

Questions for John Gallegos, CEO of Grupo Gallegos

By [Kate Kaye](#) , August 20, 2008



The U.S. Census Bureau recently predicted the Hispanic population will nearly triple by mid-century from 47 million to 133 million. But marketing to the growing U.S. Hispanic demographic and its subsets remains in relatively nascent stages. Today, marketing and advertising aimed at Hispanics is often relegated to its own separate corner of the ad world, and sometimes considered little more than a translation service.

But John Gallegos, CEO of [Grupo Gallegos](#), an independent agency specializing in reaching the U.S. Hispanic market, wants to change that by striving to execute on good ideas first, and directing its work towards Hispanics second.

"We don't want an Hispanic Cannes Lion; we don't want an Hispanic Clio. We want a Clio," explained Gallegos while meeting with ClickZ News for an Americano coffee in Soho last week.

"We're an agency first and foremost," stressed Gallegos. "We target Hispanics."

Grupo Gallegos launched in 2001. The company has offices in California and Argentina, and has done recent integrated campaigns for clients including [The California Milk Processor Board](#) and Energizer.

ClickZ News spoke with Gallegos about the agency's approach to reaching an audience that's becoming increasingly desirable and relevant to U.S. marketers.

Q: Tell me how you would categorize the audience you're reaching out to.

A: The audience we're reaching out to is broadly defined and lumped into a group called Hispanic, but within there's a lot of different ways to subcategorize them. You can talk to Hispanic women, Hispanic men, Hispanic teens.

One of the other things that we do at the agency is we created a segmentation model that takes acculturation into mind.... There's the low acculturated which we call "learners;" there's the mid acculturated which we call "straddlers;" and there's the high acculturated which we call "navigators."

Q: How does that translate when you're talking about digital media?

A: There's a huge implication because the adoption of digital media...you can see the upward trend the more you acculturate. Navigators, for example over-index versus the general population.... They're not only online at a greater rate, they do more online than the general U.S. population....They tend to be younger, they live in urban areas, they just tend to have the perfect lifestyle for it.

You can imagine the Internet is wide open to them.... Spanish and English, there's really no limitation for them.

Q: Is there hesitancy when it comes to brands reaching out to Hispanic markets and doing digital? Do they maybe think that broadcast media and more mainstream, traditional mediums are the way to go and digital should just be an aside?

A: Yes, and I think that there's a lot of different reasons for that.... One of them is digital is new to clients and whether they want to admit it or not they're a little bit intimidated.

Now you add Hispanic, which they're also trying to get their hands around. God forbid you add those two things together. So there's a real reluctance there. You really have to find the right client. Also there's already this preconceived notion with Hispanics that the higher you go up in acculturation, potentially the more valuable the consumer is but the more English-capable they really are, so [advertisers wonder] do [they] really need this [Hispanic-aimed element]?

Q: Tell me about your interactive team, where they're based, and how they work with the other groups.

A: Our director of interactive -- I kind of consider him a producer almost -- is based in both Buenos Aires and Long Beach. He commutes. He's got all the technical capability, about 15 folks now, in Buenos Aires -- the programmers, the designers, the digital account folks. But at the agency we do not have that. Everybody has to be integrated. I don't have a print account executive and a broadcast account executive, why would I have a digital account executive? It's been painful because we are pushing digital as just another contact point and so we need to push the account people, the creative people, and the media people to know it and understand it in the same way they understand TV and radio.

Also we're looking for digital creatives that can go the other way. I don't want the digital creative guy who basically knows how to do great digital creative campaigns, but can't do a TV spot. It's just disjointed. Again, at the center of it all is an idea.

Q: How many people do you have all together?

A: About 60-65 people.

Q: Mainly in Long Beach?

A: Yes, and about 15-16 in Buenos Aires.

Q: In terms of the actual markets in the U.S., are there certain markets you're targeting? Is it mostly NY, Miami, LA?

A: Most of our work is national in scope.... Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago, South Texas, etc. I kind of call it the "smile" of the country -- and then you have Chicago. But you're finding that there's a lot of new integration in markets in the southeast, the Carolinas, Georgia. Hispanics really are going where there's economic opportunity.

Q: What gives your agency the expertise in reaching the Hispanic market? What is the background of the individuals involved?

A: They need to be passionate about marketing communications; they need to be professionals in that arena.

And then each discipline has its own criteria. Creatively, art direction doesn't always have to be Hispanic, but in general you have to embrace learning the culture. That said, all of our creatives are Hispanic. Usually, we're finding them outside of the country and bringing them to the states. We have creatives from Spain, [some are] Cuban, Argentinian, Mexican, from all over.

Account services is a mix. The strategic planning group is all Hispanic as well. The media department is probably the most mixed in terms of it having Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Our media director is not Hispanic but he has worked in multi-cultural media. Our producers are all Hispanic. So in general, I would say we're 90-95 percent Hispanic at the agency with a mix of foreign and U.S.-born.

Q: Are you U.S. born?

A: Yes, I am. My parents are from Mexico.

Q: Are there any things that you see marketers doing when they're trying to reach Hispanic audiences that you'd like to give some advice on?

A: Don't stop at knowing the Hispanic consumer. It's super-important, it's the foundation, you've got to get inside it and get information. But it needs to be an insight, and I think a lot of agencies and client relationships stop there. I think we're evolving that, getting a lot more information.... that's where our job starts. I feel like we're just getting going because the thing that we've got to do is tell a brand story. And in the Hispanic industry versus the general industry, when you go to a Hispanic conference, it's all the talk about the consumer. When you go to a general conference.... they'll talk about the importance not only of the consumer but how to tell the brand story.

You can be an ethnographer, you can be a researcher, you can be a strategist. That doesn't mean you can create.