

Oral History of The History Factory

Cast of Characters

Phil Auerswald – Phil demonstrated his work ethic and creativity as a teenager mowing Bruce’s lawn. Taking a break from Yale, Phil backpacked around the world interviewing the founders of McCormick Spices’ acquired companies. On a stop in the UK, Phil so impressed Dennis Jenks, CEO of Patterson Jenks, that Dennis was motivated to invest in Informative Design Group (later re-branded as The History Factory). Phil relocated to London to establish the UK office. Today, Phil is an Associate Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University, Senior Fellow at Kauffman Foundation, author of *The Coming Prosperity* at Oxford University Press, and a Member of the Advisory Committee at Clinton Global Initiative.

Rick Beller – Having joined The History Factory as a business development consultant, Rick transitioned to an indispensable member of the team as he applied his considerable management experience to a wide range of operational issues. As Bruce’s partner in the “Great Idea to Great Business” initiative, it was Rick’s steady hand that guided The History Factory through the unprecedented challenges of the Great Recession. Today, Rick serves as The History Factory’s chief operating officer and business strategist.

Stacy Bender – An experienced archivist and longtime second-in-command in the Archives, Stacy was the motivating force behind The History Factory’s lengthy sponsorship and employee participation in the Northern Virginia Relay for Life.

Barry Deutsch – A legendary senior communicator at Mellon Bank during the acquisition-fueled ‘80s, Barry recognized IDG’s potential to support a wide range of corporate communications. He encouraged IDG to continually stretch its capabilities, and was a demanding yet highly supportive mentor to Bruce.

Jason Dressel – Jason’s career has tracked with an era of pervasive and continuous change at The History Factory. From the somewhat chaotic early years when he was thrown into a variety of positions, to his pivotal role in the formalization of The History Factory’s business development function, Jason has grown and evolved into a key leadership position in the company.

Jack Felton – The longtime head of communications at McCormick Spices, Jack Felton was one of IDG’s earliest supporters and cheerleaders. A recognized leader in the profession, Jack used his considerable networking skills in professional circles to personally introduce and promote IDG to a generation of corporate communicators.

Charron Fullerton – A communicator at Mutual of New York, where she liked to describe history as a “guerilla activity,” Charron evolved from a cornerstone client and friend of IDG, to an advisor and consultant to The History Factory. Charron’s creative “fingerprints” left their mark on many of IDG’s earliest efforts.

Allison Goss – “Al” was the first receptionist, office manager and social secretary at The History Factory. Her enthusiasm and good-natured personality were infectious. The ultimate “people person,” Allison was instrumental in helping establish the “work hard, play hard” ethic at The History Factory.

Alden Hathaway – No staff member has left a more indelible mark on The History Factory than Alden. In more than 25 years with the company, Alden has performed every function from archival to interpretive on his way to becoming one of America’s premier corporate researchers. Having mentored generations of staffers, Alden established his reputation for “Yankee” independence by always locating his office in the farthest corner from Bruce’s office. Alden has always been, and remains, one of Bruce’s closest friends and trusted colleagues.

Chris Juhasz – As Director of Archival Services, Chris championed the vision for The History Factory’s migration from analog to digital. Starting with a dedicated core group of use-oriented archivists, Chris continues to attract some of the most passionate and technologically sophisticated archivists in America to join the team.

Donny Lanham – Donny became part of The History Factory family when he was a member of the cleaning crew in one of our earliest buildings. While holding down a day job as head of shipping and receiving for an iconic luxury retailer, Donny and his family founded their own cleaning business and The History Factory has been a client ever since. At the end of a long day, there is nothing more welcome than the huge smiles and warm hugs that Donny has been giving our staff for more than 25 years.

Michael Leland – Mike is one of The History Factory’s “homegrown.” He joined the company right out of college as part of a group of Kenyon College friends who had signed on as the moving crew in 1995 to relocate The History Factory from DC to Chantilly, Virginia. At one time serving as the company receptionist, Mike has literally worked his way up to the senior-most levels of the company. Part “fire-fighter,” Mike has been assigned to some of the most challenging engagements in The History Factory’s history, including many weeks spent in Saudi Arabia managing a major multi-year project.

