

» MISSISSIPPI LEADERS by Martin Willoughby

Happy 'mad genius'

Sarver believes stamina, keeping the mood light key to agency's success



Martin Willoughby

First we had marathons which seem like way too far for a human to run. Now we have ultra-marathons which allow athletes to race for distances up to 100 miles or greater. The focus, determination and endurance that must require simply amazes me. As I continue to study the "secret sauce" of leadership, I similarly find that endurance is an extremely important quality of leaders. The ability to be a long-term guiding force for an organization and to consistently bring the energy and enthusiasm to get the job done makes a HUGE difference. Chip Sarver, president of the advertising firm Mad Genius, similarly said, "I personally admire every business leader that has the stamina to wake up each day and motivate a team to fight for business and repeat it day after day." Sarver has brought that kind of stamina to building a thriving business at Mad Genius, including weathering the Great Recession that impacted so many clients.

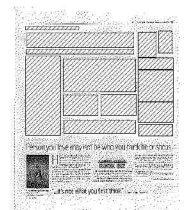
Sarver grew up in Saucier, Miss., and earned a degree in radio/television/film from the University of Southern Mississippi. Sarver has over 24 years' experience in account management and production for a number of broadcast network affiliates and provided freelance services for HBO, ESPN, and FOX Sports. Prior to co-founding Mad Genius, he was an account manager with WJTV in Jackson.

When asked about who he considers a ge-

nius, Sarver said, "There are several geniuses throughout history I admire but of late it's Willie G. Davidson. For him to have had the vision to take back a failing Harley Davidson brand and shape it into a lifestyle that people respect, identify with, and, frankly, want to spend \$25k+ on a two-wheel vehicle that you have to prop up with a kickstand is pure genius!"

Sarver is a passionate Harley Davidson enthusiast himself. He had a goal to ride his own Harley bike in all 50 states before his 50 birthday. He only lacks five states and has a few years left to go. Early business mentors taught him the importance of business ethics and modeled how to show respect to people. He learned early on the value of sending handwritten notes to follow up with people and to show appreciation.

Sarver also emphasized, "While we are often working on tight deadlines, I try to keep the mood light in the organization." Humor can be a great stress buster, and Sarver credits his Mom for his own sense of humor and his Dad for his common sense. Philosopher William James once said, "Common sense and a sense of humor are the same thing, moving at different speeds. A sense of



humor is just common sense, dancing.” Sarver certainly effectively brings both humor and common sense to his leadership style.

He also emphasized to, “Never turn off the business clock. Represent yourself the same on Friday night the same as you would in a Monday morning meeting.” That is a great point that I emphasize to my clients. Every day the door is open for business is “Game Day,” and we need to bring our very best.

Sarver takes an active role in leadership in the community as well. He is past president

of the City of Ridgeland Chamber of Commerce, and the Jackson American Advertising Federation. He also serves on the Tulane Advisory Board and is currently on the Madison County chamber board. Sarver has a “pay it forward” view of leadership and believes in giving back. I am sure we will see Sarver and his colleagues helping organizations grow well into the future.

Martin Willoughby is a business consultant and regular contributing columnist for the Mississippi Business Journal. He serves as Chief Operating Officer of Butler Snow Advisory Services, LLC and can be reached at martin.willoughby@butlersnow.com.

Up Close With ... **Chip Sarver**

Title: President, Mad Genius
Favorite Books: *Gabriel Allen* by Daniel Silva; *Dirk Pitt* by Clive Cussler
First Job: “High School — West Building Materials”
Proudest Moment as a Leader: “Watching our team prepare a creative strategy and acquire new clients, all while having a MAD time.”
Hobbies/Interests: “Driving through all 50 states on Harley Davidson motorcycles with my dad. I have five states left on the West Coast; Jimmy Buffet concerts”



“Never turn off the business clock.”

Chip Sarver

President, Mad Genius