Francisco C. Cárdenas

BRAND & DIGITAL MARKETING EXECUTIVE

Integrated Brand Strategy | Digital Transformation | Multicultural Growth | AI-Enabled Marketing

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Executive Profile

Brand and digital marketing executive with 20+ years across the U.S., Mexico and Europe, on both client and agency sides. Most recently led brand and digital for Avocados From Mexico with a $27MM budget, after a decade running the brand's digital strategy through nine Super Bowl programs. Has led teams of up to 30 and built AI-enabled brand experiences for national organizations. Bilingual in English and Spanish.

Selected Impact

- **Avocados From Mexico:** Led digital strategy for nine Super Bowl programs. Most talked-about brand among 60+ advertisers (2020), nearly 5 billion impressions (2022), and a top-two digital campaign five years running (Merkle).
- **He Gets Us:** Built the national digital ecosystem, drawing 113,317 audience submissions from all 50 states and a 139% lift in branded search.
- **The Salvation Army:** Unified thousands of local websites into one national framework and built an AI strategy agent for agency and client leaders.

Core Capabilities

Brand Strategy • Integrated Marketing • Digital Transformation • Budget & Agency Management • Team & Cross-Functional Leadership • U.S. Hispanic & Multicultural Marketing • Social, Creator & Influencer Strategy • SEO & Web • Consumer Experience • Measurement & Analytics • Generative AI • Sports & Cultural Marketing • CPG & Food

Platforms & methods: Brandwatch, Sprinklr, Talkwalker, YouTube brand lift studies, conversational AI and multi-agent systems

Experience

Avocados From Mexico | Dallas, TX | Mar 2026 - Sep 2026

Director, Brand & Digital Marketing

Brought in-house after a decade leading the brand's digital strategy on the agency side.

- Managed a $27MM budget across brand, digital and media, with a team of 3 and a multi-agency roster.
- Negotiated FY27 agency contracts and scopes, onboarding a new organic social agency and dedicated SEO support.
- Built the FY27 Digital Transformation roadmap across social, creators, SEO, web, analytics and emerging technology, and shaped the Brand Strategy narrative and campaign territories.
- Designed and presented Real Attention Value (RAV), an attention-weighted measurement model proposed to move reporting beyond impressions.

LERMA/ | Dallas, TX | Jun 2015 - Mar 2026

Progressed through four roles in nearly 11 years. Led teams of up to 30 for Avocados From Mexico, He Gets Us, The Home Depot, Southwest Airlines, Keurig Dr Pepper, Metro by T-Mobile, Ocean Spray, The Salvation Army and Barcel.

Executive Director, Brand Integration | Jan 2026 - Mar 2026

- Led integrated brand strategy across creative, media, digital, experience and emerging platforms, making brands behave as coherent systems instead of disconnected campaigns.

Principal, Digital Strategy & Integration | Apr 2023 - Jan 2026

- Initiated the integration of all agency disciplines into one way of working across strategy, creative, media, social, technology and production.
- Built the national digital ecosystem for He Gets Us, which held through two consecutive Super Bowl campaigns, drew 113,317 audience submissions from all 50 states, more than doubled site traffic in a month and lifted branded search 139%.
- Built LERMA/'s innovation and technology practice, including the William Booth AI agent for The Salvation Army, brand voice systems and generative tools.
- Directed the redesign of The Salvation Army's web ecosystem, unifying thousands of local websites into one national framework.

- Created Talk B.I.G. for the Hay Festival's U.S. debut, a pro bono multi-agent AI system that answered Instagram comments with literary quotes and needed no human moderators.

Principal, Digital and Social Media Strategy | Jun 2020 - Apr 2023

- Led all digital and social media strategy for the agency, building integrated campaigns across digital, social, creative and media.
- Delivered nearly 5 billion impressions and 200,000+ mentions with the 2022 Avocados From Mexico Super Bowl activation (Brandwatch).
- Created a virtual LERMA/ agency on Roblox, extending the agency into gaming and immersive platforms.

Director, Digital Strategy | Jun 2015 - Jun 2020

- Led Avocados From Mexico digital strategy across nine Super Bowl programs. In 2020, AFM was the most talked-about brand among 60+ advertisers, with 2.3 billion social impressions.
- Kept AFM among the top two digital campaigns in Merkle's Digital Bowl Report for five consecutive years, the only brand to do so.
- Relaunched the Avocados From Mexico chatbot as a character, lifting engagement 1,055%.
- Launched a personalized celebrity phone experience with Thalía for U.S. Hispanic audiences, drawing 916,000 visitors in three months.

Dieste Inc. (Omnicom) | Dallas, TX | 2012 - 2015

Director, Digital Strategy

- Built the agency's digital strategy capability and social media team for U.S. Hispanic work on AT&T, Frito-Lay, Heineken, Hershey, Nissan and P&G.
- Led digital strategy for #Muttbombing for Dallas Pets Alive, which earned 146 million+ media impressions on a $0 budget.
- Led digital strategy for Adoptable Trends, which increased adoptions 200% in a year.

Earlier Experience

- **Executive Creative Director & Managing Partner**, Lead2Action, Mexico City (2010 - 2012); **Creative Director & Managing Partner**, Nueve por Nueve, Mexico City (2008 - 2010)

- Earlier creative and strategy roles at Dieste Harmel & Partners (Omnicom), Dallas; Lapiz (Leo Burnett), Chicago; and Zertior / Augeo Sports & Entertainment, Madrid

Recognition & Industry Engagement

- **Awards:** Cannes Lions 2015 (Silver Media, Bronze Cyber), ANA Reggie 2020 (Silver), IAB MIXX Gold 2014. Also Clio, D&AD, One Show, FIAP, London International Awards, Ojo de Iberoamérica, Ad Age Hispanic Creative Advertising Awards and ADDYs.
- **Cannes Lions panelist, 2024 and 2026:** Spoke on AI in marketing at Latino US Day both years.
- **Speaker and judge:** American Advertising Federation, Southern Methodist University, IAB Conecta, Google Hispanic Marketing Forum, IAB MIXX, Effie Regionals. AAF Digital Committee member.
- **Host and producer:** Loud & Clear, a podcast on advertising, technology and culture.

Education

- **MBA, Sports Management & Marketing** | Universidad Europea de Madrid / Real Madrid C.F. Alfredo Di Stéfano
- **BS, Advertising, Texas Creative Sequence** | The University of Texas at Austin