

Behind the numbers

PEOPLE

BY CHRISTINE GATUIRIA 22 JAN 2013 3 min read

MediaCom North America's CFO Mark Piazza exercises left brain and right to achieve well-rounded financial management success.

When Mark Piazza is presented with financial data, he does not focus exclusively on the numbers. Instead, he looks for the story behind the numbers to paint a full picture before making any decision.

"People don't think a CFO needs a creative skill-set," Piazza remarked, noting that indeed his position calls for a great deal of imagination. One might even say MediaCom North America's CFO has discovered the holy grail of financial management: the ability to blend left-brain (analytical) and right-brain (intuitive) talents to ensure that budgets are spent on priorities and that dollars are matched with real key performance indicators.

A proud native New Yorker, Piazza grew up knowing he wanted to be a leader. "As a child, I loved competition," he said. "I enjoyed taking risks and the challenge associated with being told I couldn't do something." Early on in his career, Piazza set his sights on a CFO role; he systematically worked toward achieving his goal, taking on various financial management, strategic planning and operational positions in the CPG, retail, marketing and advertising sectors. He also worked as a general manager for two years, a role which exposed him to all aspects of business management and solidified his overall expertise.

When Piazza stepped into his current CFO role five years ago, it was a goal accomplished, paving the way for new ones, and a natural, mutual fit.

Piazza enjoys the various responsibilities that come with his job. "We [the Finance Group] are risk, procurement, financial and operational. No matter what you're talking about, all roads lead to finance," Piazza said. "That's why I love the role, it's so diverse."

Finance is at the centre of things in another way, too: in collaborating with clients and agency management to develop compensation models that give the agency some skin in the game. "I work with some of the most amazing and talented people in the industry on a daily basis," he said.

Piazza interacts with the executive leadership team often and also manages seven direct reports. He knows his co-workers well - personally due to his own easygoing style and professionally due to MediaCom's 360° Performance Review process. This intensive evaluation and multi-assessment procedure helps create an open, collaborative and respectful work environment.

"There's nowhere to hide and it's a humbling process," Piazza said, "but in the end you get honesty and balanced feedback."

Not that Piazza is the type of leader who waits to give or receive feedback. Being a CFO is a high-pressure job, and he relies on his team to get him answers "quicker, better, faster." So when it comes to managing his people, Piazza believes in praising staffers when they do well and giving them timely, constructive feedback when they run into obstacles.

Piazza puts the need to nurture strong relationships in a corporate environment simply: "I'm only as good as my people."

This article was first published in [Forefront Magazine](#), January 6, 2013.

PEOPLE