Adam Nemett – A gifted filmmaker and writer, Adam was hired as The History Factory’s first “Idea Engineer.” He was a co-developer of The History Factory’s StoryArc™ story generation process. He has been the leading evangelist in rolling the process out with clients around the world.

William Petre — William was a copywriter and starving would-be author when hired as the first employee in the UK office. For a number of years, he authored books for our clients on both sides of the Atlantic between long hiatuses to write his novels. After hundreds of rejection letters, William’s first novel, *The Alexander Cipher*, (under the pen name “Will Adams”) became the first in the widely successful Daniel Knox series of adventure thrillers. At the time, William received the largest advance for movie rights ever paid to a first-time novel. *The Alexander*

Cipher has been published in 16 languages. His second, *The Exodus Quest*, has already been sold for publication in another 10 languages.

Steve Richardson – While there were several employees that came and went in the early years of IDG, Steve has always been officially recognized as the “first employee.” Steve joined the founders at the time when it became clear that IDG would survive, and he was instrumental in all of the company’s foundational engagements. Steve became part of IDG’s “first family” when he married fellow staffer Terri Schorzman. After leaving The History Factory, Steve continued to support the company as a sales rep for an archival software firm.

Erica Rose — Erica leads The History Factory’s editorial team, collaborating with clients and internal team members to help synthesize the creative and strategic vision for our projects. Erica has been instrumental in the development of the entire editorial process to ensure that deliverables meet and exceed client expectations through product quality, research integrity and editorial accuracy.

Michele Shirey – Michelle’s career coincides with the professionalization of the design function at The History Factory. From print to exhibit to digital design, Michelle grew into her role as lead designer. She is a mentor and leader to the designers and a senior design team member on all engagements.

Paul Snetman – When Paul left the organization, the desk-set that the staff presented him was engraved “To the Architect of The History Factory.” Paul joined IDG fresh from the MBA program at Georgetown, with previous experience at Arthur Andersen and FedEx. As IDG’s first businessperson, Paul instilled foundational cost accounting, project management and planning disciplines. A passionate technologist, Paul led the company’s efforts in computerization and database development. The high-point in Paul’s tenure was the successful execution of the strategy and physical structure that ultimately became The History Factory.

Peter Thompson – With a passion for history, and the sensibility of an ad man, Peter became Bruce’s first creative partner. Together, Bruce and Peter pioneered some of IDG’s groundbreaking fully integrated anniversary campaigns including First American Bank’s centennial and Brooks Brother’s 175th. As a project lead on the Goldman Sachs engagement, Peter was instrumental in The History Factory being awarded the investment bank’s “Five Star” certification.

Jim Welter – As a veteran internal communicator at Fireman’s Fund Insurance, Jim was a foundational client. His curmudgeonly wit, wisdom and willingness to share left a profound influence on Bruce and an entire generation of IDG staff. To put it simply, Jim was, hands down, the company’s first beloved client contact.

1979 – Bruce Weindruch and Tom West found Informative Design Group, Inc (IDG) to design corporate museums and commemorative exhibits. The first office space is in a dilapidated warehouse at 1210 Queen Street in Alexandria, Virginia.

1980 – IDG moves to the Park Lane Building at 21st St. & Pennsylvania Ave., across from The George Washington University, in Washington, D.C.

1982 – IDG relocates to the Upper Georgetown neighborhood in Washington D.C.

