

Gary Dixon



Education and Training: BA, broadcasting/journalism, Texas Tech University, 1972; MA, communications, BYU, 1976

Job Position in 2006: President of the Foundation for a Better Life

Family: Dixon and his wife, Susan, have seven children: Rebecca, Russell, Monica, Melanie, Adam, Jared, and Kimber. Dixon grew up in Santa Fe and now lives with his wife and family in Denver, Colorado.

Awards and Honors: “I was selected by the American Advertising Federation as a national speaker on the topic of building creative teams. The presentation and workshop was given around the country and was entitled ‘Creative Combustion.’ Recently I received recognition for ten years of service as a member of the Board of Trustees for ProLiteracy Worldwide.

“This is a challenging area personally. The Homefront series and the work for the Foundation for a Better Life have won numerous awards. They include Emmys, Addys, TELLys, Mobius, Gabriels, and numerous others—all of which I am very proud of. However, because of a belief I’ve had in the importance of teamwork, I have never taken credit personally nor had my name attached to these. It has rather been my honor to work with some of the finest creative talents in the industry to produce these meaningful messages. This is not false modesty: the true creative talents deserve the recognition.”

Career: Gary Dixon is president of the Foundation for a Better Life, an organization that promotes positive values through the media. The messages for the foundation have aired on all networks, on thousands of theater screens, and in over two hundred countries. They also appear on over ten thousand billboards around the country, including Times Square. The foundation’s outdoor effort was recently recognized as the most successful public service campaign in the history of the billboard industry. National awards include the TELLY, Creativity, Mobius, Cine Golden Eagle, and Gabriel.

Formerly, Gary Dixon served as vice president of Bonneville Communications, where he directed the creative development of many successful campaigns, including campaigns for Major League Baseball, Homefront, Children’s Miracle Network, and the American Cancer Society.

He has also been a speaker at regional and national advertising conferences for the American Advertising Federation and at creative seminars. Other assignments took him to Jakarta, Indonesia, where he served as a communications consultant on a government project, and to Japan, where early in his career he directed a documentary on the first Trans-Pacific flight.

Dixon serves on the Board of Advisors for the Harvard Center for Media and Child Health and on the National Board of Directors for the College of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University.

Questions and Comments:

What advice would you give to an up-and-coming student in your area?

BYU opened up a new world of possibilities to me. The spiritual atmosphere and high academic expectations pushed me to new levels of what I could expect of myself. BYU also brought me into a network of personal and professional contacts that continue to be a vital part of my life.

The Communications Department in particular gave you a sense that you had a responsibility with the education you were receiving. It was an unspoken but very clear expectation that you would take whatever talents and learning you received and make a positive contribution to the media—not just get a job. Additionally, your horizons were broadened to think of your life's work on a national or international scale.

I would suggest that any incoming student should be aware of the rich opportunities that abound from association with BYU. The day-to-day class work will sometimes wear at you, but the key is to keep the perspective that this unique university will open a world to you—and not just because of the skills you'll acquire. You will discover that indeed your resume will get you in the door, but your values will get you promoted. Managers tend to put people they trust in charge.

In short, BYU has meant preparation for opportunity. The education I received there and the reputation of the school have been a springboard for my life as well as career. Several professors provided a benchmark of character and example to me that I have never forgotten.

What are some of the frustrations of your career?

There are always frustrations—if not there would be no “work” in the word *work*. Challenges always create stress and in the process produce solutions. I think that is the key: to expect success and move through the problems with the idea that you are going to be successful. It is often not so much the problems but how you handle them.

What brings you the most happiness or satisfaction in your career?

To work with great people and in some cases to encourage the talents and capabilities of a number of individuals who have made significant contributions in the field of communications.

To play a small part in the creation and distribution of media messages for the Foundation for a Better Life and others that have affected people for good across the world.

To have had the opportunity to work with some of the top leaders in the communications, commercial production, business, advertising, and entertainment industries.

Additional Information: www.forbetterlife.org