



Season 6: International Marketing and Brand Management Episode 4

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[Music]

Stacie Berdan:

Welcome to the global careers podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER – THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you've considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host!

In Season 6, we focus on the challenges and opportunities in global careers in marketing, communications, and brand management. What are the rising trends and skills employers in the field are seeking in new hires? Join us as we hear from award-winning international marketing professionals as they share their stories working on some of the most iconic brands around the world. Today's guest, Claudia Gioia, is a seasoned global communications professional who has spent decades working across Latin America, while racking up numerous awards in the industry. Her latest ventures – Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Perceptual Advisors, a full-stack marketing and communications firm focused on founders, funders, entrepreneurs, and disruptors. Previously, she held many senior leadership positions in Latin America, Hill & Knowlton, LLYC, Burson-Marsteller, which is currently BCW. Claudia has worked on some of the world's most iconic brands, including Unilever, Accenture, Nestle, Ford, Intel, AT&T, Facebook, and the list goes on. She is a powerhouse in the marketing and communications industry, having been named to the global top 100 Most Influential People by *PR Week*, and she won the iconic Gold Stevie Award for the Best Executive of the Year in Latin America. She's amazing, and I'm very proud to call her friend and colleague. Welcome Claudia, it's wonderful to have you with us.

Claudia Gioia:

Thanks for having me, Stacie.

Stacie Berdan:

One of the objectives of this podcast is to provide a sense of the careers that are out there – more than just titles. What do you do?

Claudia Gioia:

What I do is a version of what I've done all my life as marketer and communicator but now for startups. My day to day is... my job is threefold. I do client service, which includes strategy and execution. I do business development, which is a fancy way of saying sales. And I do operations, which is like helping the machine work faster and better.

Stacie Berdan:

Okay. And you have had such a successful career as a consultant in international PR, communications, marketing... What changes have you witnessed in the industry, particularly in the last three, four or five years?



Claudia Gioia:

Yeah, the marketing and communications industry has shifted dramatically in the past two years as you've gotten new technologies and strategies that have reshaped how companies and brands communicate with their target audiences. Most of these changes in the past few years were driven mostly by technology and data. And when we talk about technology and data, of course, the main character of this story is artificial intelligence. Of course, we've got machine learning virtual reality, augmented reality, but AI has been around for quite some time. And it has really made it easier for marketers to reach out multiple target segments at once with very personalized messages in order to catch their attention faster than ever before. Number one is new technologies. Number two is location-based targeting. We're now familiarized with Waze and Google Maps...but the thing is that, in marketing terms, those technologies have allowed companies / brands to get in contact not only with the demographics that they are interested in, but to do it with such precision that they can hit their desires (what we call the KPIs – the key performance indicators) way faster that they were able to do it before, I would say like seven years ago. The other is like the use of chatbots and voice search. Perhaps the companies that had... that were more sophisticated, had a chat bot, and people were reluctant to use it. And now, those chatbots have learned how to respond. And AI-powered Voice Search has also expanded the opportunities for not only consumers to search but also for companies to avoid spending long wait times in order for people to speak with agents over the phone or worse, right, like still sending emails, waiting days to get a resolution. I remember, like in this last Superbowl that ad from Bud Light with a couple dancing while waiting to be attended on the phone. In my opinion it was excellent, if you haven't seen it, look for it, it really speaks to how technology in that case needs to improve. In terms of voice search we have... because now all these are part of our day-to-day life, right, but it, it was not so long ago that they launched Alexa, the Google Assistant, the Cortana, we knew about Siri. I would say the other one, the other big bucket has to do with data driven insights and analytics. They can help marketers understand better consumer behavior patterns in detail. And they allow marketers to test out different products and different services without a lot of investment. So, and I think this is a perfect segway to the second part of your question. What's in the future, right? I've started answering by speaking about AI, and AI is exactly the conversation that we're having towards the future. We're having today and also in the future. It's going to be everything that's going to be colored, in a way, by AI. It's more that now, let's say generative AI, which is like the famous ChatGPT that, you know, in terms of marketing, it has touched so many disciplines within the marketing itself, because for advertising – its programmatic advertising, for public relations – it's the way of not only creating lists of reporters and on a specific topic, or analyzing the media coverage and the tone, but now, it was recently launched, you can also create a pitch, which is like the third part of media relations activity, that takes a lot of time, using AI. At the end of the day, everything is fantastic. But the human element is critical for everything to work well. So, marketers, let's say, they have seen their job enhanced by technology and the way to be more efficient. But at the same time the human element is so important and or as important as what technology brings to the table.