“I always kind of considered myself the first permanent employee. We were at 2233 Wisconsin Ave. It had three rooms. The third room, which was our archives storage space, was literally maybe a 10’ by 12’ room. It was a really small room. We went out and bought this Hechinger \$19.99 shelving and threw it up in there. I’m trying to remember whether I thought I would be there for any length of time. It was a really informal arrangement. In those earlier years we had our share of ‘extended lunches’ shall we say. I don’t want to portray it as a lunch. All we did was go out and have a few beers or something. It was kind of a very informal atmosphere and we had a lot of fun. It wasn’t until we moved into that next office, and started hiring some people, that it started to become a little more organized and a little more serious as far as the company is concerned.”—Steve Richardson

1984 – IDG relocates to 2201 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.

“I met The History Factory back in 1984. They had just re-located to 2201 Wisconsin Ave in Washington D.C. That’s just above Georgetown. I was the cleaning supervisor there for a cleaning company... I remember when they first moved in they had big trucks.”—Donnie Lanham

“When I first started it was all young men and the atmosphere was collegial and slightly collegiate. We expanded across the hallway and added new staff people including Barb Dawson. Adding a woman to the staff made the atmosphere more professional and a more balanced work environment. I think that the environment earlier was totally appropriate for that stage of the business and as the business grew and had to address different concerns and a broader client base and all that, it was appropriate that it changed then.”—Phil Auerswald

“The 2201 Wisconsin Avenue office was a split office. Rich Brown, Tom West, Debbie Van Buren, Steve Richardson, and Bruce were on one side of the hallway. On the other side were the archives and Barb Dawson and Alden.”—Peter Thompson

“To get in the archives room you had to go from the office side to the archives side—go out in the hallway, walk down the hall a little bit and go into the archives. The archives room was probably no bigger than a conference room. I think they had two collections, Mellon and McCormick.... It was a really different environment in those days. It was a lot smaller.”—Alden Hathaway

“When I came in, the archives were on a regular office space floor. I remember really just Fireman’s Fund, which was about two rows of shelving. McCormick might have still been there. In fact, yes it was, because one of the things Bruce always loved showing clients was the boxes of spices that we had—all old bottled spices. That was the big client show item, the McCormick spice boxes. It was very smelly, too, so we always got a kick out of that.”—Peter Thompson

“The archives room backed up to the Naval Observatory. I remember it was always fun because right about lunchtime, 1:00, on nice days, in my office—with the window overlooking the Observatory where the vice president lives—you could always tell when Barbara Bush was out walking because a black car with blacked-out windows and Secret Service agents would drive very slowly a hundred yards in front of her. So I’d look out and see Secret Service and say, ‘Barbara’s out for a walk.’ You could open the windows and hang out there and say, ‘Hey Barbara’ and wave to Barbara Bush.”—Alden Hathaway

“It wasn’t impossible for me to sit in the back corner office on a summer day after I’d been out late the night before, surrounded by these boxes of McCormick labels facing this early-era computer and once in a while fall asleep for 20 minutes at the keyboard to awake with Steve or Rich walking in the room like, ‘What the hell are you doing?’ It was a start-up. It was a real sort of start-up atmosphere with everything that entails.”—Phil Auerswald

“My first impression was that it was a real collegial, high energy, young company with a lot of possibilities. The basic concept of using history as a strategic asset, I can’t say that that exactly clicked with me.”—Paul Snetman

“It was a very small start-up group with a lot of great ideas. I think we were one of their first customers. We were learning together.”—Jim Welter

“Their idea was that you could mine corporate history in any number of ways for promotional purposes. It was sort of like the non-book history company. You could do corporate histories without necessarily writing the old-fashioned corporate history book. They were very entrepreneurial, very agile, and very willing to shape what they knew how to do with what the needs of the client were.”—Barry Deutsch

“The business developed not unlike a lot of other entrepreneurial businesses do. They had a good idea and they got started. I don’t know that when they started down that road, they had intentions of hiring a bunch of people and really turning it into a real business. I think it just kind of happened.”—Paul Snetman

1986 – While touring spice manufacturing plants and interviewing McCormick officers around the world, IDG employee Phil Auerswald meets with London businessman Dennis Jenks whose company was recently purchased by McCormick. Jenks is very impressed with the young Auerswald and the concept behind IDG. During a trip to McCormick headquarters in

Baltimore later in the year, Jenks meets with Bruce and Tom and decides to invest in the business.

