



# Drive and Commitment

Amy Colbourn, managing director of business strategy for MONOGRAM, chats with *Peter White*

**Y**ou're running a Las Vegas resort that's due to open soon. How do you stand out in a crowded marketplace? Ideally, you find an agency that thinks outside the box. In the case of Virgin Las Vegas, you pick up the phone and call MONOGRAM. It's a newish marketing agency that paradoxically has a wealth of experience in Sin City. MONOGRAM Managing Director of Business Strategy Amy Colbourn unravels that paradox for our own Peter White in a recent conversation.

## Could you begin by telling us a little about yourself?

I'm managing director of business strategy for MONOGRAM. I'm charged with focusing on business leadership, specifically in terms of brand strategy and business development. I help drive strategy and lead the teams who manage the relationships. I've been working with Executive Director John Schadler since O.H. Partners acquired

the team from SK+G and opened the Las Vegas office five years ago.

I've spent the majority of my career on the East Coast, working for independent agencies. While there, I was able to lean into brand strategy and lead marketing efforts for local casinos, regional destinations, and several state lotteries, as well as drive global consumer brands. That experience was a great complement to the luxury-marketing and megaresort legacy of SK+G. I was inspired to take our work to the next level with industry-category focus and a dedicated team with a focused skill set.

## What do you love about being in the advertising industry?

One of the reasons why I love the advertising industry is because it's always evolving. That means we have to stay in lock step with consumers, up to date on pop culture and abreast of innovation. We're constantly operating in a growth mindset. Advertising is an exciting and dynamic industry.

**Tell me more about the team at MONOGRAM.**

As much as we are laser-focused on luxury, hospitality, destination, and casino marketing, we are committed to a team of experts who have the experience and who truly possess the passion for what we offer. We're not for everyone and we're OK with that notion. This is the kind of place where we're always on. We're always thinking about our clients' business.

Marketing specialists love working for agencies with a range of client verticals that offer a ton of exposure to different businesses, challenges and opportunities to do amazing things creatively. Agencies that specialize in marketing for a focused vertical, such as hospitality and take it to the next level of specialization. It requires a unique skill set, one that's highly conceptual with the ability to define the experience. It's highly emotive and requires the ability to deliver the experience. What we do is very brand-centric, meaning we have the ability to do effective brand marketing while also selling amenities. What we do requires a highly polished design aesthetic in order to create distinct visual identities or to imagine an experience from a back-of-the-napkin idea.

**Tell me more about what makes the experience as a MONOGRAM client different.**

MONOGRAM was created to deliver specifically for the clients it serves. Just as we help properties define customer-service culture as an element of the brand and a competitive advantage, we seek to offer the same level of personalized service to our clients. The experience for a MONOGRAM client is highly skilled and very personalized.

We realized that we had an existing set of clients who had expectations that were aligned with the hospitality businesses they serve and that we needed to shift operationally to specifically align with these expectations. This means going beyond defining our client-service culture to cater to the needs of the hospitality sector. It's the invisible promise of an experience — an experience that delivers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It's about making intangibles more tangible. It's about competitive advantages that are based on emotions and not things.

MONOGRAM serves a different kind of client. The clients themselves are high-touch and require personalized service just like the customers they market to, and guests they serve.



Amy Colbourn, managing director of business strategy for Monogram

**What notable projects has MONOGRAM been involved with recently?**

We work with clients on a lot of international casino, resort, and destination projects that are highly confidential and have long development times — up to five, six or even eight years from conception to opening. With these projects we're bringing a brand vision to life as projects are conceptualized working alongside architects, investors and designers.

That aside, one of the most fun brands we've worked with recently is Virgin Hotels. We reimaged Virgin's loyalty program, "The Know," when it was rapidly expanding throughout North America. It was a fun way to take loyalty from the transactional nature most consumers are familiar with — like points and rewards — and adopting a lifestyle approach to loyalty that is more about personalization and preferences. I could go on ...

**Tell us more about the project's development phases and what they involved?**

Virgin Hotels' work, along with our depth of knowledge in the Las Vegas market, parlayed us into being the brand agency to introduce Virgin Hotels to Las Vegas. The beloved Virgin brand was up against a few challenges. First, replacing the acclaimed Hard Rock Hotel and, second, stepping into an off-Strip location.