

the apartment

## ALL FIRED UP



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**pradeep rao**

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# “We actually do have chairs, we just don’t like to use them.”

Two years ago, Brian Honda, cofounder and managing partner of The AdPharm, packed his wagons and left the bright lights of the city and headed west to the country. Well, sort of. If launching and managing a thriving healthcare division of a large multinational advertising agency is the city and nurturing the bloom of an upstart agency on the outskirts of town is the country—then off to green acres it is. Lured by the same call of nature, The AdPharm cofounder, Nathan Incedon, traded in his big-agency VP post for a spot on the ranch and a vision of greener pastures. It’s been a year since Brian and Nathan officially opened the doors of The AdPharm in downtown Oakville and with a growing list of clients and a strong portfolio of innovative work under its belt, the small seed planted in the country is starting to leave a mark on the Canadian healthcare advertising scene.

The AdPharm is a full marketing communications agency fuelled by an in-house studio, editing suite and production facility. The moment

you enter The AdPharm’s workspace you know you’ve veered off the beaten track. From the blaze orange walls to the open spaces and loft, to a board-room devoid of chairs, The AdPharm stays true to the promise that Brian and Nathan make to every new client and employee: “working with us will be different.”

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**“There are as many proprietary models and strategic tools as there are ad agencies.”**

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“We actually do have chairs, we just don’t like to use them,” explains Nathan. Meetings are for people with too much time on their hands, we prefer to just get the job done. The logic is consistent with the agency’s “results-only” philosophy. “Our approach is very focused; understand your objectives and become a catalyst for results. Strategic thinking and creativity trump everything but accountability here at The AdPharm.



how we approach our clients, their business and our work.” With over 25 years of combined industry experience between them, Brian and Nathan drew heavily from insights gained from vantage points on both sides of the client/agency fence in local and international markets to shape the identity of The AdPharm and the services it provides. “We’ve seen a growing frustration in the marketplace over the years,” says Brian. “Clients frustrated with what has happened to the client/agency relationship as agencies grow beyond their means. We need to be involved in the day-to-day business of our brands, not sitting in committee meetings. It’s our experience that has gotten us where we are and it’s what our clients rightfully expect from their agency relationship.”

It’s easy for clients to see the benefits of experience and a results-only approach from a strategic thinking and process point-of-view, but it’s the creative product that benefits the most. Leading the creative charge at The AdPharm is Senior Art Director Pradeep Rao. Having spent the past 10 years in consumer advertising with multinational agencies such as DDB, McCann, Ogilvy, JWT and Y&R in international markets including India, Dubai and Canada, Pradeep has seen the same level of client frustration with agencies. Expectations are often too high for creative to produce great communications from sub-optimal brand or market insights. “There

are as many proprietary models and strategic tools as there are ad agencies,” Pradeep suggests. “They exist because every client wants something different—something that is innovative and breathtakingly creative. The truth is that it all comes down to the people (client and agency) that work with you everyday and think about your business every night. It sounds simple—and it is. I like to tell clients to judge the performance of their agency not by what they have asked for, but rather by what they haven’t. There

are a lot of competent agencies that can execute your best wishes. There are far less that can take the seedlings of your ideas or understand your desired outcomes and make it hap-

pen. I wanted to join an agency that didn’t have all the answers but had the means to try. If you have all the answers, you don’t need an agency partner like us. If you’re willing to look, we have a couple of really bright flashlights.”

Not surprisingly, in a results-only environment, success is determined by how well you understand your client’s objectives. At the core of every client brief and every client interaction is a desired result—sometimes it’s a definable business metric and sometimes it’s something hidden between the lines, but if you can just identify it, understand it, agree upon it and then work aggressively to achieve it together, amazing things can happen.





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“We’ve been fortunate to work with clients who share the same aggressive commitment to generating results that we do,” says Nathan. “It gives us the freedom to explore new ideas, challenge the marketplace and innovate. Working with one of our current clients, we recently partnered with CanWest media and the National Post to create a new media vehicle for healthcare marketers.” Appearing as once-weekly installments in the Body & Health section of the National Post, *The Patient Diaries* provides a forum for consumers, patients and healthcare providers to discuss current healthcare issues. Each sponsored forum garners attention in the form of National Post editorials.

Since launching *The Patient Diaries*, the partnership between The AdPharm and the National Post has continued to evolve, with The AdPharm diversifying into other custom publications, including the recently published

*National Post Annual Golf Magazine*. “Working on publications like the Golf Annual has been a natural fit for our competencies in design and content generation; more importantly, our expertise and insights into healthcare marketing have allowed us to bring new content and a fresh new perspective to these publications and open up new communication vehicles for healthcare marketers,” explains Brian.

The Adpharm will not grow beyond its ability to maintain its developing client relationships, insist Brian and Nathan. “It’s why we love what we do and there is simply no need to change that. To be successful, growth will need to be a two-way street. The publications side of the business will continue to mature as we invent new ways to bring healthcare information to the consumer.” The AdPharm can be reached at 905-901-1062 or [brian@theadpharm.com](mailto:brian@theadpharm.com) or [nathan@theadpharm.com](mailto:nathan@theadpharm.com). **CPM**

**the adpharm**