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Selling ice to the Eskimos has its rewards

Jul, 2010



An interesting competition, an idea and a spare 10 minutes combined to provide one MBS student with the opportunity to experience the glitz and glamour of T.V.—from inside the production machine.

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MBA part-time student Alistair Lloyd was one of more than 100 people to enter radio 774 ABC's June 2010 'pitch' competition, run to coincide with the third season return of ABC TV's popular *The Gruen Transfer*. To his surprise, he won.

Launched in 2008, *The Gruen Transfer* has become a Wednesday night staple for those interested in the world of advertising. The informative and fun program has made stars of industry insiders who sit each week on a panel dissecting the world of advertising.

One of the most popular segments is 'The Pitch' where leading advertising agencies compete in tongue-in-cheek challenges to sell the unsellable. Past bouts have involved pitching ideas to promote invading New Zealand and to help save the blobfish (a rather unattractive endangered species). It's all in good fun and serves to highlight the thought and creativity that goes into producing the commercials we see every day.

Tapping into that sense of fun, 774 ABC radio asked listeners to 'pitch' a campaign to sell ice to Eskimos. Alistair's idea was to put himself in the shoes of an ex-pat Eskimo. He set aside 10 minutes, wrote up his idea and sent it off. In Sydney, members of the *Gruen* team selected his pitch from 10 shortlisted ideas.

"I put on my thinking hat and thought well, if you're an expat of any sort living away from home then what do you want? You want your vegemite or your Jimmy Barnes album...you might want a certain mustard or maple syrup that you use," says Alistair.

"If you're an Eskimo and you're away from home, you want the comforts of home, and that's what I painted in a 100 words or less. You wouldn't want to just go shopping; you'd want to go ice fishing. You wouldn't want to take the dog for a walk; you'd want to go sledding. If you had a choice between a warm shower and an ice bath well..." he trails off with a wave of his hand.

Alistair's prize included a trip to Sydney to attend the taping of the *Gruen* season premiere.

Granted backstage access, he mingled with the crew and panellists Wil Anderson, Russell Howcroft, Todd Sampson and Dee Madigan. He also had the chance to chat to *Gruen* producer and TV legend Andrew Denton about the importance of working with an engaged, motivated and energetic team.

"I ended up having a real good chat with Andrew Denton at the end of the night—just about aspects of management really," says Alistair.

When he's not winning national competitions Alistair is the Manager of Enterprise Architecture for National Foods, a role which he describes as "a relatively new function in IT that looks after aspects of technology, strategy, planning, risk and governance and anything new, unusual or different."

The MBA will provide the capstone to Alistair's carefully considered career plan. "The first ten years of my career was about what I could do...the next ten years of my career was about what I knew...the next period is about how I lead," he says, describing his career progression.

Alistair's MBS study will help him navigate this next phase of his career by "expanding what I know, getting book learning legitimacy to what I've picked up through my career... and (by) allowing me to talk to my business peers in the right language."

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For those wondering, Alistair's quick to point out that his recent creative experience and national success hasn't tempted him to switch to a career in advertising. In fact, the experience has highlighted the inherent creativity in his current role.

"What I like about that type of work (advertising) is that you're fulfilling needs. It's very applicable to any profession. I'm an IT professional and a lot of our job is finding out the needs of our business.

"I'm fortunate in my role at the moment that I've got a lot of time to be professionally creative," he says.

This term Alistair is again testing his creative mettle as he completes his core MBA Marketing subject. Given his *Gruen* credentials, it's a safe bet that he'll prove a popular syndicate group member.

[Read Alistair's pitch](#)

Picture: Alistair (centre) on the Gruen set with members of the Gruen panel