

# ***The Power of Creativity in the Role of the PIO*** **Al Aguilar - CEO/Chief Creative Officer** **Creative Civilization**

Good day and welcome to this session titled “*The power of creativity in the role of a PIO*”.

The poster is for the TAMIO 50th Anniversary event. It features a dark blue background with a yellow and white circular graphic on the right side. The text on the left reads: "The Power of Creativity in the Role of the PIO", "Speaker", "Al Aguilar", "CEO & Chief Creative Officer", "Creative Civilization", "June 6, 2024", "11:15 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.", and "Register at [www.TexasTAMIO.org](http://www.TexasTAMIO.org)". The TAMIO logo is prominently displayed in the center, with "50" in a large yellow font and "Years of Communication Excellence" and "SAN ANTONIO, TX" in smaller text.

I am very honored to be here today and last night I had the privilege of meeting many of you from District 7 at dinner. It was exhilarating for me to meet so many talented professionals. From the very experienced to interns. It was inspiring.

To all of you here today, let me begin by saying thank you for the important work that you do in providing communications and being the link to your respective communities.

**Bridging the Gap of  
Information to Educate,  
Motivate and Empower the  
Constituents You Serve.**

I like to think of it as bridging the gap of information to educate, motivate and empower the constituents you serve. That's an important task and mission...and you should all be proud.



I also want to congratulate the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers on your 50th Anniversary of leading communications excellence...and thank you for bringing your conference to San Antonio, Texas, the 7th largest city in the country...and while San Antonio continues to grow rapidly...it remains true to its unique character and charm...so bienvenidos...and as we like to say around here...mi casa es tu casa.

I also want to congratulate and thank one of my esteemed colleagues who I had the pleasure of working with early on in her career, where I quickly recognized she had an amazing talent and dedication to excellence, And that is Xochitl Mora, one our your board members who honored me by asking if I would join you here today to share a few ideas and experiences about how the power of creativity may be relevant in your respective roles. So Xochitl, thank you and congratulations on your outstanding career.

So what can this adman share with you that may be relevant in the role of a PIO?

Well, our commonality is that we are both in the communications business. Communicating and connecting information in a fresh and engaging manner that makes a difference.

And I suggest to you that the power of creativity makes a big difference in just how effective we can all be. As a PIO or as an adman.

So what is the role of being creative while reporting the facts?

Well, how many times have we all experienced the effectiveness of a headline that generates great interest and readership and on the other hand a headline that didn't attract attention or connect in the way we wanted?

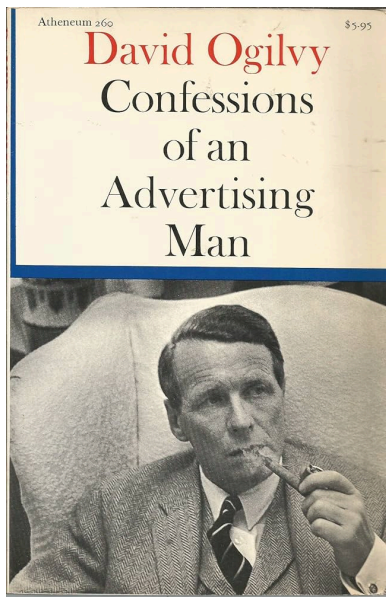
Now I do know that everyone in this room is Creative. And each of you have great examples of the power of creativity in the work you have done.

So rather than focus my attention on advocating for the power of creativity in your role, I would like to share some foundational ideas and lessons I have learned that you may find helpful in the important work that you do.

In a moment I will share with you the mantra I created that has guided and driven me and my teams throughout my career.

But first, I will tell you about two milestone experiences that set my path forward with excitement and a love for what I do.

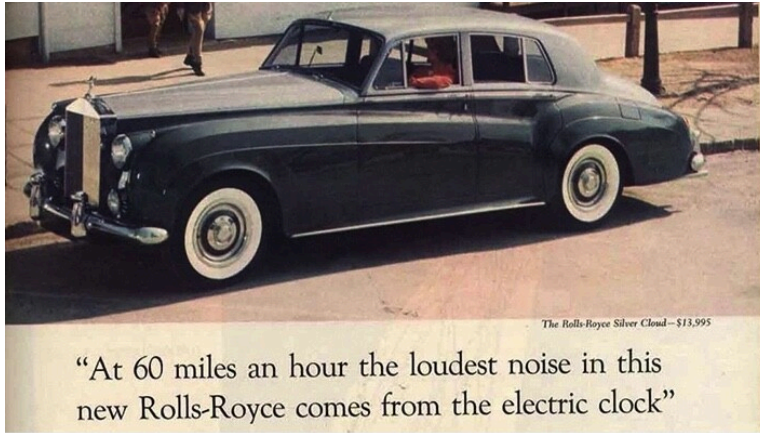
In the 70's I read this book.



