

In Advertising, Nothing Is Taboo
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Yesterday, the Worldwide CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi attended the inauguration of the company's new Geneva offices

"A supermarket of ideas replaces a supermarket of food." This is how Pedro Simko, General Manager of the advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi presents the new offices of his company, which are situated at the place du Temple in Carouge.

"We have moved from 660 m² on boulevard Saint-Georges, to 1300 m²," said Pedro Simko. Other than the size of the offices, the number of employees has also risen with the hiring of 18 people since the beginning of the year. This brings the number of Geneva employees to 50.

For the inauguration, Kevin Roberts, CEO of the group Saatchi & Saatchi made a trip to the city of Calvin.

Interview:

In January 2004, what made you decide to create a partnership with the Geneva-based agency Simko?

With Pedro Simko we have found a partner that shares our ideas and philosophy. It is a question of real exchange, even if our group has the role of holding the majority in its partnership. Simko brings his very well rounded knowledge of the Swiss market. On the other hand the agency benefits from the International network of the Group Saatchi & Saatchi.

Why did you choose Geneva for your Swiss headquarters?

You know the expression "you must fish where there the fish are." It's exactly the same thing for business. If the largest multinationals in the world have their headquarters in Geneva, then it's in Geneva where we must be. That goes with out saying that a number of our big accounts are based here.

After print, TV, radio and the Internet, advertising is now present on screens in large shopping centers (i.e. La Praille). Is this new type of media the future of advertising?

(Smile...). I have just finished a book on this subject, entitled Sisomo: Sight Sound and Motion. Actually we are entering into the age of the screen.

In the coming years, this media will become the media of reference in advertising. In the US, we are already beginning to find them shopping centers.

Are there taboo subjects (sex, violence, drugs) that even advertisers find difficult to deal with?

I compare the advertising message to a conversation between friends. Everything that is said between friends can, in my opinion, be said in advertising. For me, there are no taboos. Advertising is part of our culture as much as the cinema and music are.

On your internet site (<http://www.saatchikevin.com/>) we learn that you played rugby with the Geneva Internationals. Surprising?

(Big smile...). I lived in Geneva for 7 years between 1975 and 1982. I worked at Procter & Gamble and played rugby. Note to readers: Kevin Roberts is crazy about the oval ball and a big fan of the New Zealand All Blacks). I played with the Geneva Internationals team and then with the Hermance team.

Who's Who?

Simko Founded in 1970 in Geneva, the agency became famous with its campaigns for Cardinal, Toni and Caran d'Ache. In 2004, Simko merged with the giant Saatchi & Saatchi. Today, the agency has 50 employees. Saatchi & Saatchi Founded in 1970, the group joined the French Group Publicis, the 4th largest advertisers worldwide, in 2000. Today the international network of the Group accounts for 134 agencies in 84 countries and approximately 7000 employees.