

All About Adding Value

An Interview with Bill Georges,
Executive Vice President, Sales, Active International



Bill Georges

EDITORS' NOTE *Bill Georges has more than 17 years of marketing, advertising, and sales leadership experience. Prior to joining Active in 2007, Georges was Senior Vice President, Advertising and Affiliate Sales, for Comcast Networks, including E!, Style, the Golf Channel, G4, AZN TV, and Sprout, where he maximized new revenue streams through new digital platforms and unique, integrated marketing programs. Earlier in his career, Bill Georges played competitive tennis, competing at the U.S. Open and playing on the ATP Tennis Tour. After a sports-related injury, Georges turned his full attention to the business world. As Vice President of Sales and Sponsorships, he developed and sold integrated television, print, and radio sponsorships for the ATP tour, increasing revenues and enhancing the event's image.*

This is a time of economic challenge for many industries. Are there strong opportunities for growth for Active?

Being a global company helps us greatly. Looking at the world as a whole, one local market might be experiencing a downturn, while others might be very strong. That allows us to service all of our clients' multiple needs. What's currently going on with the U.S. economy is the perfect storm for us. We bring value to companies, because we're able to partner with them and help them not only stretch their dollars, but also address their underperforming assets. In short, we can help them improve their results.

Is it feasible for Active to have consistent messaging and a consistent range of services globally?

It comes down to client needs. While we offer the same level of quality and service around the world, local markets are unique. Overall, we are well positioned to provide our global clients with a seamless and efficient experience when they work with us.

How broad is your target market? Does it cross all industries?

We can help in all vertical markets. What really matters is how our clients' expense lines match up with the way we retire trade credits. We can help anyone who has robust marketing plans and anyone who's doing a fair amount of freight or travel. We ask ourselves if there's a way for us to retire the trade credits at an aggressive enough rate for it to make sense for all of us to work together.

Has the value that Active can add to the bottom line been well understood?

The marketplace understands the value of doing barter, but that's rather different from understanding the benefits of having Active as a partner. That is something that is not as well understood.

Real estate is a big arena for you. How is that a natural fit for Active's services?

It's another asset class. Whether you have an underperforming real estate asset or you have an underperforming widget, we're going to return value to you in a way that's going to be beneficial.

Active recently purchased a freight logistics company. How will that be important to the way you're serving clients?

It enables us to offer clients another way of retiring trade credits. That's what we're all about – giving value for those trade credits. This move into freight logistics allows us to get into another large expenditure area. We'll continue to expand Active in similar ways. So it's not just about media; it's also about travel, and now freight.

Can you truly customize the value you add for each client?

Yes. We can meet the exact needs of each client. This is one of the greatest differentiators between Active and other companies offering corporate trade. With those other companies, a lot of times clients are asked to change what they are doing in order to get value. We work with exactly what clients have, and give them a

rate of return that allows them to redeem much more than they would otherwise be able to for those languishing assets.

On the media side, many might not realize the size and scale of what Active does. How large a part of your business does media represent? Are you competing with the big media agencies?

We are not competing with them; we are an added resource. When we get involved with a client who is already working with an agency, that agency is very involved in planning and evaluating the value of the media. The reality is that we work with our clients and their agencies to place the media in accordance with the plans they've developed. The difference is that through our unique business model, we create cost-advantaged capacities relative to the marketplace through trading, which are utilized by our clients who realize an economic benefit. In the end, we are delivering the same media that our clients would purchase through their agency; they're just paying for it in a different way and with less cash.

How large a part of the business is the travel sector, and have you seen growth within it?

While travel doesn't represent a huge portion of our business, I foresee it growing, because it's very important for clients who don't have much media or are looking for other ways to use their trade credits to reduce costs in other parts of their business. In the short-term, as our clients evaluate doing large hospitality-type events in this kind of economy, I expect that side of our business to grow more cautiously.

What made you feel the opportunity to join Active was right for you? And, looking back, has it been what you expected?

Absolutely, it has been what I expected and more. It was an opportunity to be involved with a company that's the best in the world at what it does. I believed that the economy was going to align with us in a way that would give us exponential growth over the next few years, and I couldn't be more excited about the opportunity. I should add that we're not a company that you can only partner with when things are dire. Even if you don't have underperforming assets, there are ways of tapping into our expertise that don't really cost you; they will actually save you. If you can gain extra resources and spend less, why wouldn't you do that? ●