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[October 03, 2007]

# MOVERS, MAKERS, SHAKERS

(Business World (Philippines) Via Thomson Dialog NewsEdge) One of the benefits I enjoy for being in the advertising industry for so long is I get to know most of the players very well. I get to know the best and the brightest, those who perform "above the noise level." Socky Pitargue is one such person. She now heads PC&V Communications, an ad agency which she put up right after she left JWT exactly 10 years ago. It was at JWT that I met her, a junior copywriter fresh from a small agency run by an ex-colleague, Armi Aquino.

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The story was, just before Socky signed her appointment papers, the office got a call from Armi who bewailed that we had pirated her top writer. It was this call that convinced us that we had hired well.

Even at that young age, Socky came in with impressive credentials. As part of her academic requirements as a Communication Arts student at the University of Santo Tomas, Socky had apprenticed at Nation-Ads Philippines. Recognizing her potential, Nation-Ad signed her up for a regular job as copywriter - months before she graduated. In fact, she had to take a leave from work to march on stage to receive her diploma, with cum laude honors!

The world of advertising wasn't really new to Socky. An older sister had worked with Philippine Advertising Counsellors, then the country's biggest advertising agency. Regaled with stories about its high-profile people and their work that she actually saw on print and TV, Socky was hooked. Once, looking out to Makati from the high offices of PAC, she decided she wanted to be part of this industry. That was when she was barely 12 years old. Who would think that, many years hence, that child would still be as wide-eyed and passionate about advertising and, in fact, become one of its respected, highly visible personalities?

The new hiree did not disappoint JWT, and vice versa. The ink on her appointment papers had barely dried when Socky won for the agency an Award of Excellence for Pond's Cold Cream at the Philippine Ad Congress. It was her first in what was to be an illustrious career marked by creative and marketing successes.

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As luck would have it, Socky was given a first-class mentor in the person of Edwina Arroyo. Edwina was one of JWT's top creative directors, the one behind most of the agency's award-winning works at that time. Socky trembled at the prospect of working with Edwina; her boss, after all, was TOWN's first awardee for Design, known and respected in the industry for her impeccable taste, eye for detail, and a quality of work that she exacted from herself as well as the people she worked with - including her new "apprentice."

Socky recalled that particular Pond's assignment she was given by Edwina. She had stayed up late crafting an ad for presentation the following day. When she showed the work, Edwina simply looked at it and said, "This is piecemeal advertising. What do you do after 1, 2, 3 years? Where is the long-term idea?" She went back to her desk nearly in tears and that's when it hit her. "Draw from your experiences!"

The piecemeal ad was re-crafted into an award-winning campaign for Pond's, entitled "Secrets of a Beautiful Face." It drew from her experience in transcendental meditation, her interest in Chinese medicine, her home experiments with flower essences and perfumery, her trips to Quiapo, Tondo, and other places that were Manila's "soul." It was from this first creative award that Socky also learned her first major lesson in advertising.

"The power of an ad to connect is only as powerful as the truth it communicates. And truth comes only from real life, or a deep personal experience. That's why in advertising, one cannot stop learning and experimenting; it's curiosity and daring that will sustain us."

Socky's track record at JWT was exactly that, a record. She was soon promoted to creative director and was put in charge of very important clients such as Kraft Philippines, Richardson Vicks, S.C. Johnson, among others. When PRC (Unilever) needed a new creative director, Socky was brought to the task. It proved to be a right move for JWT as the team won 9 Gold Awards for Unilever in that year's Ad Congress, the most number of golds ever for Unilever in a single year. (To be continued)

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