

IMPACT

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MADISON NEXT

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Sam Balsara, Chairman of Madison World & Vikram Sakhuja, Partner & Group CEO of its Media & OOH divisions, begin their innings; bat for new positioning to get the agency future-ready

BY SRABANA LAHIRI

Sam Balsara, Chairman of Madison World, is happy. The six-month wait to have 'strategy man' Vikram Sakhuja on board has ended, and Madison World is just getting used to an equity partner, and the new head of its Media and OOH divisions.

When we meet them, Sakhuja is just four days old at the agency and yet to get into the nitty gritty of it all, but the two men share a camaraderie that is visible and both are equally excited as they talk about Madison World's new positioning, Madison Next, designed to make the agency future-ready and up the level of service it offers its clients. Madison Next rests on four pillars - focus on Digital, empowering youngsters, promoting internal talent to senior level management roles and focus on research, insights and big data.

The first leg of Madison Next has just been rolled out - with Balsara announcing the re-structuring of the Madison OOH senior management team, calling it "natural evolution" through a series of promotions, some shifts from MOMS to Platinum and vice-versa, creating opportunities for growth and new leadership.

Meanwhile, though Madison closed the year 2014-15 on a high, with the Bharatiya Janata Party's massive media campaign to its credit, it lost Airtel, a big client, soon after. The agency subsequently won many new accounts including Snapdeal, DHFL, Bandhan Bank, Viber, Lenskart.com, Zivame.com, Cricbuzz, gaana.com, MagicBricks.com, Total Environment and Amul Hosiery (JG Hosiery), etc. But last month, it again lost a big client, Mondelez, following a global media realignment by the company, for which Madison was not invited to pitch.

In this backdrop, as Sakhuja takes charge, Balsara's brief for him is simple - move the agency from efficiency to effectiveness.

THE TARGET CONUNDRUM

While Sam Balsara has always stressed that the USP of Madison is to "allow people to work with budgets rather than targets", Sakhuja has been part of a highly target-oriented MNC culture focused on tangible growth. In fact, Sakhuja's brief in his previous role as

global CEO of Maxus, touted to be the growth engine of GroupM and holding company WPP, was to put in place a plan to fuel further growth. So, does one see a conflict there or assume that there will be a genuine culture shift for either Madison or Sakhuja?

"Obviously, the reason why Vikram is here is to help Madison change. But what I am hoping is that Vikram will not throw the baby out with the bath water. There must be a few good things we are doing now; I hope he will retain those. But there are possibly quite a few wrong things we are doing, quite a few things which we are not doing... and I am hoping that Vikram with his width and depth of experience will introduce Madisonites and our clients to these concepts. It will hopefully be a good mix of old and new," says Balsara.

Here, Sakhuja reiterates that the "target culture is a MNC-typical thing". "When there is a global company, they work through all the countries by setting certain growth targets and then the people go about delivering them. Local companies are driven more while trying to build intrinsic value and obviously there is a P&L at the end of it, but the obsessive factor is not the P&L. That is a very healthy approach, to create value within the organization as distinct from an MNC where a person comes with a three-to-five-year horizon and has to take the sales up by so much, profit up by so much and everything is short term. One of the things I always loved about Madison is its client orientation. I definitely want to take that legacy and build on it, besides bringing data, technology and digital into the mega frame," he explains.

ON TO MADISON NEXT

Balsara's experience and sharp sense of the media domain, coupled with Sakhuja's strategic expertise and skill in dealing with clients, promises to be a killer combination as the agency adopts its new positioning. "Madison has a suite of 22 tools. In the last year itself, we have come up with some fantastic new tools specially created for new digital and e-commerce players. Their output is both on Digital and non-Digital, and they tell us what is working or not working, what we can do to make a media plan more efficient and increase our RoI. At the operations level, at the heart of our vast television



operations is Adwise, which is now at the fifth level of upgrade, and has been given a Digital link. We are hoping to link it to Print as well, to make our operations seamless," says Balsara.

"As for Madison Next, I'll let Vikram take a closer look at what we have planned and I'm sure he will have something very valuable to contribute and maybe modify some of its legs," Balsara adds.

Sakhuja is all for an integrated approach, and cites the instance of former Print buyers in the UK (where Print is on a steady decline) becoming Digital buyers with great success. "Print buyers are one of the most savvy local buyers, and they understand the tricks of the trade in a number of ways that Digital buyers will never understand. That was a very successful experiment, and a testimonial to the strategy that Sam is talking about right now," says Sakhuja.

