

In person

## MASTER PLAN

*A penchant for numbers and passion for her work allow JASMIN SOHRABJI, President, MediaCom, to be a frontrunner in the media planning industry*

>> SAVIA RAJAGOPAL

With a background in Economics, how did you get involved with media planning? When I did my post-graduation in Economics, I was looking at getting into research or banking. I really didn't know about advertising and knew even less about media planning! I was told that if you're good with

numbers, you could try getting into it. Because advertising was a glamorous profession in those days, I thought, why not give it a shot? My resume seemed to match a media planner's profile and I literally took the first job I was offered. I entered the business by accident!

### **Has practical learning taken precedence in your career?**

The practical aspect is always more valuable. However, a background does help as it gives one an understanding of the job. But I do hire newcomers and train them, as long as they are passionate and take the initiative.

### **Did you face any problems entering this field because of the general notion that women are bad with numbers?**

In fact, being a woman was the easiest entry point! Every media enterprise and agency head, by and large, was a woman. Oddly enough, we began as an industry with 70-80 per cent women in the field. But today, the ratios have completely reversed. Probably the industry didn't attract too many men back then, because it was looked at as a backend, low-paying job.

### **You've been involved in a lot of ground-breaking research. What about it appeals to you most?**

The campaigns are functions of a team, but my contribution has been much more in the research area. Seeing the team use those inputs in campaigns makes me happy. I'm particularly proud of two pieces of media research — one of them involved understanding the media habits of light television viewers. The other research revolved around the television viewing habits of people with a second television set, especially in North India where most households have two or more televisions. That was pathbreaking.

### **You've had stints in the US and Asia. Does the industry operate differently?**

I was based in Indonesia and was the Regional Media Director for nine countries in Asia, including Australia. US has access to much more research and therefore is more dependent on it, whereas we know how to use a lot of gut because we've grown up with very little research.

### **What's your favourite medium when it comes to media planning?**

Television still has the highest reach and it is cost effective as well. We are looking at 'communicating' more. The creative idea can be through a 30-second spot, or it could be totally innovative like the yellow cab campaign that took us to the finals at Cannes.

## FILE-O-FACTS

**Loves...** Shopping, "I'm a shopaholic!" she confesses **Success mantra...** "Stay with a job where you're constantly learning. The day you feel your contribution is higher than what you're getting out of it, you should move on."