“I was fascinated by the whole idea because I had never come across anything quite like this. I knew about people archiving and keeping historical records and museums and so on but this was a rather different approach. So, I was very interested and very impressed and particularly having just sold a business, this was a new business. I have always been interested in things, and I’ve been involved in a number of what I would call ‘new ventures.’” —Dennis Jenks

“The relationship between Dennis and Bruce was really central to the development of the company. He brought a real, true, business sense and was supportive of the things we were trying to do.” —Paul Snetman

“I think they had a great idea and they had some experience, but I think the experience of running through our corporate closet and having such free access to it was a new experience for them and it was the first time they had ever computerized that many documents and put them in document safekeeping, preservation folders. I think it’s probably the first time they ever had such complete free access. We just turned everything over to them and said, ‘Go, find good stuff for us. You tell us what we should keep.’ I think the experience of working with us and what we had made them far more skilled when they went to other companies because they had learned from us and we had learned by working together.” —Jack Felton

“I think all the clients felt very much as if they were part of the team. I’d go down there and work on the collection a little bit when they were in Georgetown. 5:30 pm or 6:00 pm would come and Bruce would run out and get a six-pack of beer and we would all sit around dissecting what had gone on that day. I think it was like that with a lot of the clients.” —Charron Fullerton

“The ambiance of the place, in my view, was very high energy, very collegial in the sense of informality, and the work got done.” —Barry Deutsch

“It’s fun when you’re on the threshold of a new profession, which is what they carved out for themselves. It’s fun to learn together and I think we learned with them and they learned with us... and they were far more skilled when they went to other companies.” —Jack Felton

“Back in the early days it was really very much off-the-cuff and I think it was great. It was very fertile during those days because everybody did everything. So you had people very involved in everything that was going on within the office.” —Charron Fullerton

“We were really making it up as we went along. As every company’s history is different, so what they can get out of it is different. And so, in a sense, we were very hit-and-miss about the processes that we went through.” —William Petre

The atmosphere was never a real rigid structure. It was very, ‘Do your own thing. Make sure you get the work done.’ Which was good and bad, I think. The company wasn’t very well

managed from a personnel point of view . It was a very casual atmosphere and not very structured.”—Steve Richardson

“I got given the title of Director of Research just because it was available. It was the untaken title so I took it. To me, that’s a benefit. When I first got to The History Factory, there were some efforts to find out what you did well. I remember Bruce handed me a manuscript and said, ‘Fix this.’ I was given something to fix and I had no idea what I was supposed to be fixing. And it didn’t work. But it was okay. I just moved on to something else. Eventually, I learned that, as I got better at doing things that we do here, I didn’t have too many failures and had a lot more successes.”—Alden Hathaway

“As they began to take on more customers and more clients, they developed more capabilities—that’s what I mean about becoming more professional. They really carved a niche in this business.”—Jim Welter

“A lot of things before were all done ad-hoc. We made it up at the time. It had to become a lot more established. I processed the archives for American Securities Bank which, of course, they would not do today. They would not have me, just a person with a B.A. and no library experience, doing archival processing. We made it up.”—Peter Thompson

“We could keep busy and bring on people and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah, but it was always a struggle to make this profitable. I mean, we could kind of keep in business, but making it profitable was an ongoing struggle.”—Steve Richardson

“It was wild and kind of free-form when I came on board and I had to try to instill some discipline and some order, which unfortunately took some of the fun away. But it gave us a chance to grow and to operate as a profitable company.”—Paul Snetman

“A big debate in the early days was how to define what we did. Were we an advertising agency? Were we a public relations type of company? Were we just historians? And that was kind of a big thing.”—Peter Thompson

1989 – A light manufacturing building becomes available that suits IDG's growing business needs. The company moves into the not-yet-gentrified neighborhood of Columbia Heights and “The History Factory” is born.