CHALLENGES BEFORE MADISON

"The first challenge is that we are the only Indian agency," says Sam Balsara. "All our competitors are global agencies. In presentations, there is a certain awe they can bring. They say 'We are in 136 countries employing 1,50,000 people and our billings and revenues are so many billions. We talk in hundreds of crores'. But frankly, all this doesn't daunt me. I have always believed that big ideas and clear intent with integrity can beat billions of dollars any day." Of course, sometimes the billions of dollars get the better of Balsara, by his own admission, but by and large, that is not the case. The second challenge, according to him, is what all other agencies face - client pressure, pressure on remuneration... "It makes us have to do with fewer resources than what we actually need, to offer 100% service. Talent is not available in plenty, though the DNA we have created at Madison has enabled us to generate talent at senior levels. We continuously have people within Madison who are ready to take on more responsibility. But because Madison does not follow very ambitious growth targets, many of our valuable talent have to look outside and they get lapped up very easily," rues Balsara.

He also feels that the consumer and his media habits have become far more complex, fragmented and possibly more difficult to understand, and to take advantage of it in advertising terms is a challenge for all media planners.



Lara Balsara Vajifdar, Executive Director, Madison World

"Lara will continue to perform her current role. She is doing an excellent job now, with a firm grip on everything that happens in all the units of Madison World. She has done a great job of making me free to go out and meet clients, spend quality time with them, spend quality time on industry issues and for that I am very grateful to her."

SAM BALSARA

Gross billing of
Madison Media is
₹3750
crore

As per latest Recma
rankings, Madison is
ranked

No. 2
in the country with
11%
market-share

Source: Madison



	KEY CLIENTS	Outlook/Vision going forward
Madison BMB (advertising)	Car Trade, Prince Pipes, Asian Paints SS, VVF Soaps, Neelkanth Developers, Godrej Nature's Basket	Doing path-breaking innovative creative work, that helps clients achieve their objectives
Madison PR	P&G, Britannia, Levi's, Kellogg's, MP Tourism, Café Coffee Day, Puma, Dalda, J W Marriott, H R Johnson	Specialist in Brand and Corporate PR with marquee clients
MOMS (OOH)	Marico, Aircel, Asian Paints, ITC, Kotak Group, Raymond, SBI Life, TATA AIA, TATA Housing, Toyota Kirloskar Motors	Providing holistic OOH solutions backed with strategy, research and innovations.
Platinum Outdoor	Samsung, Canon, Omkar Realtors, Cleartrip, Freecharge, Welspun, Idea Cellular	Providing holistic OOH solutions backed with strategy, research and innovations
Madison IES (activation)	Renault, Ferrero, Michelin, Kolher, LinkedIn, Cupondunia, Tata Chemicals, Star Plus, Parag Foods, Dabur, Canadian Wood	Providing holistic OOH solutions backed with strategy, research and innovations
Anugrah Madison (rural)	Colgate, Marico, HRI, Cargill, Valcoline, Ceat	Be the rural specialist of choice for large advertisers
MRP (retail)	Nivea, Airtel, Supermax, Godrej Security Solutions, Tata Housing, Piramal Healthcare, ITC Hotels, Crompton Greaves	Expand client base through good quality of work
PMG (sports management)	CEAT, Yes Bank, Kent RO, USL, Godrej Properties, NDTV, Shell	To focus on various sports properties and harnessing the power of all sports, not just cricket for brands
MATES (entertainment)	Snapdeal, Dabur, Wipro, Raymond, Amazon, Mondelez, Kellogg's, Marico, Tata Salt, Reebok, Grasim Sultings, Hershey's, Piramal Healthcare, Park Avenue, BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, Club Mahindra, Bacardi, Johnson & Johnson	Develop entertainment properties and focus on film marketing and celebrity management

Highlights of Madison journey in the last 2 years

Managed the entire media campaign to bring Current BJP Government to power



Hat-trick at awards shows this year - Media Agency of the Year (Media Ace)

Radio Media Agency of the Year (Golden Mikes)

Print Media Agency of the Year (Ink Awards)

New clients won this year
Snapdeal, BJP, Lenskart, Viber, Gaana.com, Cricbuzz.com, Metro Cash & Carry India, Amul Hosiery, Shaadi.com, DHFL, Milton, Senco Gold, Total Environment, Rare Township, Inbisco, Wockhardt Hospitals, Zivame, HiTech Mobiles, Cordlife, Swash Technologies, Ashirwad Pipes, Bandhan Bank, Zigy.com, USPL, I Love Diamonds, OYO Rooms

Celebrated
25th
Anniversary
in 2013

LAUNCHING SOON: A NEW DIGITAL UNIT @MADISON

Talking to IMPACT in April, Sam Balsara had mentioned venturing into a standalone digital agency that would work independently of Madison Media. "It is still work in progress," he states, "You will hear about it at the appropriate time. Madison is today geared for a certain kind of client; it is a custom shop, not a mass factory, in a way designed for certain large advertisers. I feel that the digital medium will be able to attract a large number of small advertisers too, but I don't think the DNA of Madison Media is geared to handle this clientele. Therefore, in addition to having all the prowess of a digital agency, our DNA has to be such that it can successfully handle a large number of small advertisers, of which I think there are going to be an abundance in the years to come, thanks to the Modi government."

