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Annie McDannald

**GLOBAL MANAGER FOR CIVICOM
MARKETING RESEARCH SERVICES**

BY TOTALPRESTIGE MAGAZINE
IMAGE COURTESY BY ANNIE MCDANNALD

Annie McDannald has seen her career grow alongside the company she represents. McDannald joined Civicom Marketing Research Services early in her business career. Since joining in 2009, she has learned the ropes of market research and gained a unique knowledge in the industry that no formal education can offer. In her near decade of service, McDannald has grown in the business world and is a vital member of the company. Currently the Global Manager in the Marketing Research Services department, McDannald oversees the department's operations worldwide.

She is also tasked with building relationships with new customers and keeping long-time clients happy. Many of the things McDannald does are behind the scenes, but without her work Civicom wouldn't be the major brand it is today. She recently sat down with Total Prestige Magazine to speak about Civicom and the company's Marketing Research Services department, what it does, and its role in growing businesses.

Annie, you have worked with Civicom since 2009. Can you tell us about how you got started with the company and your background in marketing research services?

For me, Civicom is an example of being in the right place at the right time. Although I didn't have experience in marketing research services at the time.

I had an extensive background in business development, customer service, and client management. I had solid comprehension of the technology we were using and developing for our marketing research clients and took delight in collaborating with clients on the best solutions for their online research needs. I started with the marketing research services department as an account manager and gained a great deal of experience in the delivery of our services, as well.

What can a business expect from the services offered by Civicom?

Exceptional service and support. We have a culture within that focuses on a deep understanding of and commitment to our clients' success. Our motto is "your project success is our number one priority." We live and breathe that mentality in everything we do. This sets us apart from every competitor. By reputation, we are attentive, responsive, and go the extra mile to achieve success. This support extends to every service we offer and is tailored to the nuances of each technology we work with.

What type of companies does Civicom work with?

Civicom, as a whole, serves clients of all sizes across every industry. Civicom Marketing Research Services, in particular, primarily works with clientele that consists of qualitative marketing researchers. These companies range from independent and small boutique researchers, all the way up to large Gold Top 50 research firms and corporate research teams. We aim to give the same level of attention and care to every client.

Civicom works to help companies with research from several different social media websites including Pinterest. How important is it for companies to collect this data and what can they do with it?

Social media is just one way to connect with potential research respondents, which is a commonly used approach for recruiting efforts to find the right participants for a specific research study. Our recruiting services, called CiviSelect, are extremely well-versed in finding the right respondents to participate in qualitative research, even those individuals that are quite difficult to find! Social media is one of the many tools we use to achieve success in this area. We have extensive tools and resources to drive this critical service on a global scale. However, we do not use social media solely for recruiting respondents. We have utilized Pinterest as an innovative approach for collecting insights from respondents in a fun and creative way. Pinterest specifically allows respondents to create visual representations of their thoughts and feelings. This is an advantageous tool for some research objectives. Though, with growing frequency we find that a high quality online community platform, such as Civicom Chatterbox™, provides a more flexible feature set to accomplish a social media type of interaction within a more controlled environment.

Civicom runs numerous webinars with clients and potential clients. How can these webinars improve a company's fortunes and what goes into setting one up?

Webinars are an exceptional way to establish your company at an expert level as a thought leader, to introduce your products and services to customers, or to coordinate internal presentations or trainings. I have extensive experience on both sides of this, as we both support clients in their efforts to present webinars and we also host our own webinars. The webinars we host are most often intended to highlight our offerings or to weigh in on important industry

movements, such as the recent GDPR legislation in the EU. These sessions create awareness among our attendees and are extremely beneficial in establishing new business, but also in expanding various services to our existing clients.

If you are looking to present a webinar to your clients and followers, I strongly suggest working with a provider like Civicom. For example, we provide the online meeting platform, assist with participant registrations, invest time to prepare the presenters, professionally facilitate the webinar and Q&A, and manage your recording. There are many logistics that go into putting on a webinar and a partner like Civicom greatly simplifies this process for you. One tip I would give is to make sure you prepare your presentation with thoughtfulness and attention to detail. Also choose a presenter that speaks clearly and with passion, as this greatly contributes to how engaged your audience will remain for the duration of the presentation.

What kind of innovations are being made in the market research field that weren't available a few years ago?

Innovation is constantly happening, particularly within services for marketing research. Technology is constantly developing and advancing. There are many advancements taking place with artificial intelligence (AI), neuroscience technology and measurement, and virtual reality, to name a few. One particular area where we've seen demand driving innovation is in media management and analysis.

Qualitative methodologies produce an overwhelming amount of content that can be time consuming and challenging to wade through. Researchers need to be able to uncover key insights buried within countless hours of video and audio recordings. We've developed and just recently launched a new online insights management platform, named Glide Central, designed to resolve this very challenge. Many of our offerings are born out of needs that our clients consult with us about and request.

As global manager, what is a day like for you at Civicom?