“The building on 15th Street was an old building which they gutted. They had an elevator shaft which was the front entrance...It was three levels. They set it up real nice. They had the office space on two and three and a kitchen up there. They had the archives downstairs.”—Donnie Lanham

“It was a nifty building. It was a neat space. It looked like the kind of space that a hot advertising agency would occupy and we were kind of moving it in that direction, to become a real cutting-edge communications firm. It gave the company an identity.”—Paul Snetman

“That was a very exciting time because it was going from a very non-descript office space on Wisconsin Avenue to this big building. That was really a big deal to move there.”—Steve Richardson

“In hindsight, I get the feeling—and you can ask Bruce— that in about 1986 the company was only six or seven years old and he was thinking to himself, ‘Hey this *might* work.’ Rather than, ‘This *will* work.’ I think by the time we got to 15th Street, I think he was probably saying to himself, ‘Hey, this is going to work now. I have a three-story building all of my own, people who are creative, projects that are great.’—Alden Hathaway

Everyone seemed to really be enjoying what they were doing and also felt very strongly about The History Factory’s mission. That seemed so important. Everyone really believed that what the company was doing was important, preserving history in all the different ways. That was one thing that I really enjoyed, all the people there. It was always just a really warm and happy atmosphere.”—Allison Goss

“We used to have a lot of fun up on the roof. There was a back stairway to go up on the roof. We would go up there after work, have a few beers and just hang out. We did that a lot. There was always one week—we just called it “spring break”—where we’d go up there and just party every night that week.”—Steve Richardson

1993 – There is a concentrated effort to professionalize and market The History Factory’s expanding archival capabilities. This new focus on archives management creates two disciplines within the company: archival and interpretive.

“Moving to Columbia Heights was a big deal as part of positioning ourselves as something and that was conceptually a factory. The raw archives came in through the bottom floor. It would be processed and filtered upward, and refined into a book, video or exhibit at the top.” The History Factory name came from relating the building to the idea that we were a factory and we refine history.”—Peter Thompson

“The corporate history and leveraging it as a communications vehicle, that was kind of far afield of my interests and my business expertise such that it was at that point. But, information technology and using it effectively was something that was real central to my interests.”—Paul Snetman

“We were doing simple database kinds of stuff and word processing. It didn’t take a real sophisticated system to be able to support that. We just kind of went along with everybody else... I think we pretty much kept up with the technology curve.”—Steve Richardson

“I think that we had a better idea of what the future of information technology was than plenty of other people at that time. When we were doing this very rudimentary indexing of archives a lot of problems came up about how knowledge should be retrieved, what to do about oral

histories, how to organize videos, text, and pictures in the same database. We were always thinking about how to use interactive technology and how to push the envelope in terms of technology to integrate these different resources to tell a coherent story.”—Phil Auerswald

“Bruce had this story about how The History Factory was made possible by the PC and there’s truth in that. We grew in our confidence and what we could do. We didn’t really have any experience at the beginning. So, we were very much figuring out what it was the customers wanted at that time.”—William Petre

“Certainly as technology evolved there became a lot more opportunities and we were able to take advantage of those opportunities to communicate history for our clients.”—Alden Hathaway

I remember our first email account, which was I think Histfact@aol.com, and it quickly became a popular way to distribute information. I remember times in the office when we’d have to yell over cubicles and say, “Hey, sign out of AOL. I have to sign in so I can get this file that is being emailed.” I think it was dial-up and we had just one account and it was always lots of talking saying, ‘Hey, get off that email account, I need to jump on so I can get this chapter back to the client’ or ‘Somebody’s emailing me something, it’s so much easier than faxing.’”—Michael Leland

1995 – The History Factory outgrows its DC office building and moves to a considerably larger, modern warehouse facility in Chantilly, Virginia.