Sakhuja adds that the two of them have already discussed this. "One of the biggest catalysts of Digital growth is going to be development of content. I am not using the word creative, but development of content for all the various platforms - Facebook, or Twitter, or LinkedIn have different content needs. Quite often, we wait for a creative

agency or a third party to create content people are also a little lost in terms of what should be developing content. So as Sar says, there needs to be a digital agency which has some of this content capability At Madison, the number of creative talent in Digital is arguably higher than it is at most other media shops, primarily because it is to some extent taking the creative as much as taking the media plan which is going to help digital."

To deliver value to the client, the digital agency must offer an integrated creative and media product, much in the same way that agencies in the 60s and 70s used to deliver an integrated creative and media product, feels Balsara. "Maybe 20 years from now, further specialization will come into digital and then maybe again this might get split, but this is not the appropriate time to split creative, media and Digital. Besides, I think there isn't infrastructure in this country to provide creative digital to advertisers at a reasonable cost. That why people like us have found an easy entry into this area. Clients are looking for a quick and easy solution that meets the communication need, and I think media agencies are better placed to provide it, he says.



As for Madison Next, I'll let Vikram take a closer look at what we have planned and I'm sure he will have something very valuable to contribute and maybe modify some of its legs

**SAM
BALSARA**



THE TEAM

Madison World

SAM BALSARA
Chairman & Managing Director, Madison World

VIKRAM SAKHUJA
Partner & Group CEO, Madison Media & OOH

LARA BALSARA VAJIFDAR
Executive Director

RSR MURTHY
CEO, Madison World

BHAMINI PAINTER
HR Director, Madison World

PRABHA PRABHU
CEO, Madison World

RAJ NAIR
Chief Creative Officer, Madison OOH

SOUMITRA BHATTACHARYYA
CEO, Madison OOH

PARESH CHAUDHURY
CEO, Madison HR

DARSHANA BHALLA
CEO, Media

MELROY D'SOUZA
CEO, HRG

**MADISON
NEXT**

Madison Media

VIKRAM SAKHUJA
Partner & Group CEO, Madison Media & OOH

BASABDATT CHOWDHARY
CEO, HRG & CEO, HR

DINESH SINGH RATHORE
CEO, HR Director

VANITA KESWANI
CEO, HRG



SHEKHAR BANERJEE
CEO

NEEL KAMAL SHARMA
COO, Media

SUMIT KANUNGO
COO, Media

NILAKSH SHUKLA
COO, Media

DEEPAK C.D
Director, Software

Madison OOH

VIKRAM SAKHUJA
Partner & Group CEO, Madison Media & OOH

SOUMITRA BHATTACHARYYA
CEO, OOH

DIPANKAR SANYAL
CEO, Premium Outdoor

JAYESH YAGNIK
COO, Media

SAUMEN ROY
COO, Media

PRASHANT MANDHIKE
COO, Premium Outdoor

SANDEEP SAWANT
COO, Media

'I will talk the effectiveness game with all our clients'

Walk into the Andheri office of Madison World, and you are greeted by a tall standee saying 'Welcome to the Madison family, Vikram'. Indeed, Vikram Sakhuja's entry into Madison World has been one of the hottest topics in the industry ever since the news broke earlier this year. It entails a significant structural change at Madison, consolidating the Media and OOH divisions under one head for the first time, and bringing in a professional from outside the family as a board member. It also brings two of the industry's top media brains - Sakhuja and Madison chief Sam Balsara - together, the synergy of which holds great promise. An alumnus of IIT Delhi and IIM Kolkata, Sakhuja has over 28 years of experience across the media and marketing landscape. He has worked with Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola, Star India and GroupM, where he headed South Asia operations as CEO and later became Global CEO of Maxus. Here are excerpts from a conversation he had with Srabana Lahiri



QJ What was the first thing Sam said when you walked into the office on your first day at Madison?

Well, he said 'Welcome to Madison! I got a bouquet of flowers which was almost as big as me!'

QJ What is your mandate for the agency for the short term and the long term?

Here and now, I want to get a quick handle on the kind of businesses that we have, once I do that, I will consolidate them as well as strengthen them. The perspective that I come from is that advertising and marketing spends are actually meant to grow business, so I should either grow sales or it should make your entire brand value stronger in whatever way. Accordingly, I have laid a lot of emphasis on the effectiveness part of media. The industry hasn't been very keen on that. I would actually love to be in a position to see how we can talk this effectiveness game with all our clients.

