

Expert Interview I with Senna Bayasgalan, a first-generation Mongolian American, a board member at Asians In Advertising, Director of Marketing at Cordia, speaker, advisor, mentor, and investor

Including | thoughts on amplifying different voices in marketing, and taking accountability for inclusivity

>> Bernice Chao, Co-Founder of Asians In Advertising, guest curated Strands on March 17, 2022. [Read it here.](#)

Tell us a little bit about yourself and what keeps you busy. How did you end up doing what you're doing today?

I'm Senna Bayasgalan, a first-generation Mongolian American, a board member at Asians In Advertising, Director of Marketing at Cordia, speaker, advisor, mentor, and investor.

I originally wanted to be a diplomat but decided to be a marketer after organizing and promoting marketing events for the causes I believed in during college. This is also why I joined [Asians In Advertising](#) because I believe in their mission to develop a free community, create opportunities, and help elevate Asians to higher leadership positions.

What excites you most about what you do?

I get so curious and excited about seeking out and amplifying different voices in marketing and advertising campaigns. I'm a marketer because I love people and their stories. And everyone's story is unique and remarkable.

What beliefs define your approach to work? How would you define your leadership style?

I approach my work with "make the best part of your job the biggest part of your job." While I love creating high-performing marketing programs, my absolute favorite part of the job is the people and the teams—building them, supporting them, and growing them into thriving cultures. I'm deeply passionate about authentic and inclusive leadership and spend a lot of time of my career thinking about how we can best show up for each other and improve each other's lives.



As an Asian woman, I intentionally set aside time and resources to help elevate women and people from underrepresented groups in their careers. I recently became a [#IamRemarkable](#) facilitator, a Google initiative empowering everyone, particularly women and underrepresented groups, to speak openly about their accomplishments, thereby breaking modesty norms and glass ceilings. There are so few of us who make it to that senior level, and it's so important to have a voice so you open doors for others coming up behind you.

This is also why I'm very excited to moderate a panel "Effective Boss: Leadership Characteristics and Skills" at Asians In Advertising's first summit, [Breaking Barriers](#), happening during Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, May 5 & 6th. I will be speaking with some incredible API leaders who are driving workplace and societal impacts and breaking barriers for the next generation.

What has been the most rewarding project you've worked on, and why?

Marketing a brand "inside out." At the end of the project, you could walk up to the most random employee who wasn't in the marketing team and ask what the brand stood for, what our mission was, or why we do what we do, and they could answer you with a sentence.

This made marketing the brand to the outside world so much easier because everyone who worked there was advocating for the brand. When you increase employee engagement by aligning everyone around common goals, improving company culture with diversity and inclusion, and fostering brand advocacy through clear positioning statements, it pays off.

We are big believers in diversity -- Not only because we believe in equality, but because we also think it's better for business. The Black Lives Matter movement has shaped industry conversations around both global injustice, and also lack of representation in our industry. How do you frame these kinds of conversations, both internally and with clients? Is there an emphasis on action, or are the conversations really more about communication?



It all starts with understanding what DEI is. **Diversity is what you see. Equity is what you do. Inclusion is how everyone feels.** Therefore, DEI should be a leadership priority. We can't create space for others to change and grow if we don't ground our actions on the outcomes we're trying to achieve. It's important to check whether we're creating the right spaces and resources for people to explore, connect and build capacity to improve climates of bias, harassment, and inequity.

For example, on an organizational level, we can make anti-racism and racial equity a priority. Identify and implement best practices, provide resources (like training, budget, and time), and require accountability from everyone.

On a personal level, you can take personal accountability for inclusivity. Be more mindful and educate yourself instead of asking people from minority groups to educate you. Work within your spheres of influence and cultivate cultural humility.

Switching gears a bit, how do you find time to balance personal interests with your career? Do you believe work/life balance is possible? Anything you've implemented that you recommend that others try?

This is so hard for me. I'm still learning to balance them. I can spend hours on reading, researching, and speaking about women empowerment, DEIB, inclusive leadership, authentic and innovative ways to brand, building empowered teams, etc., But I think it's important to realize that you can feel burnout from doing the things you love. Recently, I started to intentionally carve out times for things like exercising, meditating, and spending time with my family and friends.

What's your media diet? Where do you find inspiration?

I love listening to my favorite books and our [Asians In Advertising podcasts](#) while I run, watching shows on Netflix from different cultural backgrounds, and keeping an eye out for what people and brands are talking about on different media and social platforms.

I also love talking to people who are not in the industry about brands, DEIB, and leadership. It's really refreshing to hear from people who may have different perspectives than you and the people you spend a lot of time talking about those topics with day to day.



As you know, we believe there is so much value in having a wide range of teachers. What's the best piece of advice/knowledge you've stolen, and who/where'd you steal it from?

I completed Shine Bootcamp, a professional speaking program for women, last year. One big lesson I learned from the program is that “**confidence comes with exposure**”. You can learn and practice to be brave and confident.

Another one is from #IamRemarkable that “**our accomplishments do not speak for themselves**”. This is an important realization because we can't assume what others do, or do not, know about us. Talking about our accomplishments is a skill. It's a muscle that needs flexing to be developed and strengthened over time.