“We wanted the business to grow. The major change that came about was gradually improving the quality of the people and the willingness of Bruce to let go and with the right people, delegating authority and giving them the chance to develop business with clients.”—Dennis Jenks

“The History Factory in Columbia Heights really defined and put the vision in place. Chantilly was really a bigger space that we used for economic reasons.”—Peter Thompson

“When we first opened up our space evolution in Chantilly, we started with the main warehouse. The upstairs was just totally unfinished space.”—Michael Leland

“I can remember when I came here thinking, ‘God, they have tons of room. This isn’t a problem.’ We had so much room and we didn’t even have that warehouse next door to us. We just had this one and it was almost empty.”—Stacey Bender

“By 1999, we were trying to make the transition to the digital space. We had these new products that we were creating called Heritage Servers which was kind of like The History Factory’s first version of the ancient prehistoric version of LuminArc. It was just basically a web-based product.”—Jason Dressel.

“The first exhibit that we did that embraced the digital revolution was in the late '90s with Andersen Consulting [Accenture]. We had a very small room in their St. Charles culture center to produce an exhibit. The size of the space and the large amount of content, and the technological sophistication of the audience mandated that we get smart and use technology. You had information kiosks and banks of videos. You could browse through an interactive timeline where you could explore different engagements and then get digitally delivered information about those programs. That to me was the turning point to saying ‘Wow, we are really going to go in and do this and embrace this new medium.’” —Michael Leland

“In terms of archives, Internet technology opened up possibilities beyond that sort of architecture for collection management systems and information, storage and retrieval systems. We recognized it as an organization when we did a couple of pilot projects that required us to develop what would have essentially been considered content services portals or information management systems.” —Chris Juhasz

“We do websites and we've got the whole social media aspect of things, right? That's very much in our mindset when we're working on projects. At the same time though I think because social media and technology is becoming so overbearing in our lives that in many cases I think we find such satisfaction in, almost joy in the simplicity of the traditional things like books... or like walking through an exhibit. There's just something so real and so tangible about that.” —Michele Shirey

“I think the stuff with Saudi Aramco in the mid-2000s was our first true international project; we had done maybe a handful of English companies. Had done a couple of other European subsidiaries for Kimberly-Clark, we were doing items in Asia. At least for me professionally, Saudi Aramco was kind of just the first big step outside the borders.” —Mike Leland

2008 – The Great Recession

“Everyone knows the story of what happened: the world changed in Q4 of 2008. What was interesting was that, because we had organizationally gotten ourselves to the point where we were just being much better in terms of how we were doing things, we were in a much better position to be able to deal with it.” —Jason Dressel

“The combination of looking at the pipeline, and looking at projected utilization, led us to project out and see that come four or five or six months from now we are going to find ourselves in an awkward position from a profitability prospective. So we had to respond to that.” —Rick Beller

“It was sort of like ‘Look, we need to get some things in place now that the economy is going south. We have to do something or else we might not survive, either.’” —Erica Rose

“When we started to see the downturn, we started eliminating positions. Through rolling furloughs and other items, we were able to weather it. Downsizing our staff definitely helped along with tightening our belts.” —Michael Leland

“What was interesting about 2008 was that we were having conversations with companies that were still interested in doing something with their history. We were able to adapt and have that conversation and connect to the things that they were worried about in a depressed economy like keeping their employees engaged, trying to cut costs, being more efficient. We had the opportunity to have a more business-oriented dialogue.”—Jason Dressel

“In 2008, we actually added 17 new clients to our roster. We generally look to add 10 to 12 new clients a year, so that was a huge success for us. The projects and margins were smaller, but we were able to sell our way through the darkest hours and continue building new relationships.” —Jason Dressel

2009 – The Idea Engine is established in downtown Washington, D.C., a skunk-works focused on innovations in heritage management.

