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ENTREPRENEURS TAKE MULTICULTURAL TACK

NICHE: ADVERTISING AGENCY TARGETS THE HISPANIC MARKET.

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SANTA CLARITA - Seven years ago, Patricia Gracia opened an advertising agency in her San Fernando Valley apartment with nothing more than a computer, a fax and a telephone.

Today, Gracia's **Power Media Group** is a multimillion-dollar enterprise that specializes in creating Spanish-language ad campaigns for high-profile clients seeking to reach the booming Hispanic market.

“Even if we live in the United States for 20 years, the ad that moves us is in Spanish. We love to hear the Spanish language,” said Gracia, a Peruvian immigrant who became a U.S. citizen 14 years ago.

“When you say things that touch the Hispanic culture, you touch their hearts.”

Now operating out of new offices in Santa Clarita, Power Media has attracted such clients as Universal Music Latin and Video Distribution, Vivendi Visual Entertainment, Creativa Interior-Primor, Xenon Pictures and Laboratorios Mallo.

The company also was recognized last month for its business growth by the Latin Business Association.

“The nominees are judged on growth, involvement in the community and being a diverse company with their employees as well as their clients,” said Ruben Guerra, chairman of the nonprofit association, which was founded in 1976 to support and promote Latino-owned businesses.

“Recognition is always good but nothing comes by accident. It's hard work. Integrity is the most important word for us,” said Tony Gracia, a former radio sales manager who joined his wife's company four years ago as its chief executive officer. “I think the award represents the integrity we have and why our clients are with us.”

The Gracias have created a niche business, targeting the Hispanic audience that is becoming a more prominent part of the culture in Southern California and nationwide.

“The Hispanic market is growing and what it needs is professionalism in advertising,” said Tony Gracia. “We have multicultural clients and we are proud to be a multicultural company.”

According to the Census Bureau, 42.7 million Hispanics now live in the United States, a number that is projected to reach 60 million by 2020.

And marketing experts note that the purchasing power of Hispanics will exceed \$1 trillion this year, with the top five markets being Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Chicago and Houston.

The Gracias believe that their company's success comes from their knowledge of the Hispanic market and their attention to detail. A campaign designed to appeal to someone from Mexico wouldn't necessarily work for someone from Colombia or Honduras.

“When I speak to my clients, I ask them: Where do you want to go -- national or local?” Patricia Gracia said. “I tell them to find their niche, consider the demographics.

“If you understand the Hispanic culture, they will grab your product.”

It was that understanding that helped Power Media design an ad campaign for NYX Cosmetics, a 9-year-old company based in Commerce.

“Lipstick isn't as popular in the general market but it's very attractive for the Hispanic market,” Patricia Gracia said. “Hispanic women use bright and hot colors like red and hot pink.”

Tonie Shin, public-relations manager for NYX, said Power Media also offered good advice on ad placement.

“One suggestion they had was to advertise on buses and that has used our money very well,” Shin said. “We also heard what are the top five Hispanic markets, and so, besides L.A., we advertise in Miami and Chicago.”

Patricia Gracia came to the United States when she was 18. She studied psychology and sociology at Los Angeles Valley College but switched career goals while working in customer service at The Peninsula Hotel in Beverly Hills.

Her supervisors recognized her people skills, and the hotel corporation paid for her to get a degree in public relations at UCLA.

Gracia eventually realized that she had acquired the skills to follow her dream of running her own business.

``My husband, Tony, and I have strong personalities. When we want it, we go for it. So, we have, Tony and I, power together," Gracia said.

``Media is for what we deal in. Group is a word that to me means teamwork."`

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Caption: Photo:

Tony and Patricia Gracia, owners of **Power Media Group** Inc., which was named winner of the Latin Business Association's LBA Sol Business Award for 2008 last month, display some of the company's honors in their Santa Clarita offices.

John McCoy/Staff Photographer

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