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely. So building on that, the human element, our listeners who are actually interested in jobs like these, clearly they need to know or be able to get up to speed pretty quickly on all that tech and all of that you describe, that just kind of blows my mind, and how it has changed the industry. But what kind of skills does the human element bring that are still necessary for people looking to get into the industry?

Claudia Gioia:

The three main skills, and it's not only for marketers and communications, but it's solid strategic thinking, impeccable communication skills, and a thorough understanding of analytics. Because by understanding analytics, they will be able to process a lot of the data that is generated and a lot of the insights that they will use, while they are preparing their strategy and the planning and also the execution. If we take a look at how the marketing teams are organized on a global level, they are organized generally following a market / around the market, whether it's a geography, whether it is market that is mature, or there are products, right? If there is like, for instance, I don't know, a hair line or a skin line. But at the end of the day, if you are working in different countries, or if you're just



working in your home country, in order to get what you are looking for in the collaboration space, and in order to get your job done, you need to work with others. And for that you need communication skills. By the way, these are the three skills that are also critical for CEOs. We have some companies who had CEOs that came from marketing like for instance, Pepsi or Ford, and it's really mind blowing. As you've said, when you see the trajectory of these executives, marketing is the one that holds the budget. And that's important to know – where's the money, that's the power within the company.

Stacie Berdan:

So true, so true. And working with so many of these, whether they're CEOs or CMOs, and all the brands that you've worked with, it's just incredible to me... Building relationships is clearly one of your key skills and seems to be part of Perceptual Advisors. You've founded this new organization, it's a global network of professionals – how do you successfully build relationships and collaborate with colleagues and clients around the world, maybe people you've never met, or maybe only have met once... how does that work?

Claudia Gioia:

There are a couple of things. One has to do with building relationships over time, and having also a good reputation as a professional and as a person. That's one thing. How we do it with Perceptual? Well, we were all alumni of the same firm back in the days – Burson-Marsteller. And we reconnected. And so it was sort of simple to begin to build the network. And one person brings another one, but there is this element of trust. So when you're thinking about building a career, it's very important to build relationships, not only just by linking them on LinkedIn, but just more most importantly, like building that relationship. And it's critical, I would say, that you not only connect and disconnect. So over time, what we generally do is like, instead of having –this is like falling into tactics – instead of having like one long weekly meeting, we have at least two or three 20 minutes meetings, and we use also Slack or WhatsApp, and text, and email, in a way to have at least one touch every day, let's say this is with our partners, with our strategic advisors, with our clients, of course. And lastly, I would say that the more you can use video, it's the better. I get used to working remotely, because I worked with technology companies, and they were the first ones to use remote working, they had a lot of remote working physicians and people were used to that. But I think that video creates a connection that's sort of close to that person.

Stacie Berdan:

I mean...and the trust... you're right, I mean, as an alum from that prestigious firm, I myself I know, I mean, you know you can trust and believe in somebody that you worked with years ago with that, because you just know the caliber. So, I love that. I love that, it's great. Trust, speaking of trust, I mean, the rise of ESG and DEI, how has that affected the role of the marketer and communications professional, particularly on a global scale?

Claudia Gioia:

On a global scale, I would say a decade ago, marketing and communications were the ones that had to put out sort of some communications about that, whether it was in tandem with HR or with Operations, but in a way it was, okay, marketing and communications will issue a report. With time, fortunately, companies had to transform and build departments and work on serious global initiatives and be part of those. The consumers and the public opinion demanded that. So, fortunately, both ESG and DEI are two big disciplines in global companies, that they have their own experts. And marketing and communications, what they do is help them communicate because these two disciplines, they need not only to work well with the consumers, or potential consumers or external stakeholders, but also with employees. Employees value these programs, whatever format it takes in a company, but they value it even more than it was in the past. And companies need to retain their good people, attract and retain good talent.



Stacie Berdan:

That is so true. Thinking about... I'm going to take a step back because this podcast is for global careers, people interested in global careers, GW is based in DC, and there are a lot of international students as well as American students studying there... You are from Argentina, and you have now lived and worked in the US for many years. Can you talk about that? What is it like to actually be Argentinian working in the US? How have you had to adapt? What kinds of things have you encountered that would help our listeners that could maybe be a parallel application to going and living and working in another country?

