

A New Beginning: The Future of Global Communications

A Conversation with Matt Giegerich and Shaun Urban

When two veteran healthcare advertising executives decide to rejoin forces, the natural — and expected — assumption is that they would launch a new, differentiated, potentially funky, boutique-type communications agency. Well, Matt Giegerich and Shaun Urban are doing anything but the expected. Their new venture is still differentiated, funky, boutique-ish, and communications-oriented, but far afield from their healthcare advertising roots. These two strategic futurists are the driving force behind Pando — the latest innovation offered by The Inception Company, a provider of video production, studio broadcasts, meeting planning, and innovative platforms for both live and virtual meetings.

“Joining The Inception Company a year and a half ago was an amazing change from where I was, and I don’t regret one moment of it,” says Giegerich, who served as chairman and CEO of Ogilvy CommonHealth Worldwide, a division of Ogilvy and WPP for 17 years, capping a 25-year career at the multi-faceted agency group. “It’s so fun to be in a different vertical serving the same industry in many regards but offering a new value to the marketplace. It’s really cool to be a part of a team that’s bringing something so innovative to the market and working with my colleague Shaun along the way.”

Giegerich as CEO and Urban as president are overseeing all aspects of Pando’s operations and growth, even joking that they are also chief bottle washers.

“I knew I wanted to do something different,” Giegerich says. “I wanted to do something that was forward-looking in terms of technology and I wanted to do something in a small environment where I felt like I was deeply connected to all of the components. And I wanted to get my hands dirty.”

Having worked together for more than 14 years at CommonHealth and before that in roles as agency partner and client, Giegerich and Urban have developed an easy rapport and trusted partnership, which have been key to their early success. Having collaborated closely for so long, they finish each



Matt Giegerich, CEO
The Inception Company

other’s sentences, which comes in handy as they have been hard at work conducting dozens and dozens of demos — 195 and counting — showcasing Pando’s unique capabilities.

“I was ready for a change and to join a smaller, more entrepreneurial organization where I could use my skills and experience to help lead a company through its next significant growth phase,” says Urban, former managing partner of Ogilvy CommonHealth. “When I talked with Doug Mack, founder and chairman of Inception, about Pando I knew instantly that this was a game-changing technology that fills an unmet need in our industry; I was convinced from the start it was going to take off.

“Our skills are very complementary and diverse, and I think we both knew coming to Inception together would create greater energy and momentum than if one of us came separately,” Urban continues. “Matt and I bring a lot of energy and passion to what we do. We’ve built our reputations based on an incessant focus on clients. Matt has a creative edge about him that I don’t have, while I bring a lot of new business and operational skills to the organization.”



Shaun Urban, President
The Inception Company

The Opportunity

Drawing its name from the oldest and largest living organism on earth — 45,000 trees connected by a single root system and genetic code — Pando is the first-to-market technology solution that brings the impact of a live meeting to a virtual audience. Clients value the ability to interact with their participants and the “lean in” engagement, which keeps participants’ full interest. Participants also appreciate the lack of travel while still experiencing the interaction and collaboration of a live meeting.

The advantages of Pando are many: the technology enables clients to have more frequent meetings while avoiding the cost, logistics, and scheduling challenges of travel. The meeting is facilitated by an in-studio moderator who interacts with up to 60 participants displayed on the 40-foot Pandorama video wall, as well as up to 5,000 off-wall participants and/or observers worldwide. Supported by a full studio production crew, all elements of the meeting are managed to ensure a dynamic and engaging meeting experience, including the participants’ audio and video feeds, all

program content, polling/survey questions and results; and five in-studio cameras.

Pando officially launched in May 2018, and the first program was conducted in July. In 2018, Giegerich, Urban, and the talented production team oversaw more than 60 programs, ranging from product launches to training of all types — sales rep, MSL, HCP — to market research to advisory boards.

When PharmaVOICE met with Giegerich and Urban in early 2019, the company had already completed a handful of programs since the start of the year and their 2019 calendar was booking up fast. “We are expecting somewhere in the neighborhood of 150 broadcasts out of this studio in 2019,” Giegerich predicts. “When we look at the adoption of Pando throughout just the pharmaceutical industry, we project that we will at minimum double the number of Pando programs that we do every year over the next few years. The beauty of Pando is that it has the engagement of a live meeting without the hassle or expense. For a guy who grew up flying around the country, and in some cases around the world, sitting behind glass, city after city after city after city, seeing Pando’s application to complete a market research program in an afternoon is a great story.”