Confessions of an Advertising Man by David Ogilvy. It was written way back in 1961, but it is a classic. He is considered one of the industry's iconic leaders. I think the show Mad Men was about him. It is a great book about creativity and really about life's lessons.

It not only captured my imagination, it opened the door to my lifelong passion for marketing, advertising, public relations and so much more.

In it he shares great examples of the power of creativity...such as the story of his famous headline for a Rolls Royce ad that struck me for several reasons.



Here you see the ad.

First he said, it's not about luxury or status, he was inspired by the little things that make it extraordinary.

Second, he said you can break the rules... as he did by creating one of the most famous and longest headlines ever, and it worked..

"At 60 miles an hour the loudest noise in this new Rolls-Royce comes from the electric clock."

And then it hit me... You can actually make a living, having fun and get paid writing copy and headlines? Piece of cake. That... is what I want to do.

So I set a goal of becoming the Hispanic David Ogilvy.

Well, easier said than done.



The second awakening for me was when I met this man. NO, I didn't meet James Bond, but when I took my very first advertising lecture class at UT Austin, this dashing man,

Dr. William Mindak, who looked, dressed and even drove a car like James Bond, introduced himself as our professor and Dean of the of the College of Communications, and then proceeded to teach me the greatest lesson I ever learned about creativity. To this day, that lesson continues to inspire me. In fact, it is the genesis of the mantra I created and live by.

Dr. William Mindak boldly told us...You are not going to create anything new!

**You are not going to create  
anything new!**

What? We are not going to create anything new? What is he talking about?

What you are going to do is connect existing things...objects, emotions in new and different ways to create messaging for your product or service that is engaging, memorable, and motivating.

He went on to explain...You are not going to create oceans, trees, apples, streets, baseball, happiness, sadness, crying, laughter...look around, it's all there for you. Connect the dots in new and different ways.

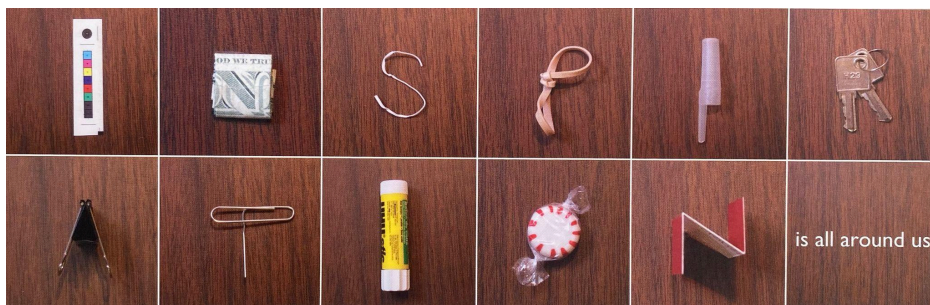
Look around you...the world is your palette.

**The World is Your Palette.**

So thus I created my mantra which is...Inspiration is all around us.



One of my designers took this mantra to heart and while sitting at his desk, created this spelling of the word Inspiration from the objects around him. Rubber band, paper clips, glue stick, even a mint, to spell inspiration.



Think about it...how many times have you had that moment of inspiration by seeing, hearing, reading, or experiencing something that triggers an extraordinary idea.

So indeed, the world is your Palette and Inspiration is all around us.

Let's try this exercise.

Let's combine some existing things in a new way to communicate an idea.

So here we have an image of Clouds.



And here we have the emotion of Love.

love 

How can we combine this existing object and emotion to communicate an idea for a product?

Well here's an idea.

Imagine this couple jogging alongside each other and they stop to rest at a bench and while staring at the sky and they are struck and touched by the clouds sending a message by forming in the shape of a heart.

This happy, healthy couple happens to wear Nike as they enjoy life and love together.



