

# fitzco

## AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

**R**ing ring. It's the day before Thanksgiving, 1983. Your biggest client's on Line 1. You're Dave Fitzgerald, a 30-something Atlanta ad man. And you're about to answer one hell of a call to adventure.

It all began with Marriott Hotels. Dave was a general manager at their agency of record, Green & Burkhard. Unknown to Dave, they were about to part ways. But Marriott's CMO believed in Dave, so he called with a proposal.

**“ you're fired. now, go start your own agency. we'll be your first account.**

It was Wednesday.

“I need your word by Monday.”

That night, Dave pitched the idea to his wife.

He thought on what to name this unplanned baby. Thus, “Fitzgerald & Co” was born on a cocktail napkin.

## ORIGIN STORY



The next morning, Dave was in his boss's office. Just a casual drop-in, to say he was leaving and taking their biggest client to go. Woof.

Of course, he couldn't do it alone. Enter Lisa Galanti, an account manager at G&B.

When Dave met Lisa, she was client-side in the foam packaging business. Her main product: a pizza container, unique for being round, not square like every other pizza box you know. Lisa's love for her work could not be contained.

Dave said to himself: “Anyone who can get this excited about a pizza box needs to work with me.”

Lisa became his co-founder, AKA the brains, heart, and soul of Fitzco.

Together, they opened the doors to Fitzco on December 15th, 1983.

It was makeshift office to start, but it was home.

## FORMATIVE YEARS

**L**isa and Dave promised Marriott they wouldn't seek new business for a year. To have a chance to stabilize, and dedicate all their time to the client that made it all happen.

New business had other plans.

Soon enough, Fitzgerald & Co's phone was ringing off the hook. Atlanta's advertisers came to us.

When a thoroughbred racehorse outfit found out we shared an office building, they called. Dave was no equestrian, but he knew he could sell to them.

## and so it went.

We grew by word of mouth. Dave met with the CEO of every agency in town. “Give me the accounts you're conflicted out of,” he'd tell 'em. We were gutsy like that. Still are.

Those efforts won us AdWeek's Southeast Agency of the Year in 1992.



Our straight-talking, DIY approach translated to office life. The vibe was communal, like a family of young upstarts. Lest we forget, it was the 80s & 90s. The 2 Hour Martini Lunch was no myth. The pace of work was different back then. We had fun, and we were known for it.

Our holiday parties were the envy of Atlanta. Come year end, we always throw down. Especially in those early days. From all faiths, and all levels of inebriation, the FitzFam came together to sing around the piano.



## HELLO IPG

Even when Dave was 30-something, he had a plan: sell the agency by age 50.

In 1998, opportunity knocked. Interpublic Group was at the door.

We merged with McCann Atlanta, under IPG's bigger umbrella.

That merger earned us another longtime member of the FitzFam: Brian “B-Dub” Wallace, our VP Digital Creative Services Manager.

Dave had some reservations about selling.

Fitzgerald & Co was his baby, after all. Would an international holding company be a good adoptive parent?

In the end, Dave stuck to his convictions.

Our independent spirit had an extra name on the letterhead, but it was never tamed.

So the beast waited.



Email was all the rage.

**what is a Digital Creative Director, and how do we get one?**

We had many questions.

**R**egardless, transparency was always the answer.

Sure, we'd play email tag while questioning briefs and deliverables. But we always knew when to get off our butts and talk it out.

The 2000s meant less time for martini lunches, but we'd still get together for a cold one, and to hash out everything from life to media buys.

We were always driven to go beyond the brief, and the digital age brought us new tools.

For our first “experiential website” (as they were called back in the day), we built 10 hours of video comedy content. It cost as much as it would've to shoot a 2 day TV spot, but the client bought it.

We somehow pulled it off. We like to think we were ahead of our time.

Fitzgerald & Co continued to mutate through the 2000s.

Mashups were hot. We did one with our name and became Fitzco.



In 2004, we merged with an agency named Austin Kelly.

That's how we found David Brooker, our Guardian of All Things I.T., and Keri Palmer, our Fearless CFO.

In 2015, Dave stepped down as CEO. Lisa moved on shortly after.

In 2017, we moved into a slaughterhouse. Well, a former one.

We made it look dope, but we were still searching for ourselves.

## GOODBYE, IPG

When Dave transitioned from CEO to Chairman, he also took a step back from day-to-day operations.

In Dave's own words,

**i had a lot of time to reflect while I was deposed.**

He thought about what he wanted to do for the rest of his life—and found it while looking back.

On a family trip to his childhood home, Dave got another call to adventure.

This time, it was from IPG. The message was a familiar one:

**start your own agency. again.\***

*(“By “start again” we mean “buy back.”)*

Dave took longer than the night before Thanksgiving this go-round.

He gave it a good think.

He remembered how much he loved the ad biz.

How much he loved the band of misfitz he gave a home in Atlanta.

So he returned.

**IN JANUARY**

# 2020

we became **New Fitzco, LLC**. Fitzco for short.

ONWARD

After our Independence Day, once again we had a lot of questions.

“What does this mean?” was a big one.

We realized the answer was what we made of it.

So we decided to make it matter.

All the work, all the wins and fails. All the regime changes, and all our office culture quirks.

We had a chance to remake who we were.