

Masters of influence:

John Sintras

John Sintras was around for the formation of Starcom MediaVest, the rise and rise of Mars and a swag of global awards. The key, he says, is attitude.

Influence has more to do with having the right attitude than the right job title. That's what John Sintras reckons, and he should know.

The chairman of Starcom MediaVest Group (SMG) Australia and director of the media network's Global Experience Product has ticked off a long list of achievements that have influenced the success of his employer, the bottom line of his clients and the betterment of the community at large through his charity fundraising work with the Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

"You can be influential – no matter what role you have in an organisation or company, no matter how senior you are, to a point," he says on the subject.

"So I believe that all of our people have the opportunity to influence something that they're doing every day and have a positive influence on something just with the right attitude – the willingness to want to make a difference and lean in and be an active part of something, and do something transformational."

While he might be at the top of the tree, position is only a small part of exerting influence, Sintras insists.

"You can be in a senior position and do nothing and not be that influential. Yes, there's a certain gravitas that comes with the title, but I think you earn power. And, frankly, you're only as influential as other people think you are."

Professionally, one of Sintras' biggest moments of influence came when he

oversaw the 2001 merger of AIS Media and Starcom, which resulted in Starcom MediaVest. He cites the process as a professional milestone of which he is proud.

"That was a huge integration across 13 offices coming down to five, across five cities," he says. "That was a textbook integration: it was successful and it created a successful new culture that represented the best of both worlds."

In his global role with the group, it is part of Sintras' remit to inspire the 7000 SMG employees around the world to drive innovation and creativity, and the continued development of the agency's product.

As part of that, he was tasked with making Starcom MediaVest the most globally awarded media agency in the world – and he has delivered in spades. SMG was crowned Media Agency of the Year at last year's Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, as well as the Global Festival of Media Awards, while Starcom MediaVest Australia won Agency of the Year at the 2015 Festival of Media Asia Pacific Awards, among a growing collection of hardware.

The opportunity to impact clients' business outcomes is a form of influence Sintras takes great pleasure in. "I love transformational client opportunities," he says. "When I look at someone like Mars, which we picked up in 2002, we have been on



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a continual journey with that client, of transformation and innovation. Everybody said back then: 'You can't be global best practice'. And Mars Australia ended up becoming one of the most globally awarded clients in the country in media awards."

It's clear from talking to him that Sintras is a passionate proponent of the power and efficacy of the media industry. He believes media agencies are natural influencers. "We are in a position to influence because we sit in the centre of many things," he says.

"Especially today, the modern media agency – or whatever it's called today – we're at the epicentre of technology and brands and consumers and media and the whole lot of it. You do sit in the middle and when you look at all of that

and synthesise it the right way, you can be more influential because very few people get that view."

But it's not all about business. As well as juggling his local and global SMG duties, Sintras has been an active member of the Cerebral Palsy Alliance for the past 10 years, including six years on the board.

When he took over the alliance's annual fundraiser, it was raising about \$400,000. This year, the media-dominated weekend held in the Hunter Valley raised just shy of \$2 million. "That's making a direct difference to thousands of families every year," he says proudly.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Sintras has little patience for people who don't venture "outside of their own lane".

"It's really easy to say, 'I'm too busy, I'm too busy, I'm too busy', but you end up becoming myopic and miserly," he says.

In the same vein, he argues that diversity of experience and a broad perspective is an important aspect of being influential. "Because ultimately what is influence? It's having a point of view that adds value – to someone, a client, a relationship."

"You're not influential if you don't do anything interesting, say anything interesting, or make a difference." ●

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