“In the middle of the downturn they decided to put something together called the Idea Engine which was going to be based in DC and the idea was that it would be a little bit of a think tank for Bruce and a couple of people to spend the downturn investing in innovation.”—Adam Nemett

“I think it is important to continually make strategic investment in what is going to propel the organization forward. Even in a downturn, you don’t want to lose sight of that. So in spite of the challenging economy we committed ourselves to making those investments. As a result, what happened was we started to formulate some new methodology and some new approaches to clients.”—Rick Beller

“I was coming back from these meetings and I was like ‘We need to have something that's more fun. We need to have something that's more reflective of our creative point of view.’ When suddenly we had this Idea Engine. I said to Adam, I said we need a point of view. And Adam goes ‘I have that thing.’”—Jason Dressel

“I remember the first day I pitched StoryArc to them. I took the idea of story structure and the hero's journey and tried to apply it to corporations with the idea that a company or its founder or its workforce, that that's the protagonist of that company's story. And to try and place the company into this protagonist's role and follow it through the course of a lot of ups and downs, not just this linear, flat timeline of this is why we're great, but to really see the ups and downs, the peaks and valleys of this company trying to make it. And coming up against obstacles and having to rise to a challenge and then sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing but then picking themselves up and trying again. Because that's really the story of most of these companies.”—Adam Nemett

“I'm not claiming in any way, shape or form, credit for Story Arc. It was definitely a brainchild of Adam and then got improved by Bruce. And it started out, by the way, as Story Bridge. That was the original name for it. But it's interesting. I had already identified that as a major need. Again it was one of these kind of serendipitous things where I was like ‘I need this’ and they were like ‘We have that.’ And it came together. It was kind of neat.”—Jason Dressel

“The first real time it got used with a client in terms of an interactive Story Arc session and the first major experiment was with a major financial services and commodities exchange in Chicago. That was CME Group. Once we saw that it could be a viable way to tell stories and get these programs out there, we started using it for a lot more clients.”—Adam Nemett

“I think that the greatest thing that came out of the Idea Engine was it helped set the stage for us moving back into D.C. which I think is going to be a huge part of where we're going.”—Jason Dressel

2012 All non-archival staff relocate to the heart of Washington, D.C., near Dupont Circle.

“We have our headquarters out in Chantilly, Virginia, which is in Northern Virginia. It was a great location to consolidate because we have significant archives business and square footage that we need 25,000 square feet is just prohibitive to be down in D.C. But the challenge has been on the creative front and on the programming front. We have people in Chicago, New York, out West, Baltimore, and in D.C. and Northern Virginia. In order to take our organization to the next level and bring in new people into a culture that is very unique, we need to have a co-location. We need to be spending time together. There is far more teamwork, there is far more brainstorming. There is more complexity to our project on both the business intent as well as the creativity. So we need to get people together where they can interact on a daily basis and not just by telephone and that was very difficult to do in Chantilly. The move to D.C. reflects a step towards growth, a step towards greater integration of the current talent and the ability to find new talent.”—Rick Beller

“The History Factory started out in the District. There’s definitely a different feel to being in the city itself rather than out in Chantilly. I think it will be great to have everybody back in a space that people want to work at. I think it could be really really energizing and I am excited.”—Erica Rose

The History Factory Today

“From the first time I walked in The History Factory, the value proposition of an organization that believes in authenticity in storytelling and the ability to first capture, preserve, and then leverage the history of wonderful clients—I mean that to this day resonates. It’s not just a great idea, it’s an intriguing idea, a really smart idea and it’s a unique idea that Bruce founded the business on 33 years ago and to this day remains true. What’s unique about The History Factory I still think after all these years, I think that the value proposition is really rooted in authentic communications. At the end of the day you connect it all back to that. It’s about substance and it’s about authenticity.”—Jason Dressel

“At our best we can really help inject some real authenticity into a space that’s generally really inauthentic.”—Adam Nemett

“You build client loyalty by being authentic. No one believes in a faker. If they do it’s not for very long.”—Erica Rose

“I don't think that we will ever lose that sort of authenticity no matter what medium we choose.”—Michelle Shirey