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(Business World (Philippines) Via Thomson Dialog NewsEdge) Socky Pitargue's gift for turning brands around was again proven when she was assigned to Asia Brewery.

**Information Technology**

In fact, the work she helped put together for Beer na Beer was the foundation for JWT's winning the San Miguel account seven years after. Legend has it that Roy Golez, then Asia Brewery's marketing director, was annoyed that each time a customer ordered beer, a bottle of San Miguel Beer would be automatically brought to the table. He therefore decided to launch a beer called Beer.

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A name change to Beer na Beer and an award-winning TV campaign later, the new entry surprised everyone when it inched up in market share, eventually enjoying a 15% share and becoming the second largest selling beer after San Miguel. What was originally intended to be a flanker brand to Carlsberg ended up as Asia Brewery's biggest, if not most

controversial, beer brand.

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Tuesday, September 27, 2011 TIME:

Not a lot of people know that it was Socky who baptized this generic beer as "Beer na Beer" and that this stroke of genius did not pass unnoticed and unappreciated. One Friday afternoon, I was asked by Roy Golez to bring Socky and her Beer na Beer creative team over to his office. Did we do anything wrong; were we getting fired? To our relief and surprise, Golez presented Socky with a check for P10,000. A small reward, he apologized, for the name-cum-campaign handle, Beer Na Beer, that Socky had coined for the brand. The room burst into applause, and a party specially prepared by the marketing team for their agency partners ensued.

Little wonder that in 1992 JWT made her vice president and executive creative director. In her new position, she led the agency in new business pitches, such as Globe Telecom, Duty Free Philippines, Mobiline, San Miguel Corp., and the biggest business pitch at that time, Philippine Airlines. Our success rate? On the first year that we focused on new business, we hit a 75% success rate. By our third year we were winning 100% of our new business pitches!

One of Socky's skills was getting the right people for the job and infecting them with her passion to win. But a key part of that skill was allowing people to "shine" and giving credit where credit was due. She would be the first to admit that she couldn't have done it without the likes of Raymund Villaruel, Ariel Comia, Claire Drueco-Lopez, Shu Manalo, Jessie Pastor, and many others from Creative, and Meckoy Quiogue, Gi Gatchalian, Aileen Araneta and their teams from Accounts and Planning.

With such a track record one wonders what made Socky throw this all away and walk into the unknown. The news that she had decided to go on her own reached me while I was in Sri Lanka as regional VP. She said it was because she had read the handwriting on the wall.

She had observed that, with competition getting tougher and response time more crucial to brand survival, marketers were starting to insist on creative presence in strategic meetings. They needed creativity unhindered by hierarchies. The scenario, as she put it, presented an opportunity for an agency led by strategic-thinking, entrepreneurial creatives.

When media independents emerged in the scene, she was one of the first to embrace the change. "With media clout out of the question," Socky told Gerry Pereira, then JWT regional president, "you [meaning JWT] and I are now equal." Creativity and results, not size, were going to be the deciding factors for clients when choosing an agency.

The agency started with a fashion brand, a Makati bar/restaurant, an insurance company, and a high-end furniture shop as clients. Today, their account roster includes three of the country's biggest and most successful brands.

For PC&V, account acquisition was always guided by a clear growth philosophy. "We prefer to grow our business vertically rather than horizontally. That means getting more brand assignments from existing clients, rather than going after new clients or accounts. This way we get to know and focus on their business better, build deeper relationships."

What I find remarkable was how Socky attracted some of the most talented people into her agency. Two of JWT's creative directors - Ariel Comia and Raymund Villaruel - were the first to join her as business partners, even agreeing to a 50% pay cut and giving up perks. When I visited her office recently, I was surprised to learn that the agency is now 25-people strong, less Raymund Villaruel, who died in 2005.

The agency celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. Looking back at the years she has spent in the business, Socky muses: "I used to focus on building a future for myself. Now, it's building a future for my people and their families. The change is liberating! At the same time, it is what moves us forward."

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