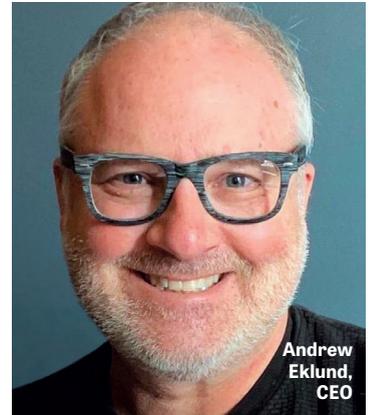


A Digital Marketing Pioneer Sees His Vision Come to Life

At the speed of bits and bytes, this agency owner saw the digital world coming 25 years ago



Andrew Eklund, CEO

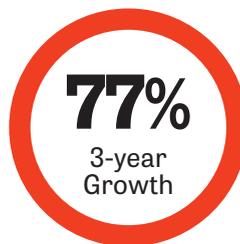
In one of his first careers, Andrew Eklund, founder and CEO of digital agency Ciceron, spent time in the Bay area in the early 1990s. While there, he had a vision of advertising and marketing’s future. And it was zeros and ones.

“It struck me that digital was the future for two reasons,” he recalls. One was accessibility. Digital technology would democratize marketing, creating a level playing field where any brand— even one that couldn’t afford traditional broadcast and print advertising—could now compete. The other was accountability. For the first time in the history of advertising, everything would be measurable.

Eklund jumped at the opportunity to create one of the first, pure digital agencies in the country, and to do it in his native Minneapolis, which at the time was the fifth-largest U.S. ad market. There was prescience, too, in the name he chose for the firm. “Cic erone” is an old term for a trusted and masterful guide. Eklund foresaw an agency that would function as a guide for clients on their journey through a rapidly changing digital world.

VIGILANCE AND AGILITY ARE CRITICAL

Accessibility and accountability still underpin digital advertising and marketing, but little else has remained static. Ciceron has been on the cutting edge as the industry evolved from websites and e-commerce to SEO and social marketing. Today, digital advertising, in particular, is a frenetic, hyper-personalized environment that demands constant monitoring and the agility to respond to changing conditions in near real-time. Ciceron has thrived throughout that evolution because



of its focus on aligning marketing with measurable business outcomes. “We are not afraid of financial spreadsheets,” Eklund says. “We want to get all the way into our clients’ business and understand what constitutes success in their eyes.”

Achieving that requires the ability to optimize campaigns quickly across all advertising channels, both traditional ones like TV and print and the proliferating array of new digital media. Ciceron shines here. It has extensive resources and deep expertise in data, media, and creative—the three-legged stool of modern marketing—all under one roof.

MARKETING BUDGETS MUST BE FLUID

“We know the consumer, sometimes better and oftentimes earlier, than our clients do,” Eklund says. “We’re very close to how they’re living their lives, what new technologies they’re using, what new social networks they’re embracing. With our data, media, and creative capabilities, we can quickly and efficiently reallocate marketing spend where it has the greatest impact.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted the importance of Ciceron’s capabilities. The agency has helped clients in industries like retail and entertainment transition to entirely new business models very quickly as consumer lifestyles have undergone radical change. “In a very short period of time, we’ve seen digital’s penetration reach levels we believe it should have reached five or 10 years ago,” Eklund says. “I think the next three to five years are going to be Ciceron’s salad days.”

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