So here is another idea that was inspired by architecture. While visiting the The Alhambra grand palace in Granada, Spain



My breath was taken away as I said, “Now this was a creative civilization.”

Hmm. Why not name our new ad agency that. Creative Civilization, as an aspiring goal of our own little village of creativity inspired by the great civilizations before us.

The Alhambra “inspiration all around us,” that created the name of my ad agency. If you are ever in Spain, I encourage you to visit the Alhambra in Granada...you will be inspired.



Advertising • Marketing • Public Relations

So my next power of creativity tool is something you see here on the screen. Is anyone familiar with this word? Gotados? It’s not Spanish... It’s not Gottodos.

It's all in how you look at it. It is Got To Do's. And so the Got to Do's is a very important tool when being creative. It becomes the objective perspective of creativity. Because you know we all have our own personal, subjective likes and dislikes, so how do you judge or evaluate whether this creative idea, press release, headline or ad is good. What is the so-called litmus test?



You can create your own list of Got To Dos, but here are some GOTTODOS.



Meaningful, Memorable, Engaging, Relevant, Factual, Believable, Sustainable.  
Does my content meet the Got to do's?

I now want to share a couple of examples that met the Got to do's with the power of creativity.

The first example is for the Hearst owned San Antonio Express-News.



As you know, the world of media and how people get their news has become very fragmented, especially with the growth of digital outlets, but consumers were still claiming that TV news was their number one source for news. And the Express-News

wanted to communicate their differentiating value of providing in-depth coverage, rather than the short sound bites on local TV news.

The other challenge was that the news coverage was the same, national and local news, sports, politics, etc. The expected.

So going back to the Got to Do's and being inspired by the world around us...we communicated their differentiation in an engaging, relevant and memorable way.

## **San Antonio Express-News**

**From Wall Street to Zarzamora Street...  
There's No News Like the Express-News.**

*From Wall Street to Zarzamora Street...There's no news like the Express-News.*

## **San Antonio Express-News**

**From the Super Bowl to the Chili Bowl...  
There's No News Like the Express-News.**

*From the Super Bowl to the Chili Bowl...There's no news like the Express-News.*

And this one...when George W. and Vicente Fox were presidents of the U.S. and Mexico.

## **San Antonio Express-News**

**From the Bush's to the Fox's...  
There's No News Like the Express-News.**

*From the Bush's to the Fox's...There's no news like the Express-News.*

Today I am wearing one of my lucky Spurs championship rings presented to me by the team. I say lucky because I have no basketball talent but I contributed to the team through the power of creativity and as we celebrate our Agency's 25th Anniversary this year, it reminds me of the very first client and the very first campaign we created back in 1999. The San Antonio Spurs were entering the playoffs and we pitched this idea called Go Spurs Go...and the client response was lukewarm. Too simple, boring...I asked what about the simplicity of Just Do it. And they said how about Ready to Go?



Well, we created the Go Spurs Go campaign and they went on to win their first of 5 NBA championships and the rest is history as they say. It lives on today as the forever mantra of the Spurs. Talk about sustainable.



Right across the freeway there at the Alamodome lies this brick, that gives us a little bit of recognition as part of the fabric of this community. Creativity can be fun.



Finally, as Xochitl mentioned, I have been described as one of the Godfathers of Hispanic marketing, so...I want to share the story about a creative idea that put my previous agency on the map, created the largest Hispanic ad agency in the U.S. and made San Antonio the Hispanic Madison Avenue.



I had been recruited by the Coca-Cola Company and was part of the marketing department at the headquarters in Atlanta and was enjoying an amazing experience working for the world's best-known brand. But after a few years, I wanted to move back home to San Antonio. So I formed a partnership with the idea to grow a Hispanic advertising agency. When I left Coca-Cola, I told my boss Chuck Morrison that maybe I could continue to work for Coca-Cola through my new ad agency. He laughed and said, "we already have an ad agency in New York...Do they even have an airport in San Antonio?" It was his way of telling me I was making a big mistake. But I was persistent. And a few months later we found ourselves at corporate headquarters presenting to the president of the company in a creative shoot out with the agency from New York.

So what was going to be the idea to win the account?

...We looked around and inspiration was all around us.

