

# CA

## COMMUNICATION ARTS ADVERTISING ANNUAL 59

Daniel Zender    Virginie Gosselin    & Larry  
Greenhaus gfx    Exhibit



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## Living the Hard-Knock Startup Life

You did it. You became sdc, cco or vp Grand Poobah of a large agency. After years of working your way up the ladder, balancing endless toil and late nights, and amassing shelves full of shiny award hardware, you became a big fish in a big pond. So, what's the next challenge? Maybe it's time to jump into the abyss and start your own shop.

But, do you know how to incorporate? To secure financing? To set up a company 401(k) and health insurance? Do you even know how to fill out an invoice? This is the daily reality for the industry's newest entrepreneurs. They've broken free from the hassles of agency life, but also its comforts and conveniences—and its safety net.

Lately, there's been a flood of new agencies starting up. What's behind the trend to jump ship and chart an independent course? I chatted with seven new-agency leaders to discuss their motivations, their biggest challenges and what they've learned so far in their quest to be the next Droga.

Let's start with the reasons behind starting your own shop.



**RAFAEL RIZUTO, chief creative officer at [San Francisco, CA]**

I was feeling a bit disenchanted with some of our industry's business practices becoming too bureaucratic and out of touch. At the time, I didn't see any other place I'd rather be, so I decided to stop whining about it and start my own thing.

What other industry trends spurred you to start an agency?

**SEEMA MILLER, president and chief strategy officer at [Chicago, IL]**

My partners and I realized that the traditional agency model was broken and losing relevance. In addition, management consultancies were encroaching on agency turf by acquiring creative shops. The challenge we saw is inte-



grating the analytic culture of consulting with the creative culture of agencies.

**MARH GROSS, creative director, [Chicago, IL]**



We wanted to build a successful business from the ground up with our rules, our philosophies and our creative vision. We saw a need in the marketplace for a nimble agency that is adept at dealing with adversity and change and delivers outstanding creative and strategic thinking, sans egos and attitudes.

There are egos in advertising? Get out of here! Seriously though, it's a boom time for agency startups. What's behind the trend?

Miller: Small is the new black. Both clients and agencies see the limitations of big. Clients are switching from traditional retainers to project-based relationships, which favors small over big.

Rizuto: A bunch of people weren't happy with the way things were at their agencies. Also, clients are more receptive to a more nimble and agile agency, with less processes and overhead. A couple of months ago, I was talking to a very prestigious chief marketing officer of a very big company, and he was complaining about how only 30 percent of the money he pays to his agencies goes to creative, which is the only thing that adds value to his business.



**ANSELMO RAMOS, chief creative officer at [Miami, FL]**

The bravest clients in the world are totally open to independent agencies. They buy bold ideas. They buy passion, obsession, trust and commitment. And we can totally deliver on it. As an indie shop, you can partner for any capability they don't have in-house.

All of you came from big agencies. What lessons learned from those big shops do you put to use now?

Gross: I grew up at o&as and have tremendous respect for the organization and what it stands for. o&as's founder Bill Bernbach is