Claudia Gioia:

I was lucky to start my expat life from Argentina to the US, coming to the US. Because I... My first door, and the place where I lived most of my time here in the US is Miami. Miami is a mosaic of cultures. And I come from a Hispanic country into a city that today speaks more Spanish than English. So I would say that in terms of culture and values, there was not a lot of change there, that was more or less the same. However, I think that in terms of the relationship with peers and clients in the US, I would say the biggest challenge was not necessarily the business communications aspect, but more of the interpersonal communications. And learning that and learning about like the sports, or learning about the culture of the country while you... when you're living where you're living, it's important because you want to connect with everyone. So I think that's one thing. What I've seen lately, because Argentina won the World Soccer Cup, is that because we were winners, our brand, at least in Miami, our country brand, at least in Miami was sort of cool, or cooler. And we were welcomed in many places, that perhaps in the past was just like not much. People were not much interested. I think that one of the components as a professional that is interested in building his or hers... their careers abroad, is creating your own brand that has to do with your origin. It's like not necessarily denying your origin, but make it more present in a good way. So people connect with you, but at the same time you have differentiators. In order to communicate well, you need to listen, and you need to connect with people. And in order to connect with people, you definitely need to show more of you. So I would say that was a great, great learning.

Stacie Berdan:

That's great, wonderful. And I'm a huge Messi fan, by the way! What advice would you give to women who are seeking out global careers?

Claudia Gioia:

That they don't give up! That they need to keep pushing. Fortunately, in some cases today, business women are accepted in almost all cultures. That was not the case long ago. So the other thing is that you need to be mindful of your evolution as a person in terms of your family... It's easier if you go alone. If you're moving with your family, think about the kids. Today, fortunately, it's all possible. But planning in advance for that move, if you have family, is way better. In terms of the relationship? Well, you need to figure out how that culture in that country works. For instance, one of the different things that I had when I arrived to the US is that in Latin America, most business connections are created through relationships. And in order to work on a project together, you have to build that relationship, while in the US it's more transactional. In Latin America, you don't need to be like an expert, everyone like emerging markets require that you are sort of like a four-by-four, so you can be more like a generalist. And in the US, there is more sort of a demand, an implicit demand that you are like an expert, you have an in-depth content and knowledge. And also that is way more, again, more transactional. And I think that those are the things that you need to be mindful – culture, family, and keep on going.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, don't give up. I love it. And, and yeah, you can do it. You can do it. It is possible. It's got its challenges, but it's possible. I love it. That is great. What's a piece of advice that you would give listeners who are interested in pursuing a career in marketing and communications in the Latin American region?



Claudia Gioia:

Well, Latin America has very good, very good colleges, that are in Argentina, Brazil (if you speak Portuguese), Chile, and Mexico... you can find very fine schools. The other thing is that most of these schools are free. So that's the other good thing, depending on what you're going to study, of course, but there are plenty of options of free schools. The other thing is that the best way if you have the opportunity to work locally, take a job that will allow you to connect better and faster with the local culture. But definitely... and also, you can do both things – you can build your career by working abroad in your field and studying, because that's actually a great combo.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that is a great combo. So many people go to Europe to do graduate programs or what have you. But excellent piece of advice. Why not do it there and work at the same time? That is brilliant. Well, now that you've given brilliant advice to our listeners, is there something that you'd like to go back in time and tell yourself, your younger self?

Claudia Gioia:

Yes. And going back to relationships, I would say that I would have loved to have a mentor, that would have pushed me to build more relationships that I would have taken care of over time. These relationships are almost forever, and you need to nurture them, and you need to take care of them. And sometimes, perhaps especially women, I don't know, but sometimes we put forward, okay that to do... And one of the first to-do things is build and nurture those relationships, because those are the ones that will help you go forward in your career and in life.

Stacie Berdan:

So true, and it's so much fun to make friends, right, and to build your network and to stay in touch.

Claudia Gioia:

Yes, yeah. Yeah, it is. And I think that, yeah, and you need fun... It is so important. Yes. Yeah. Fun should be part of like, as we have time to do trainings, or webinars... we should, we should also allow time to have fun. And it's not so complicated, but it's important to have fun along the way.

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely. Absolutely. And those relationships oftentimes make that happen. So, this has been a fantastic conversation, Claudia, I really, really appreciate your taking the time, as I know you're super busy. But I want to ask you one more thing. Is there anything else, actually just kind of broadly, throw it out there, that you'd like to add? Maybe something I didn't ask or something you'd like to touch on to make sure our listeners hear from you?

Claudia Gioia:

Well, first of all, thanks for having me Stacie. But what I would say is like, build relationships. If you can go and study abroad, build your career abroad, you will be able to leapfrog your career in unimaginable ways. And, as we just said, have fun...

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely. That is wonderful. Thank you. You're very welcome – for having you. But it's actually... our thanks to you for actually taking the time and just share your wisdom. And I can't wait to catch up again and see you soon.

Claudia Gioia:

Thank you.



Stacie Berdan:
Great. Thanks, Claudia.

[Music]

Stacie Berdan:
You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!