

Boston Business Journal

Roger Sametz: Brand-new day

Reporter Mary Moore speaks with Roger Sametz about his philosophy and work—and why it's more important than ever to actively manage your organization's brand.

By Mary Moore

Thoughtful in his approach to complex problems and on the cutting edge of trends, communications consultant Roger Sametz at first blush would seem to belong in an advertising agency on Madison Avenue, working with Fortune 500 clients. Yet, his South End firm—Sametz Blackstone Associates—applies its integrated branding and design strategies to the needs of a client list that is 80 percent nonprofits. They include cultural organizations such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Ballet and WGBH; academic institutions such as Harvard Medical School, Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research and MIT's McGovern Institute for Brain Research; and health care institutions such as Brigham and Women's Hospital. Sametz spoke with reporter Mary Moore about his work, which has spanned three decades—and why it's more important than ever to market and brand your company.

What is your definition of a good day?

A good day would be where I've helped different kinds of clients and different teams across the company. We could be working with a mutual



easier, both the deciding and the executing of it. Luckily we don't have to do that very often. We've had people who have been with us for decades.

Traits that give you a competitive edge?

Integration in a couple of dimensions. I think our ability to help organizations by evolving brand and communication strategies and then connecting this thinking to print and digital

"We connect research, strategy, message development, design, and technology to help organizations realize their goals and their potential—and help them to 'own' their brand systems."

fund in the morning, the BSO in the afternoon and Harvard at lunch. For the 30 years I've been doing this, it's still exciting to make a difference, to know that we've helped organizations better connect to their constituencies.

Toughest business decision?

That would always be around letting someone go. That has never gotten

implementation would be the simplest way to put it. The fact that we can connect research, strategy, message development, design and technology to help organizations to realize their goals, their potential, and help them to "own" their brand systems. Everyone doesn't get that, but those who do get it really value it.

What is your pet peeve?

People at organizations who say, “Look how gloomy the economy is, we need to cut back on marketing and branding. We can’t afford to communicate.” The reality is that it’s only through communications—and by connecting to other people and organizations—that they’re going to be successful.

“Especially in this gloomy economy, it’s only through communications—and by connecting to other people and organizations—that enterprises, for-profit and nonprofit, are going to be successful.”

Who is your mentor?

I don’t know that there’s just one. I’ve collected different bits and learning from people along the way and I can remember phrases and advice from people from 10, 20 or 30 years ago. One group of mentors (even though I never knew any of the them) might be those designers in France in the ’30s who honed the art of the

About Sametz Blackstone Associates

Sametz Blackstone Associates is a brand-focused strategic communications practice that integrates strategy, message development, design, and technology to create compelling communication programs that help evolving organizations better navigate change.

Clients include academic and research institutions, life-science organizations, professional service firms, businesses, cultural organizations and other non-profits, and government agencies.

Founded in 1979, Sametz Blackstone has always approached communication and design as important tools to help organizations realize both their strategic and tactical goals.

The firm has years of experience helping organizations, both startups and centenarians, define and articulate their vision and value, and increase connection to key constituents. Sametz Blackstone helps clients build or re-energize brands, enter new markets or geographies, promote offerings, increase participation, generate earned and un-earned income, recruit and retain talent, and add value to the enterprise—over the short and long term.

Located in Boston’s historic South End in a 150-year-old brownstone, Sametz Blackstone works with clients both around the corner and around the world.

Sametz Blackstone Associates

Compelling communications—integrating brand-focused strategy, design, and technology to help evolving organizations navigate change

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A.M. Cassandre, *Dubonnet*, 1932

Muriel Spark, *The Comforters*, 1957



commercial poster—art deco posters—like (Adolphe Mouron) Cassandre, for example. He broke new ground. He had one foot in art and one in business and it worked. We’ve tried to build our business that way.

Most influential book?

Muriel Spark’s “The Comforters.” I never tire of re-reading those perfectly crafted sentences.

What is your favorite restaurant?

Metropolis, on Tremont Street in the South End. It’s not sexy, but it has a nice neighborhood sort of French bistro-inspired ambience. The food’s great and it doesn’t have the high-concept pretensions of some other eateries.

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