Romulo Groisman - Biruta

Biruta Idéias Mirabolantes

“ I saw an opportunity to create a new kind of marketing. ”

COUNTRY	Brazil
INDUSTRY	Prof. Services
EMPLOYEES	70
YEAR SELECTED	2010
PARTNERS	Alan James - Biruta , Rafael Liporace de Souza Pereira , Matheus Meirelles Damasceno Ferreira - Biruta
WEBSITE	www.biruta.com.br

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Starting a company in a garage has become commonplace, but starting one in the bathroom is something else together! Untraditional in all regards, Biruta Mídias Mirabolantes (Nutty Crackpot Media) provides creative, unconventional, below-the-line marketing solutions (including interactive, promotional, and guerilla marketing) to clients such as Coca-Cola, Nike, and Petrobrás. In a market of rapid changes in technology, communication channels, and consumer demographics, Biruta keeps pace with an industry trend toward more targeted, consumer-centric methods in place of traditional brand-oriented above-the-line marketing. The company's projects range from staging a massive singles parade (for a dating website) to a racecar-inspired "pitstop" (uniforms and all) for regular drivers at busy intersections for a gas company. Biruta has become a symbol of innovation in Rio de Janeiro, and with a solid pipeline and regional expansion plans, it is positioned to become the leader in below-the-line marketing in Brazil.

Biruta was founded in 2003 by partners Alan James, Rafael Liporace, Matheus Meirelles, and Romulo Groisman. The personal story of Alan James is what brought the four partners together. Born into a poor family living in the slums of Rio, Alan dropped out of high school to work, but refused to let his lack of education prohibit him from having a successful career. He struggled to find his passion, and his restlessness led him to a variety of jobs including a lamp salesman, a race mechanic and, finally, an airplane mechanic at an aerial advertising company. Here, Alan was first exposed to the advertising industry and in 1997, he decided to start his own aerial marketing company, Biruta Propaganda Aerea. He became known for his creative banners; for example, he created a blow-up soda can for Coca-Cola. He initially had trouble finding clients during the winter, so he began brainstorming offbeat marketing concepts, like having an event in a cemetery. Alan saw there was demand for these innovative ideas as clients were interested in anything new and different to stand out from competitors, so he decided to expand his business to encompass these below-the-line marketing ideas. Realizing that he needed help developing this new business, he joined a business incubator in Rio in 2002 and set up his "office" in the only available space – the bathroom.

While at the incubator, Alan met his future partners: Rafael, Romulo, and Matheus. With degrees in communication from the university ESPM, Rafael was working at a technology company and teaching at ESPM, while Romulo was working in the promotions department of the Regional Post Office. Matheus, still a college student, was giving financial advice to the young entrepreneurs at the incubator. Once they discovered Alan's project, they all decided to bet on the new venture, and in 2003 they refocused Alan's original company and renamed it "Nutty Crackpot Media." They had a computer, a strong will to succeed, and plenty of crackpot ideas.

Biruta's first big break came in 2004 when they showcased a digital New Year's "countdown" panel, the first in Rio, to two million people. Although the 832m2 panel had 64,456 lights, the entrepreneurs used innovative technology that allowed it to be incredibly energy efficient; in fact, the screen was powered by only 2.3 kilowatts per hour – less electricity than an electric shower! Eletrobras, an energy company, bought this project = to use for 20 days prior to the countdown for its energy efficiency campaign, which also included surrounding tents with promotional materials. Since then, Biruta has created hundreds of products from its three lines: 1) campaigns, interactive, promotional events like the parade; 2) special projects, large scale, highly visible products like the New Year's panel; and 3) shelf media, are easily customized products such as bikedoors.