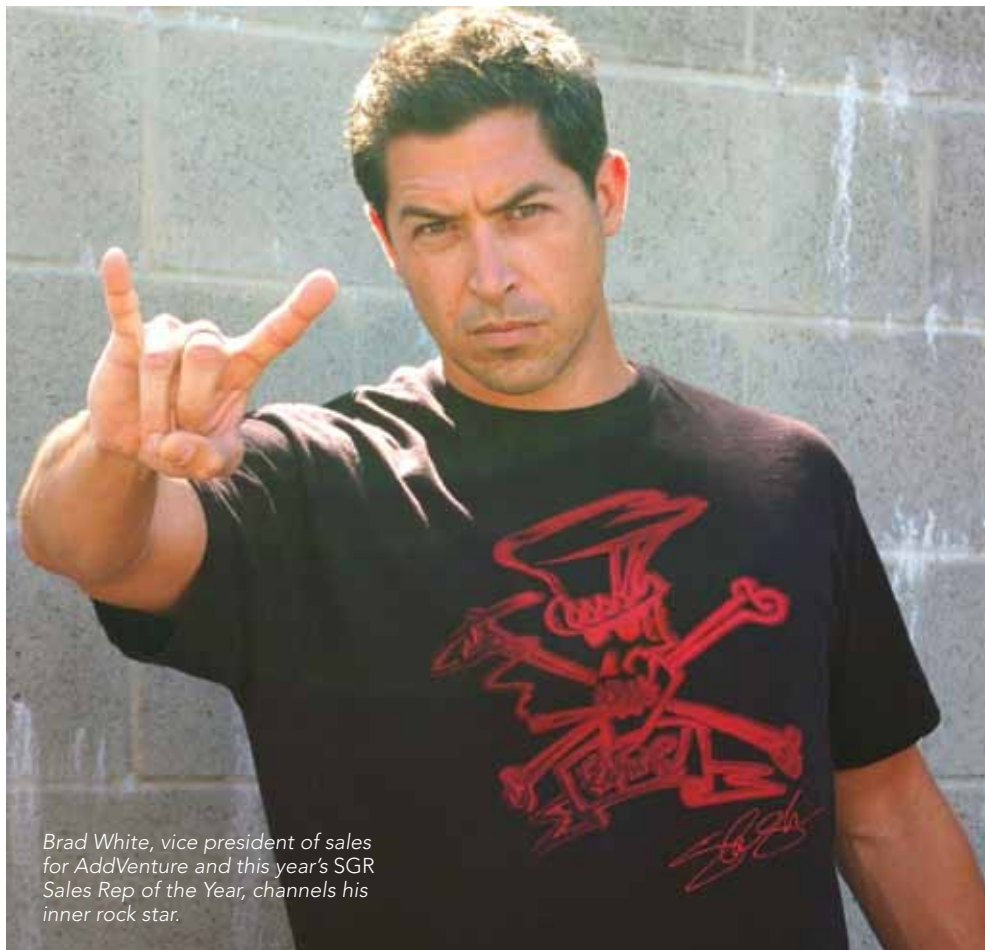


Brad White, AddVenture Products Inc.

Wildly creative, insanely plugged into online media and totally connected to his client base, Brad White was chosen by an overwhelming number of distributors as *SGR's* first-ever Supplier Sales Rep of the Year. Read on to find out why he inspires such devotion among his clients.

BY MICHELE BELL



Brad White, vice president of sales for AddVenture and this year's SGR Sales Rep of the Year, channels his inner rock star.

Famed gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson once said, "Crazies always recognize each other." Never has that be more true than in the case of Brad White – someone so professional and performance-driven, yet authentically off-the-wall and unconventional, his clients gravitate to him, and believe him to be the one thing every salesperson aspires to be: *indispensable*.

What's abundantly clear, due to the sheer volume of distributor feedback he garnered to be named *SGR's* Supplier Sales Rep of the Year, is that he's prodigiously creative and unfailingly accessible to each of his many clients.

"I always feel like he's more committed to me than just making the next sale," says Sarah Clasen, principal of Beaverton, OR-based distributor Kinetic Group (*asi/242452*). "He's the person I reach out to when I'm having a bad day and he always takes the time to talk to me – he exudes such positive energy, he could be a motivational speaker."

Right-Hand Man

"I don't sell to you; I sell with you' – that's my motto to my clients," says White. "What I want to know is, what's my client

all about? Who are their clients? And what are their goals? If I can understand and analyze the goals and needs of my clients' clients I can come up with the right promotion. You can't be afraid to take some risks. Some things are going to work and some things aren't, but you keep trying. I always think of Ray Kroc – he founded McDonalds when he was 52 years old."

Innately cool, instinctively innovative and impossibly high-energy, White, the vice president of sales for AddVenture – the five-star ESP-rated, San Diego, CA-based supplier company that prints and compresses T-shirts – has been in the industry for 13 years, and with the company for the duration. AddVenture's top salesperson every year, never doing less than \$1 million in sales, he also oversees a sales team of 10 and personally handles national accounts.