Notwithstanding the extensive networks that Giegerich and Urban have built over years working with some of the industry’s biggest companies as well as the connections they have with biotech, med device, and emerging companies, their growth projections are based on the fact that the technology is not only agnostic in terms of hardware/software, but that Pando’s applicability can be adjusted to meet clients’ needs. Whether it’s for small companies looking to manage an internal market research initiative or large companies that want to conduct a global product roll out, Pando can easily fit the bill.

Even with all the technology bells and whistles — and there are plenty of those to impress — it’s the 40-foot video wall that seals the deal with potential clients who visit the studio to experience a demo. The wall is flat out visually impressive, with multiple configurations possible, allowing for participants to be grouped by geography, area of specialty, organization affiliation, prominence within the participant group, or in virtually any manner desired to optimize the meeting experience.

Giegerich says the feedback to the programs the company has produced thus far fall in the 90%-plus favorable range, but he admits there are some participants who are unsettled by having to be on camera all the time — meaning that the multitasking that happens during typical conference calls or

webinars is virtually nonexistent with the Pando technology. “Clients love that they are able to maintain physical connectivity in a non-physical exchange, which is important to the way Pando operates,” Giegerich says. “In other programs, participants might put the phone on mute, lean back, check their email, walk around the house, do the gardening, etc. But Pando makes them participate and for that reason our clients, those who are paying the bills and in many cases paying for the relationships with advisors or speakers, love the fact that the participants have to lean in and participate.”

It’s not just participants who have to lean in Giegerich says clients are also upping their game in terms of engagement. “We hear that presenters and moderators have to think differently about engaging the audience using our platform. They recognize that being in the studio means they have to be more dynamic and engaging for the audience.”

Urban points to two distinct examples of Pando’s ability to expand connectivity even further for some companies. The first involves the ability to demonstrate a new surgical procedure or installation of a medical device to the masses. A camera crew can be sent to an operating suite with the video streaming into the Pando platform so anyone around the world can be educated on the new procedure or surgical technique. Another example involves patient advocacy roundtable meetings in the rare disease space. People with cystic fibrosis, for instance, may be unable to be in the same room or travel with one another to live events, yet their voices need to be heard and industry wants them to be heard. Pando provides an opportunity for this unique patient population to provide their feedback.

“Our customers — our customers being the pharmaceutical industry — are looking for efficiencies and cost savings, and that is a core element of Pando’s value proposition,” Urban explains. “Our customers’ customers are also looking for those same efficiencies. The pressure on physicians’ time, payers’ time, consumers’ time has never been more significant. The new guard of physicians — the younger physicians — grew up in a very technology-enabled and forward time period, all they know is technology. Their preference is to use technology to network, connect, participate in meetings, and be educated. Pando is perfectly suited for where the marketplace is today.”

What the Future Holds

Giegerich and Urban have big plans and an aggressive timeline to make Pando more acces-

PANDO VS. A WEB CONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE

- **Live meeting without the travel**
- **Cost-effective and innovative**
- **Highly engaging and interactive**
- **No software downloads**
- **Ability to see facial expressions and body language**
- **93.64% of participants surveyed stated that Pando either met or exceeded their expectations**
- **89% of pharmaceutical sales trainers and marketers surveyed said they would use Pando for future meetings and trainings**

sible in more geographies. Currently, the team is operating out of a studio in North Jersey, with a second studio being built out in Philadelphia, a third studio in Boston, and the fourth in San Francisco — all within the next two years.

“Beyond this, we see a marketplace where Pando can be installed inside corporate headquarters,” Giegerich says. “We can help our customers design and build out a Pando studio and then license them the software to run programs, and in some cases, crew the studio to run meetings.”

“I have always been intrigued by innovation and finding new, better ways to meet the needs of clients,” Urban says. “I have been impressed for years by the unparalleled quality of Inception’s virtual meeting solutions and live broadcasts, as well as the unique storytelling capabilities of its video productions. However, what really captured my interest was the company’s vision for the future of global communications. Pando will truly change the way organizations engage virtually with both customers and employees alike, allowing them to save millions of dollars previously spent on live meetings and events, market research and training. We have an amazing opportunity in front of us.” ■

This article was created for and commissioned by The Inception Company.