Clearly, I would love it if tomorrow people weren't as obsessive about the final CPRP as they are. If you look at agency valuation, CPRP is the very strong quantitative one, and everything else is

pretty qualitative. As we move into more outcome-based marketing, this is an opportunity to build some very tangible effectiveness into the plans. So I am really going to be dialling that up.

QJ And what are some of the long term goals you are looking for?

If we can get effectiveness up, even that is long term enough to be on my epitaph when I leave this business. I think it will be "A good job done!"

QJ Madison has consolidated its Media and OOH divisions under you. This is a first. What are the synergies that you hope to achieve there?

For starters, I am just going to see which of our clients are not using our outdoor services, if there are any. And try to see if we can actually stitch them together. I will look for obvious synergies. In today's world, clients have to deal with more and more agency partners - two of the principal agency partners being creative agencies and media agencies. But there are digital agencies, often four-five other agencies - an analytics agency, an outdoor, activation or

PR agency, and so on. For a client, the entire day can go in one meeting after another and he wouldn't have made too much progress. I would love it if we could actually take some of these degrees of separation away from the client and stream it seamlessly for them. Traditional, OOH and Digital are already part of the offering - out of 360 degrees of marketing, if at least 240 degrees can be done seamlessly with one shop, I think we can add value to the client.

QJ You have always been keen on grooming talent. What are your plans now at Madison?

We need to put in some more aggressive HR practices. I have something in mind called a High Commitment Work System, which I learnt from my earlier organizations. I applied it even in my last organization. I guess I will take elements of that and see what is the new stuff I can learn from here, and make a hybrid of it all. HR will get dialled up talent rather than just conventional HR. The idea of Madison Next is to bring in younger leadership. I truly believe that our talent will come from our people. We need to unleash their talent.

QJ What are the challenges you see in

your new role?

I have always looked at a glass as half-full rather than as half-empty! What I am getting into is a highly entrepreneurial, highly client-driven and one of the strongest implementation-driven agencies. This is the fantastic legacy that Madison has. The opportunity that I have is to embrace this entire connected consumer piece to some extent. The entire divisional structure of Madison has helped it as the ownership and client orientation, implementation strength, entrepreneurship come from there. At times, matrix structures can get loose and I should know. There are also certain

For me, the challenge is going to be strengthening the central resources without losing the entrepreneurship of each division
VIKRAM SAKHUJA

advantages of having central resources and other areas of excellence that teams can draw on. For me, the challenge is going to be strengthening the central resources without losing the entrepreneurship of each division. In my earlier avatars, I have seen that when you sometimes make the centre very strong, the client interface areas sometimes abrogate responsibility and let the central guys come over and something gets diluted in the process. I love the fact that out here, the guys who are running the teams have got full control - planning, buying, implementation, ownership - if you speak to most clients, they will endorse what I am saying. However, there is still a role for a central repository or a central asset base, or a centre of excellence that needs to have cross-pollination. This time around, when I start doing that piece, I will do it without diluting the client interface.

QJ Is there anything that you would like to change at Madison just now?

I have a certain style of working and a certain process that I would like to bring in. I have a lot of thoughts, but I am in no hurry to talk about them now. Sam and I get opportunities to talk... we will talk and it will happen organically.

[Transcription credit: Srinan Sabberwal and Samapita Banerjee]

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'When Sam made me the offer, it took me exactly 10 minutes to decide'

Vikram Sakhuja, Partner & Group CEO, Madison Media and OOH, talks of the unique professional and personal relationship he has forged with Madison World chief Sam Balsara over the years

For me, the foundation of our partnership lies in the absolute, utmost respect I have for Sam. He was the one who taught me media. I was a rookie at P&G and we formed a partnership. Shamelessly, I can say I sponged off everything he said. Right from media planning and strategy and especially in deal-making and negotiations, as a student in your formative years, if you just sit and watch Sam in action, you can learn a lot. One amazing thing about Sam is his ability to connect at all levels in an organization. It is pretty inspiring. The fact that I can now partner him and together if there can be some complementary skills at play, we are a potent combination. When Sam made me the offer in March this year, it took me exactly 10 minutes to decide and another 24 hours to confirm, because I had to travel to New York to talk it over with my wife rather than discuss it over the phone.

Balsara: I have known Vikram for a very long time. Madison's media journey, in a way, started with Vikram as my client at P&G. He was again my client at Coke. Vikram went over to Star and then became a worthy competitor. Over the years, I have always admired Vikram. I have seen him as a true blue pedigreed professional who understands marketing, advertising and media in that order and I believe that is very important. Therefore, it wasn't very difficult for me to approach him. (Besides work, I share Vikram's love for good food, although maybe not in the same doses.)