"Brad is creative and knows how to help me drum up business," says Josh Ebrahemi, a partner at Culver City, CA-based *Counselor* Top 40 distributor Jack Nadel Int'l (*asi/279600*) and one of its consistent top sellers. "He's a relationship man, as I am, and I can call him and tell him what I need and he takes it from there. He'll send me amazing virtual samples in just hours, get me new ideas and work within my budget. He's basically the perfect vendor."

White typically puts in an 11-hour day, which consists of some

social media, “just to get some kind of a buzz going” and then he looks at what orders are in the pipeline. “I spend a lot of time on order management – trying to close deals – and I make calls for two hours, doing major outreach to my clients, keeping in touch with everyone,” he says.

An avid user of social media like Facebook and Twitter, White started his own blog, www.whitethreads.com, in May of this year and it already gets 5,000 hits per month, much to his astonishment. Recently, he’s begun making funny, tongue-in-cheek, yet keenly informative videos on YouTube. In short, White is one savvy social networker and self-promoter.

“When you first start in social media you assume that no one will care – I know I did,” White admits. “I was like, OK, I’m going to write this blog about T-shirts and branding and culture and marketing and sales but maybe no one’s going to read it, and maybe even if they did, they wouldn’t see me as a resource. Tens of thousands of views later, I was wrong.” Has it paid off? In spades.

“Brad is the king of social media, YouTube and blogging,” says Tonia Allen Gould, president/CEO of Camarillo, CA-based distributor Tag! The Creative Source (*asi/341358*). “He found me on Twitter, contacted me and asked for a chance. From that moment on, he has formulated and follows an ongoing synergic plan to develop a long-term partnership with my company. When I ask for something, I can consider it done. Truly, after 15 years in the business, it takes an awful lot to impress me. There

order second,” White is quick to point out. “Orders come and go, but relationships last.”

Brice Dick, owner of BrandAid, a division of Neenah, WI-based *Counselor* Top 40 distributor Adventures in Advertising (*asi/109480*), knows that firsthand. “There’s no other rep I communicate with to brainstorm ideas the way I can with Brad, who’s always there to do a virtual sample of a client’s artwork and everything in between,” Dick says. “He’s also a great social networker, and goes the extra mile and then some – all supplier reps should take a lesson from Brad when it comes to building a strong supplier-to-client relationship. They say you only get two of the three services in business: service, price or quality. With Brad you get all three and some great ideas to boot – he does it all.”

White self-deprecatingly maintains that his biggest strength is realizing he doesn’t know everything and constantly seeking advice from people “smarter and better” than him. “There’s a lot of them,” he says, laughing.

But Kori Carr, account executive for Costa Mesa, CA-based distributor Clean Fun Promotional Marketing (*asi/162979*), is unwavering in her support of White. “Besides always coming up with great ideas to present to my clients, Brad taught me how to network more effectively, opening up new avenues of selling to help increase my business,” she says. “His willingness to do whatever it takes to close a deal is a breath of fresh air.”

And White’s gold-standard advice for other supplier reps?

“Brad taught me how to network more effectively, opening up new avenues of selling to help increase my business.”

KORI CARR, CLEAN FUN PROMOTIONAL MARKETING (*ASI/162979*)

isn’t a single other supplier professional, working in sales, who impresses me more than Brad.”

White estimates that he spends about an hour a day on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, and that it takes him about three hours to write his weekly blog. “People are over-thinking social media,” he insists. Websites are your online presence – they’re a hub for your clients and they’re a big digital billboard. Social media is that big digital billboard, but it includes your culture, your network, continual real-time updates and it’s free – and everyone can participate.”

At 37 years old, White’s in the middle generation – not totally dependent on technology like a tween but not hesitant to use it like some baby boomers – so he’s comfortable both networking online and hitting the pavement to make sales calls in person. “I want to bring standard business practices and social connectivity into the way I operate,” White says. “I make a lot of phone calls but I also reach out to a lot of people on social networks. I don’t think you can have a ton of success doing any one thing.”

The Swiss Army Knife of Sales

“My big strength is that I focus on the relationship first and the

Diversify your account base, and do it now. “If you rely on only a few customers you’re in a lot of trouble on a lot of levels, because you have to do everything they tell you to do, even when it’s not in your best interest to save the relationship,” he says. “And if something happens to that person or that department or that company, you’re left with nothing. I think a lot of folks in our industry in the last couple of years were doing real well because they were taking orders from their big, big client. And when their big client stopped taking orders, they didn’t know how to go cold-calling. They didn’t know how to drum up business. They didn’t know how to be creative.”

And how does he plan on keeping up the momentum of his sales success? “*Kaizen*,” he says, cryptically. “It’s a Japanese term for ‘continuous improvement.’ That concept keeps me moving forward, keeps me learning more, keeps me finding new challenges. That mindset pushes me to achieve more and makes me content with the journey – because the journey never ends.”

See an exclusive interview with Brad White, where he discusses his sales strategy.



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