

The S3 Agency

Tell us a little about yourself and your childhood.

I was born on an air force base in Germany to an Austrian mother and American father. We moved to the US when I was very young, but I was fortunate to be raised with both cultures – and with travel to other lands as a constant influence in my life. To me, America represented the land of opportunity and Austria represented a center of artistic creativity. My father's focus is on critical thinking, while my mother embodies creativity – a gift she passed on to my sister. Ironically, I never considered myself to be creative. I can't draw, sew, paint, or do any of the other artistic things they can do. I never thought my career would be one of creativity. But life sometimes opens your eyes in unexpected ways! I believe that working in advertising combines an influence from both of my parents, and I'm incredibly grateful to each of them.

When did you decide you wanted to start your own company?

I had the good fortune to work for many years for another creative agency, one founded by a female pioneer in the industry. I enjoyed many positions within the agency, ultimately running it as second in command for years. While it was a truly wonderful experience, our visions for the future were different. So in 2001 I decided to take a risk and start The S3 Agency – well, co-found it with my business partner. It's a decision we made within minutes, and one we have never regretted as we close in on two decades of The S3 Agency's existence!

Was there a specific moment when you knew this was what you wanted to do?

Yes. I was at dinner with a former client, who shocked me by asking me to be the VP of Marketing for a leading luxury automotive brand. I was honored – and, truth be told, a little flustered. But the words that came very naturally out of my mouth surprised both of us: I didn't think that would be the right path for me. That was the moment I knew that I had to start my own agency, one that would let me fulfill my vision of fearless creativity.

After you made the decisions, what steps did you take?

The next day I talked to my co-worker, friend, and future business partner about the idea. He was immediately in. So in a matter of days, we came up with our company name, designed our logo, filed our partnership papers, registered our website URL, and drafted the outline of our business plan. We also gave our notice. We literally had just a few weeks between when we decided to start the business and the day we opened our doors.



Denise Blasevick, CEO
The S3 Agency

How did you fund this project?

Our business is largely based on talent – so there were not a lot of hard costs up front for machinery, etc. We were able to fund the launch of The S3 Agency through three primary sources: our savings, our salaries (which we didn't take), and a loan from my dad (which we paid back within six months, thanks to the good fortune of acquiring some great clients in the automotive and fashion industries very quickly).

What were the hardest hurdles?

Starting The S3 Agency wasn't the hard part, since we were doing something for which that we were already well known. The day-to-day demands of running a business – making sure we always have the right people (and right number of people), the right clients (and right kinds of clients), and the right focus in an ever-changing industry is a tricky balancing act!

At any point did you want to give up?

No. No. No. No. No! I don't feel like I "have" to do it – I'm lucky enough to "get" to do this. And I get to do it with a team of fantastic, talented, passionate people! How great is that?