Hispanics are American and America is Hispanic. In the military, sports, education, business, the arts, and on and on. It was time to proclaim the mainstreaming of Hispanics as part of the fabric of America. And why not Coca-Cola, the world's best known brand to proclaim that?

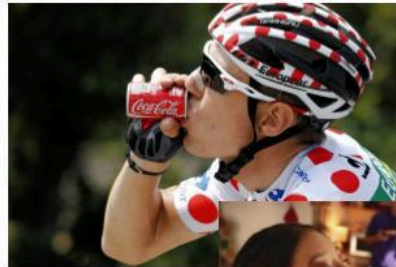
So we produced a speculative spot showing Hispanics in all walks of life as Americans while you heard a familiar tune with the lyrics in Spanish.

"America, America...mi gente, mi pais...te canto a ti, te canto a ti...tu eres mi pais... America, America...tu eres mi pais...te canto a ti, te canto a ti...tu eres mi pais."

# Coca-Cola

Sang to the melody of "America the Beautiful"

**America, America  
Mi gente, mi pais  
Te canto a ti, te canto a ti  
Tu eres mi país  
America, America  
Mi gente, mi pais  
Te canto a ti, te canto a ti  
Tu eres mi país**



"America, America...Mi people, my country...I sing to thee, I sign to thee...you are my country...America, America...my people, my country... I sing to thee, I sing to thee... you are my country."

20 minutes after the presentation as we waited in the hallway, they walked out and said congratulations you are the new ad agency for Coca-Cola.

The news hit all the trade publications. Advertising Age, AdWeek and more. So the phone started ringing. American Airlines, General Motors, Anheuser-Busch, Sprint, Levis, Procter and Gamble and on and on, creating the bluest blue chip client roster.

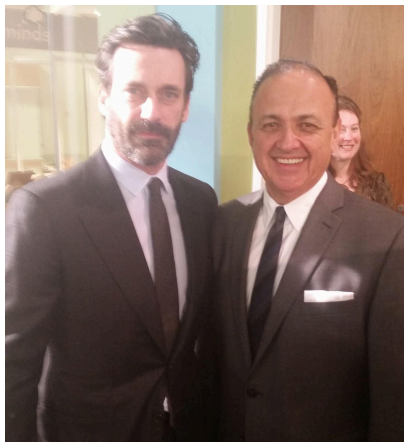
And the phone rang again back in 2015 when I received a call from the Smithsonian Museum of American History in Washington D.C. asking if they could come visit us to see our archives for their collection of a new 20 year exhibit titled “American Enterprise,” on the history of business in America and how advertising was going to be a large part of the exhibit. The curators of the advertising exhibit were creating it by decade, and we were told that their research of the 1990’s identified it as the era when corporate America discovered the emergence and purchasing power of the multicultural population of the U.S. They further said that their research pointed to us as the pioneers of Hispanic marketing in America. So today our images and ads are there, next to my inspiring hero David Ogilvy.



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of American History*

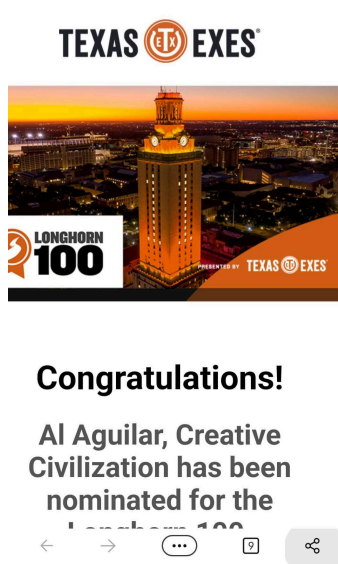
### ***American Enterprise Exhibit***

And a special treat was the day I visited the Smithsonian when they were also adding the artifacts from the show Mad Men and had a chance to meet Jon Hamm, also known as Don Draper.



When I told him how much I loved the show, he smiled and told me “I just played the part, you are the real thing.”

So now making a full circle to the place where I learned the greatest lesson about creativity from Mr. Advertising 007, Dr. William Mindak, ...last year the University of Texas at Austin notified me that I and been nominated for the Longhorn 100, as one of the top 100 Longhorn alum businesses in the world.



I share these lessons and this journey with you as a way of suggesting that no matter what your challenges are as a PIO in creating effective communications, the power of creativity is exciting and rewarding. Just look at the world around you. Inspiration is all around us.



Thank you.

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