

January 23, 2010

Madmen Monk

My friend Dave, who is also a Planner at CP+B, recently began telling me stories about a monk that he had met. He was very impressed with this individual, their conversations and an energy that he seemed to exude which just pulled you in. Dave ran into him at a party in his town and was shocked to see how young children at the party were all drawn to him, too.

It's my understanding that Greg (yes, monks have names like Greg) is a Theravada Buddhist monk, although he is practiced in many other religions as well. It was also explained to me that he spent three years in silent retreat in Burma. Three years of silence struck me as the kind of discipline and dedication that is extremely unique and I found myself anxious to meet him. Oddly enough, it turns out that he was interested in coming to CP+B. He told me later that in

his years of meditation and silence he had found a mindful life that allowed for love and comfort and would have continued to provide more. But he eventually felt his path was to take what he had learned and bring it elsewhere. I'm paraphrasing a bit here but it explained why he found himself at an advertising agency.

When I first sat down to talk to Greg it was the middle of a typical fast-paced CP+B day. He was meeting with our quality of life people about teaching some Yoga classes but I just wanted to sit and talk. And I guess, to see what all the fuss was about. The first thing that struck me was that this man was very present and very much operating from a place of love. There was no ego. No wall. No judgement. And quick to smile. He found joy his joy in life in the very second we were occupying. The conversation was fun and eventually we started talking spiritually and I sort

of blurted out where I found myself stuck. He didn't say much, but what he said literally left me flat on my back staring up at the ceiling with a huge smile on my face. Greg may be the only Theravada Buddhist monk I have ever met but I'm going to say this guy is the real deal. Damn good monk action.

Greg and I eventually got around to talking about how he could help CP+B. It was my feeling that the Yoga would be good, but even better would be if more of the staff could just spend time talking with him. If the mindfulness of the whole organization increased wouldn't we work together better. If the mindfulness of the whole agency increased wouldn't our work carry that same mindfulness forward? I think so. I think I've experienced it before. Greg thought so, too.

I've changed around my working situation a bit and I don't work at CP+B anymore. I have the title of Founding Partner and an office, but that's just how

we have always rolled at CP+B. I don't get paid by CP+B and I don't have any day-to-day responsibility so it's not my call anymore if Greg the monk teaches mindfulness at CP+B. But a nontraditional corporate culture is still in the DNA so I'd be surprised if I didn't see him in the halls in the future.

Jim Mitchem said...

Great story Alex. Thanks for sharing.

Facebook User said...

A few years ago I asked the agency where I worked if they would pay for a wandering artist monk friend to be monk in residence for a few weeks- to just be available for chats and give feedback on projects we were working on. He was a great inspiration for me to set up our own network agency Imaginary Life. As our "honorary CEO" we post his travel letters on www.imaginarylife.net as Radio Shenyen. If you would like to invite him to visit your place, hold some sessions, or in the capacity of a potplant (his words) you can write to him via blog@imaginarylife.net.

Patrick Scullin said...

Get the monk on board. Give him a biz card. "monk" would be a nice title. Or simply "being".

Rachel Timmerman said...

Alex, I think having a Monk at CP+B (or any company for that matter) would be wonderful. I once thought that it might be a good idea to provide on-premise couples counseling for creative teams, but this would be even better.

jm22749 said...

Alex,

You and your agency have done exceptional work. No one questions that fact. Your ability to be written and talked about—no contest.

But as much as your philosophy/work seems to be positioned to stir controversy and get press, I would strongly encourage you to reconsider your decision to give yourself a title with Insurgent as part of it.

Whether you agree with the politics or not, American lives are being lost in several conflict areas in the world, many of them at the hands of real insurgents. It seems an uncharacteristically aloof choice of words for someone so in tune with the pulse of pop culture.

Like money, the lives lost are real. They are never just a number.

J. Michaelson

David Ross said...

How serendipitous that you should meet Greg as you start the next chapter in your life. Your future may change more than you ever imagined. Enjoy the new gig, Alex. enjoy the journey.

HengHuiLeng said...

What spiritual advice did Greg give you?

You don't have to say what your question was.