selective campaigns. We as an agency do not work with our client’s competitors, so we would not have two of the same type of client. We have to make sure we are branched out enough and our clients like that. It is hard to market for two different companies in the exact same space. How do you make one look better than the other?

**CEOCFO: *What has surprised you as Brandwidth Solutions has grown and evolved?***

**Ms. Harsch:** This past was an incredible year for Brandwidth. It was our eleventh year in business. At the DXMA Creative Awards I won the Jerry Goldsmith Award, for which I was astounded. We took home three more trophies for creative and not just in campaigns, but in tradeshow graphics, and social media. We have this marketing wheel on our website and we have won awards in every category except email marketing. I looked at these nine trophies as I was sitting in my office and say “wow, what an incredible team”. They have done an outstanding job in many markets and these awards were in healthcare, IBD healthcare and other healthcare. I sit back and look at what we have done over the years and how we have grown. We have added team members this year and we are adding more team members next year. That is exciting for Brandwidth. Our clients are happy with where we are going and how we are doing it. We signed contracts with clients for five years. We have longevity with our clients because they are happy with where we are taking them and how we are getting them there. We evaluate what we are doing with them on a regular basis and make adjustments especially on social media because we get feedback every month. We have now added sales automation and I was not expecting to add that as a service, but clearly it was needed as we now have two clients using that service because they do not have the hands to do it for themselves.

