

THE NEXT LEADERS OF THE NORTHWESTERN NEWS NETWORK

Sam Rong (BSJ14) and **Priyanka Tilve (BSJ14)** have been involved with the Northwestern News Network since they were freshmen, and both credit their experiences with NNN as helping shape who they are today. Now seniors, Rong and Tilve find themselves in leadership roles as news directors ushering NNN into its third decade. The two took some time to talk with **Marc Zarefsky (BSJ07)** about NNN and their goals for the next year.

SAM RONG



News Director
for the Northwestern
News Network

JOB TITLE

News Director
for the Northwestern
News Network

PRIYANKA TILVE



Freshman year I wanted to be that guy on CNN reporting from around the world and telling you what's going on. NNN was really the only outlet there was.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH NNN?

I arrived at Medill already with a passion for broadcast journalism, and after a quarter of getting my bearings at NU, I was ready to jump into NNN. I started shadowing other reporters and was reporting on my own by halfway through the quarter.

I don't want to be the guy in front of the camera anymore. Brent Huffman's documentary class and my journalism residency in South Africa really helped me find my love for telling people's stories. I'm interested in more long-form storytelling and less newsy content.

HOW, IF AT ALL, HAVE YOUR INTERESTS CHANGED?

When I got started with NNN, I was more interested in reporting than anything else. I still love that, but over the course of my three years, I've found that my real passion lies in news production. I think the career goal shift is largely thanks to the varied experiences I've had at NNN.

I want NNN to tackle longer, more in-depth stories. I also want to get more freshmen on board and help them stay on board. I don't want it to feel like a cut-throat, competitive environment. I want it to be a nurturing environment. And, I don't want to think of myself as a news director. I want to think of myself as a teacher.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR NNN?

Over the last few years, NNN's campus visibility has definitely improved, but I want to keep working on that. Sam and I are also committed to mentoring and retaining new NNNers. We've both grown as journalists and leaders through NNN and are thrilled to help others do the same.

I'll stick with journalism for a while. It's not something I want to do my entire life, but I'm not sure if anyone should do the same thing for their entire life. I'll keep doing documentaries. I want to keep telling stories.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO DO AFTER GRADUATING FROM MEDILL?

I'm going to keep my options open by applying to tons of places upon graduation — to positions from digital news associate to associate producer — but ultimately, my dream job is executive producing a nighttime network show.

Marcela Aguilar brings a simple approach to marketing communications, and it's helped her quickly rise to her current role as senior director of global marketing communications for Gap.

a good listener

When *Advertising Age* revealed its annual list of "Women to Watch" in June 2013, the publication showcased 24 female professionals with a variety of influential job titles. As senior director of global marketing communications for Gap, Marcela Aguilar (IMCo2) fit right in.

What helped Aguilar succeed is her desire to listen, her willingness to talk with consumers and her understanding that in order to succeed on a global scale, you first have to think locally.

By Shannon Shelton Miller
(MSJ01)

Photo by Ray Whitehouse
(BSJ12)

“We need to listen to customers and learn from them,” Aguilar says. “More than ever, we have channels that allow us to listen, have conversations and understand real behavioral insights. Local insights are important to be relevant in our global strategies and earn customers’ attention.”

Advertising Age credited Aguilar with being one of the key architects of the turnaround effort at Gap, where she’s worked since 2011. In her role, she manages global communication strategy, including brand and seasonal advertising.

“Marcela had the passion and fortitude I looked for in people to help transform an iconic American brand,” says Seth Farbman, who is global chief marketing officer for Gap and who hired Aguilar. “As a self-made woman from Costa Rica successful in an advertising industry that still has a touch of the ‘old boys network,’ I knew she possessed both courage and integrity. She has been an amazing strategic and creative partner to me as we poured our energy into this brand.”

“We need to listen to customers and learn from them.”

— Marcela Aguilar

With Farbman, Aguilar helped manage the development of the “Be Bright” campaign, a multimedia marketing platform emphasizing energy and optimism — touchstones the Gap brand wanted to re-embrace after years of moving away from its roots.

Her IMC history made the planning and overall process that much easier.

“Medill was ahead of its time,” Aguilar says. “The whole integrated aspect of marketing, it was important then, and definitely important 11 years later. It’s what we’re doing today. You have to have traditional media, but you also have to integrate the social media and digital platforms.”

Aguilar, who was the first student from Costa Rica to enroll in the IMC Program, spent several of her teenage years going to school and learning English in Miami. She returned to Costa Rica for college, during which she also worked full-time for advertising agency BBDO.

Although Aguilar was one of the youngest students in

the IMC program, her four years of experience at BBDO gave her a solid footing. Former IMC Department Chair Tom Collinger remembers Aguilar’s transformation from a somewhat shy student to one who became increasingly emboldened as she progressed through the program.

“What I love about her is she’s the most positive, easygoing person,” Collinger says. “She makes herself so easily accessible to everyone. She’s a wonderful listener, and yet, a strong-minded person, as noted by classmates and faculty. It’s an uncommon combination in this business.”

That combination served her well when she returned to BBDO after graduating from Medill. As part of BBDO Worldwide in New York City, Aguilar created and led the Emerging Market team that partnered with Procter & Gamble to develop and launch the Gillette Guard, a razor designed for men in emerging markets.

Aguilar spent three years traveling through India, China and Brazil to discover what potential customers wanted in a razor. That was when she learned to start thinking at the local level. She realized there were challenges these customers face that she would not have thought of otherwise. For example, how would customers use the razor if they didn’t have access to running water? What if they don’t have a mounted mirror? Or, what if where they live only has intermittent electricity?

“Our very naïve perspective of what was available in the developed world wasn’t going to do it,” she says.

The team ultimately unveiled an inexpensive razor that allowed for easy rinsing and gripping in case the other hand had to hold a mirror. Three months after the razor launched, it was the best-selling razor in India.

“It was a truly amazing experience,” Aguilar says of participating in the product development and launch. “Learning from consumers and spending time with them in their homes and environments was very insightful and humbling. It changed all of us in the core team, both professionally and personally.”

At Gap, Aguilar shifted her skills to reinvigorate an existing, iconic brand that wanted to maintain relevancy at home while expanding abroad. To figure out what might work, she returned to the same approach she used at Medill and in her travels — talk to people and listen to what they had to say.

“It’s an amazing brand, and one where people have an emotional connection,” she says. “When I’m on planes and I talk to passengers and tell them I work for Gap, immediately there’s a big smile.”

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Photo essay by Ray Whitehouse (BSJ12)

TRUE DEDICATION

Eight years ago, **Melina Kolb (MSJ09)** began documenting the Chicago South Side after-school learning center founded by Sue Duncan, mother of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Now, two years after Sue Duncan was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, Kolb is producing “Remember Me Sue,” a full-length documentary about Duncan, her work at the Sue Duncan Children’s Center for the last 50 years and her lasting impact on the more than 5,000 children who spent time at the center.

The children’s center was one of the first places Kolb ever shot video. Now, she is the founder and executive producer of Tellit Multimedia. For “Remember Me Sue,” Kolb shot and edited the film, operated a successful Kickstarter campaign to raise funding, wrote grants, dealt with licensing questions, collaborated with a composer and more.

As her work comes to a close, Kolb continues to shoot b-roll to fill in small visual gaps, as well as fine-tune the narrative structure. “I just want to present the story in the best way possible,” she says.

The documentary is scheduled to air on WTTW-TV, Chicago’s public broadcasting station, in the fall.