There is never a dull moment at Civicom! There is always a new challenge or request to keep the brain working. In a nutshell, my primary focus each day is watching the flow of activity. I oversee our delivery team and account management staff and help to guide, strategize, and develop the

skills of our entire team to better serve our clients. My favorite phrase is, "There is always room for improvement!" I feel that if you don't see a place that can be improved, you're just not looking hard enough, so I'm constantly looking for those areas. I also continue to manage the needs of my own client accounts and dedicate time each day to making sure they experience the high level support they've come to expect from Civicom.

You were appointed as Civicom's global manager in 2017. How has being promoted from within and working your way up through the company helped make you a better manager?

Honestly, I don't feel I would have been able to exhibit effective management without having experienced every level of responsibility within our Marketing Research Services team. The services we offer are quite unique. It is very difficult to find someone with the specific background or experience in research services, and not solely research itself. I've done everything from serving as a facilitator on web-enabled interviews to setting up online studies to collaborating on complex research methodologies with my clients. A person really needs to experience the many technologies and services we provide from the ground up in order to understand and orchestrate success in each aspect of our business.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in working with a market research services company such as Civicom?

You need to be driven to contribute with excellence to the creation of something important. Establish exceptional communication skills and continue to develop these skills when working with colleagues internally or with clients and industry professionals. Gain an understanding of the research industry and client pain points, and nurture your creativity and innovative approach to problem solving. Being able to collaborate with clients on working out solutions that enable them to conduct their research successfully is an important skill that is gained through experience and one on which our clients rely heavily on us to provide. Clients love collaborating when they know we have the best interest of their research outcomes in mind.

After nearly 10 years with the company, what continues to drive you as an employee in the research industry?

I genuinely have pride in what I do and find deep satisfaction when our clients give us feedback that reflects we've accomplished our goal of contributing to their success. Research and the role it plays in the development of everything around us

fascinates me and I love being a part of it in such a unique way. In the past 10 years, I've witnessed amazing advancements in how research is conducted and the technology that can be employed to collect deep insights from people that then guide the world in so many ways. It's hard to believe that when I first started, smartphones were not prevalent like they are today. Not everyone had a phone with a camera. Few people even had cameras for their computers! Imagine where these advancements will lead us 10 years from now. I'm excited to see it unfold.

Annie, what is a day in your life like?

Coffee in hand, I always start by catching up on the events and business that occurred during the international business hours. I follow up with clients on open requests and opportunities, then connect with the team, so we're all on the same page for how the day is shaping up. With everything on the right track, I prepare for my day ahead, whether that entails internal meetings, client demonstrations, webinar presentations, or other exciting projects we're always working on. Every day feels like I'm playing an important part in advancing construction of an incredible piece of virtual architecture.

What makes you smile?

As a professional, there are few feelings more smile-inducing than seeing everything working like clockwork. It's also satisfying to be faced with a challenge or problem and feel confident that you have the right answer.

What scares you?

Power outages and Internet failure. These occurrences create risk in our ability to meet client expectations. We are certainly prepared in every one of our office locations for these natural occurrences and have built in redundancies and multiple backup solutions that enable us to carry on despite what is out of our control.

What is your secret talent?

If I tell, then it's not a secret! I would say that I enjoy singing (mostly to myself!) In my youth, I was classically trained in voice and participated in competitions on a state level. These days, I limit my performances to group karaoke and prefer to sing more rock and roll instead of classical arias.

Which historical figure do you most admire?

Abigail Adams. She had enormous strength from within and didn't shy away from opportunities to speak her mind, often standing up for women and their rights, particularly when it came to education and recognition for their intellectual capabilities.

ties. She was exceptionally dedicated to her family and was a guiding light and rock for her husband, John Adams, who had great influence on the founding principles of our nation.

Annie, do you have any hobbies?

I enjoy spending time in nature with my family, biking and hiking. I find therapeutic comfort in yoga and in creating – whether it's something like drawing or needle-point or just crafting with my kids.

What are you never without?

Honestly, my first instinct is to say my phone, as I'm sure many would agree, but I think it's extremely important to take opportunities to disconnect from technology every once in a while and make a concentrated effort to be truly unplugged. So, instead, I'll say breath. It's amazing how focused meditative breathing will affect your entire life.

Can you share two of your favorite quotes with us?

That's difficult! There are so many... "Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

"Businesses that grow by development and improvement do not die. But when a business ceases to be creative, when it believes it has reached perfection and needs to do nothing but produce no improvement, no development, it is done."

- Henry Ford

Instinct versus expertise. Which is more important and why?

Truly, they go hand in hand. Without expertise, your instinct is at a disadvantage. However, when push comes to shove, following instinct is more important to me. The right answer isn't always laid out within your expertise, and often your expertise will grow by following your instincts.

If you had the power to change just one thing in the world what would it be?

Inequality. Race, religion, gender, etc. There is so much time and energy spent on biases and prejudices. Once we can agree that everyone should be treated equally, I feel we can get so much more done as a society. There are many champions in this area but looking at the issue historically, I feel we often take one step forward and two steps back.

For more information on Civicom Marketing Research Services and Annie McDannald, please visit <https://www.civicomms.com>.