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Megan Lally, 39

CEO and co-owner Highdive Advertising

The first time Megan Lally saw a commercial on television that she had helped create, she was at a bar with her friends in Lincoln Park. Fittingly, it was for Bud Light.

That was about 15 years ago, when Lally was an account executive at advertising firm DDB Chicago. She still remembers how proud she felt.

"Working with big brands like this in a high-profile place is so demanding. There are late nights and there are hard problems and there's a lot of pressure," she says. "But I'm at a bar with my friends and they can see what I work on. It was just pride and accomplishment."

It's a feeling with which Lally, now the CEO at Highdive Advertising, has become familiar. The fast-growing independent agency is the force behind some of the biggest Super Bowl commercials in recent years. Just last year, it did [State Farm's commercial](#) with Arnold Schwarzenegger — in the insurer's tagline, he says "neighbaa" in his famous accent — and [BetMGM's spot](#) with Vince Vaughn poking fun at Tom Brady.

Other campaigns include [Jersey Mike's Subs' ads](#) with Danny DeVito and [Jeep's Groundhog Day commercial](#) with Bill Murray.

Lally's dad pointed her toward an advertising career after he saw her creative fundraising efforts as cheerleading captain at Cary-Grove High School. Everyone else did carwashes; her squad sold mascot-shaped air fresheners.



She landed a job in Madison after studying marketing at the University of Wisconsin, then moved back to Chicago to work at DDB. There, she worked on accounts for SeaWorld, State Farm and Anheuser-Busch. She left in 2013 and went to Leo Burnett, where she worked on Fifth Third Bank, Brooks Sports and Allstate.

She left Leo Burnett for Highdive in 2017, a few months after a couple of former colleagues launched the agency. She was co-owner and managing partner before being [named Highdive's first CEO](#) last year. She leads operations, account management and strategy.

2023 revenue of \$31.9 million and five-year growth of more than 746% earned Highdive a spot on [Crain's latest list of Chicago's fastest-growing companies](#). Lally has been instrumental in that rise, says Highdive co-founder and Chief Creative Officer Mark Gross.

"Watching her is like watching one of those people riding a unicycle on a tightrope juggling 40 plates," he says. "She just never gets rattled and is able to handle so many things."

By Ally Marotti