



# Andrew Schirmer

## From Art Director to Agency Leader, Schirmer Finds His Way to Hall of Fame

*In a distinguished advertising career that spans almost a quarter century – beginning as a freelance art director and moving to account management and agency chief – Andrew Schirmer has established a record of success in health care marketing and has earned a place in the DTC Hall of Fame.*



By DTC Perspectives staff

**H**ealth care is not like any other consumer product or service. And marketing in health care – if that is even the appropriate term to describe this unique discipline – requires a different mindset and outlook. At least, this is the view of many health care marketers, and especially those who are the most successful in the profession.

Count ad man extraordinaire Andrew Schirmer, executive vice president and managing director of McCann HumanCare, among the group of highly successful health care marketers who takes a different view of his chosen field. Schirmer, who worked on one of the early DTC brands – the Parke-Davis Alzheimer's treatment Cognex – has a 24-year health care advertising career and he has been involved with many of the leading pharma companies' most successful consumer campaigns. This year, he received one of the industry's highest honors, a place in the DTC Hall of Fame.

"While most of the marketing world revolves around enticing you to *want* things, our industry has always been about helping you to understand medicines and other therapies that you actually *need*," Schirmer noted. "I continue to feel very good about the role we play in helping people live better, healthier lives. And in a society that seems to have been

damaged greatly by the 'I want' culture, it is rather fulfilling and gratifying to earn a living in the 'you need' world of DTC health care communications."

Schirmer, who was on a pitch in Europe in late November and was not able to attend the Hall of Fame event, has spearheaded the launch of the consumer health care practice at McCann Erickson. He has a wide variety of OTC, Rx and "wellness" marketing experience and has worked on major accounts for Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, Boehringer Ingelheim and Sepracor (he was an integral part of award-winning campaigns for Lipitor, Prevacid, Lunesta, Viagra, Avodart, Zantac, and Reclast.)

### 'Thick as thieves' with a colleague

In his absence at the DTC Hall of Fame event, Schirmer asked former colleague (and fellow DTC Hall of Famer) Matt Giegerich to handle his "introduction" and read his remarks. Giegerich, chief executive of Ogilvy CommonHealth Worldwide, recounted his early days in the advertising business with Schirmer as a colleague and friend.

"I have had the honor of knowing Andrew as a friend, really for 21 years. We started together in the agency business," Giegerich noted. "He was originally a freelance art director and I was an account guy. We were, for a long period of time, thick as

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MINNIE BAYLOR-HENRY, *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38*

company disagreed. However, at the end of the meeting, Hoechst presented a suggested pathway for companies to broadcast full-product ads on TV. The suggested pathway very much resembled the [subsequent] draft Guidance that FDA eventually issued. So, for all of you who believe that you cannot make recommendations and truly make a difference with the regulators, I am here to tell you that you can offer useful suggestions – Hoechst did and it changed the face of advertising,” she said emphatically.

As much as the DTC environment has evolved over the past 13 years, it’s now on the brink, possibly, of making another major change to how pharma companies communicate with patients as the agency prepares to issue a draft Guidance on social media. The FDA is faced with “considering the history of DTC and whether industry abused the trust that FDA bestowed in issuing the [broadcast] guidance,” Baylor-Henry noted at the Hall of

Fame reception. “Many will say that the industry has acted irresponsibly,” she added, noting that a critical date in the evolution of broadcast DTC occurred during the broadcast of the Super Bowl in 2004 when drugs for treating erectile dysfunction were advertised to a huge audience of television viewers, including many youngsters. “This may have been a tipping point,” she said. “It is important that industry work collectively to restore the trust with regulators and the American public.”

However, she added, she still believes strongly in the positive aspects of DTC consumer advertising and patient communication. “I believe today, as I did in 1997, that empowering consumers is important to effective healthcare,” she said. “Further, I believe that industry continues to be the best source for truthful information, but such must be offered in a responsible manner that is consistent with the law.”

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ANDREW SCHIRMER, *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40*

thieves. [We were] married without kids, living in the same condo development, working in the advertising industry and kind of paving both of our ways, first together and then separately.... It really is appropriate and right that he is recognized here today because he – along with many of you in the room and others who have been recognized in the past on this podium – really is one of the founding fathers in innovation and consumer health care marketing.”

Giegerich continued, “[Schirmer] is one of the quickest wits and one of the smartest guys you can put in a room. I love him as a friend; I hate him as a competitor. Trying to be appropriate tonight, I will gladly encourage anyone who tonight is looking for a great agency run by a great leader that you should really get in touch with Andrew. Tomorrow call me.”

**A great line of work**

In addition to his record as an agency leader, Schirmer also has a keen eye for trend-spotting. And he believes that the DTC sector is quickly approaching a critical point in its evolution. “We are at an inflection point in consumer advertising and communications,” he told *DTC Perspectives*. “While

the whole model of how you engage consumers with brands and companies is evolving, there are certain truths to the health care category that not only still apply, but are more important now than ever.” Among these truths will always be the foundation that the “business” is built upon: helping people to live happier and healthier lives.

In his remarks prepared for the Hall of Fame reception Schirmer also noted, that he continues to work in health care – and to take last-minute trips to Europe for important pitches – because he truly loves the work. “Those of us who have been doing this for a while, still love it; love it because we believe in what we are doing,” he explained. “We believe passionately that we can help people live healthier lives; we believe in the confluence of art and science that defines our craft and we understand that the consumer insight we mine in health-care takes us to deeper places of human truth than any other category. Quite simply, it is a great line of work, and I am a true believer in the value we create for our clients and their brands.”