



Amit Bapna

IS IN THE AIR

His visiting card says - CEO, Omnicom Group APIMA (Asia-Pacific India Middle-East Africa) and he adds, they were the first ones "to screw around with the visiting cards" and add India separately, as people in India deserve a seat at the table. "Without question, the Indian economy is too important to any marketer. India is fundamentally important to our growth strategy over the next ten years." Love is on a whirlwind two-day trip, mostly to meet the network agencies in India that include the group's creative agencies DDB Mudra, RK Swamy BBDO and BBDO India, TBWA India as well as the media agency OMD India. He landed on the final day of the Ganpati Visarjan - the immersion of the Elephant God, a day when the city of Mumbai comes to a near halt. A bad day to arrive in the city perhaps? No, not for Love. He says, "it was a good day for me; it was a whole different experience for me." The affable ad-man, mostly given to a rather loquacious conversation, Love is in stark contrast to some of the ad-moguls prone to crisper and point-

ed tête-à-tête sessions. He has for a very long time worked on the P&G business where he was involved with creating the marketing plans for the female hygiene brand Whisper and others in markets as diverse as China, Saudi Arabia and Latin America. In his own words, the stint gave him deep insights on how different markets work and more importantly how consumers need to be sold brands differently.

A look at the website of Omnicom group, a global leader in advertising and marketing communications, leaves one wondering if the attempt to be so staid is a deliberately created aura specially when compared with some of the other networks' snazzier web-presence. Love clarifies that this is no oversight - rather it is making the point of what we are. "We are not running the group companies - they are independent operating companies. We try to help them raise capital and to let them run their businesses - it is a much more entrepreneurial environment." We tell them, "If you want to try something different go ahead and try it bud-

dy. Even if it is a failure you learn and we would like to learn from your experience." He adds; "If you address your day-to-day jobs like this, it changes the whole experience. That is what we do at Omnicom."

As per reports, Omnicom Group Inc. recently announced its net income for the second quarter of 2011 having increased 13.1% to \$275.1 million from \$243.3 million in the second quarter of 2010. He is evasive with numbers and when prodded on the growth figures for the group agencies in India, all he confesses to is; "We are a publicly held company that has some significant disclosure norms and I am happy with it. I cannot tell you anything that has not been printed already."

Globally Omnicom has been a powerful entity in close competition with the other networks - WPP Publicis Groupe, IPG amongst others. In India though, it is yet to make as powerful an impact in the market, where WPP is far ahead. "WPP has been ahead of all the other companies in India for one reason and it's a historical fact - when they bought out JWT, Ogilvy and Y&R they bought into the Unilever business and the Colgate business," Love holds forth and adds that before the TNS acquisition our revenues were bigger than WPP's - now WPP is bigger. He concedes that the rivals are more developed and it would be silly not to acknowledge the fact. But he adds that Omnicom has incredible infrastructure and talent in the region - "the proof is in the growth being seen as well as the recognition."

On the plans for the future, through the rear-view mirror of the industry from 2001-2011, he views, "The post-digital era of today will see us able to have more data, more readily available than we can ever handle. People who are good at coming up with ideas, can listen closely and contextualise learning into insights will have more and more value." In his view, we are in a post-digital world as digital is already part of everything we do. The scenario is not about change of a channel or medium. "We have 7 billion people on the planet and 5 billion are connected by mobile phone and half of those are able to connect directly into the Internet without a landline. The fish bowl certainly has changed. It's remarkable if you want to see it and it's hard to see if you don't want to see it."

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Tim Love, vice chairman, Omnicom Group, was particularly unaffected by the festivities on the day of his arrival in Mumbai, a day when the rain gods didn't relent too. It's perhaps this attitude that could help the group build on their existing capabilities, to give them a fighting chance against their biggest rival in this market


