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Campagna Retires from 'Reflejos'

June 07, 2007

By Kevin Downey

Jerry Campagna is leaving *Reflejos Bilingual Journal* in style, throwing a "Gracias Fiesta" for colleagues and clients today to say thanks for helping him build up the newspaper over the past 11 years.

The Spanish-language newspaper began as a barely 5,000 circulation monthly to a bilingual weekly with audited distribution approaching 100,000 in the Chicago area, making it the country's largest Hispanic-targeted suburban paper.

Campagna, 47, retained a role as president of *Reflejos* even after he sold the paper to Paddock Publications in 2000, publisher of suburban Chicago's *Daily Herald*, as a wholly owned subsidiary.

He is ready to launch consulting firm MST Latino, which stands for "mission, strategies and tactics, Latino-style," he said.

Campagna, who until recently was treasurer of the National Association of Hispanic Publications, purchased *Reflejos* with his wife, Phyllis, in 1996 from an insurance salesman who had launched it six years earlier as an ad vehicle to reach an untapped audience, Chicago's fast-growing suburban Latino population.

In 1990, there were fewer than 900,000 Hispanics in the Chicago market. Today, there are close to 1.9 million Latinos.

When Campagna purchased *Reflejos*, he had no publishing experience but said his naiveté proved helpful.

"I had no background in journalism -- none," he said. "But my ignorance became innovation. I didn't know I was breaking the rules of journalism because I didn't know them."

Campagna for the first few years after buying *Reflejos* wrote most of the paper's articles and handled editing, circulation and ad sales. He delivered the papers and, in his words, also served as *Reflejos*' janitor.

From the beginning, Campagna set out to create a bilingual paper, something he said was needed in suburban neighborhoods where Latinos tend to be acculturated. But publishing in English and Spanish wasn't initially embraced by Hispanic ad agencies.

"They saw it as a threat that someone might buy an English-language ad," he said. "That attitude has changed now, but in 1996 that was not done. I was pretty novel, I'd like to think, in actively promoting a bilingual product that [reflects] suburban, acculturated views."

In 1999, Campagna expanded the business with *Reflejos Direct Media*, a division that helps companies create marketing plans with a strategy he coined the Latino Three-Step: hiring, marketing and community outreach.

"Most of my ad buys were done on the basis that we weren't selling ads. We were selling solutions and they paid for them with ad budgets," he said. "We helped them create the infrastructure that would support their ads."

Reflejos over the years has been honored with numerous awards for its editorial content and, in 2005, with *Editor & Publisher* magazine's "10 That Do It Right." *E&P*, like *Marketing y Medios*, is owned by the Nielsen Co.

"Jerry has been the heart and soul of the publication and deeply involved in every aspect of it," said Douglas Ray, CEO and president of Paddock. "He's played a major role in getting us to where we are today."

Campagna is leaving *Reflejos*, but he's not entirely getting out of the media business. One of MST Latino's first clients is Paddock.

"I'm also working with them on the *Reflejos* transition," he said. "I'll be working with other publications around the country. But my main focus isn't media as much as it is on Fortune 1000 companies looking to put strategic plans together for Latino markets."



photo by Bill Zars

Campagna (*center*) created the "Reflejos Mambo Band," a company philosophy of combining different orchestrations, including editorial, marketing, advertising and circulation.