

Industry Update

A summary of newsworthy client/agency relationship developments and relevant marketing or agency management trends.

October-November 2023 | Volume 73



In this issue:

TALENT



Securing the right talent and resources

One of the highlights of this Industry Update is the merger of WPP's VMLY&R and Wunderman Thompson. The new entity will be called VML, not VMLY&RWJWT... [continued on pg. 2](#)

WORK AND PERFORMANCE



Driving better work, stronger performance, and value from the partnership

The world of entertainment is in constant transformation. After Barbie's marketing success... [continued on pg. 8](#)

FINANCIALS



Driving efficient use of resources

Current global economic challenges—the war in Ukraine, high and sustained inflation, high interest rates, supply chain disruptions, credit market... [continued on pg. 10](#)

AGENCY



Agency reviews and roster changes

Amazon kicked off a massive review of its media account (the brand's worldwide advertising and promotion spending went up by 22%... [continued on pg. 14](#)

WHITEPAPER



WHITEPAPER: Top 10 ideas for more sustainable media planning and buying

Contributed by ECI Media Management

While a brand's sustainability credentials have long been the subject... [continued on pg. 11](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: October-November recap

If you are looking for a sign, this might be it.

Artificial intelligence is not only changing how we do marketing; it's changing the agency landscape and the offerings brands rely on. AI is disrupting the agency model in significant ways, and not just because of task automation or productivity gains. Agencies are transforming their business and P&L from "services" to "solutions." The technology-as-a-service (TaaS) or agency-as-a-platform (AaaS) model is far more lucrative and secure than the labor-based business the agency world has relied on for growth during the last few decades. Watch for new capabilities in targeting; insight analysis; creativity and personalization; performance optimization; and complex decision-making. There also will be new offerings to generate and scale content faster, what some refer to as "language models," and AI-based targeting and modeling solutions that brands will need to compete and augment their internal data capabilities.

The world is changing as you read this. Unlike the distant promise of W3 and the metaverse, AI is already here. It is the topic of every webinar, every research paper and most of the articles we will read, because it is that prevalent and significant to our industry.

Technology players are investing billions of dollars in a race for AI supremacy because they realize that being left behind means being defeated in the near future.



Bruno Galpois

Co-Founder and Principal,
Agency Mania Solutions

TALENT: Securing the right talent and resources

One of the highlights of this Industry Update is the merger of WPP's VMLY&R and Wunderman Thompson. The new entity will be called VML, not VMLY&RWJWT as some jokingly expected. WPP is merging two of its largest creative networks, 30,000 employees strong in 64 markets, to simplify and streamline how it serves clients. Meanwhile, Amazon is reviewing its media account. Olivier Gauthier, the founder and CEO of COMvergence, calls it "the global media pitch of the decade," with over \$2.5 billion in billings (minus search, social and performance media still handled in-house). IPG's Initiative and its bespoke agency Rufus will defend vigorously, without a doubt. A loss or a win would be significant for the media agencies concerned.

- **Hollywood studios** and the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) reached a deal after 146 days of strike and negotiations, securing better protection for writers, a bonus structure for streaming content, guardrails for the use of AI, and other key points. Some actors have voiced concerns that the AI protections are not enough. The SAG-AFTRA board approved the new contract, and the full membership began voting on it Nov. 14 (through Dec. 5).
- The **Association of National Advertisers (ANA)** relaunched a mentoring program leveraging an industry community committed to improving their knowledge of marketing procurement through peer-to-peer mentorship.
- Disruption is on the horizon with a **wave of agency reviews**. Per Forrester's B2C Marketing CMO Pulse Survey, 38% of CMOs plan to review their media agency, and 37% plan to review their creative agency in the next 12 months.
- **ISBA (isba.org.uk)** launched a program of 30-minute sessions covering the creative and production evolution called "Adapting your production strategies for the new world," led by Claire Randall Consulting.
- Per the **World Federation of Advertisers (WFA)** and **MediaSense** in their new report, "Future of Media Agency Models," 88% of multinational brand marketers are unsatisfied with their media agency partnership model, and only 11% think their media agency's model is fit for their purposes. 37% are looking for simplification through working with fewer partners. 97% claim that talent remains a top priority. 27% brought parts of their paid media buying in-house, and 16% are handling more than 25% of their paid media budget in-house.
- Like most holding companies and brand advertisers today, **Publicis Groupe** launched a new company wide work-from-home policy, requiring employees to be in the office three days a week, one of which is Mondays.
- The **4A's** and **Catalyte** have partnered to allow 4A's members to take advantage of Catalyte's AI-powered platform, reskilling program, and placement service. Members can tap into a diverse pool of vetted, qualified candidates from nontraditional backgrounds, access a broader range of skills, and make their workforces more dynamic, inclusive, and competitive.
- WPP's media investment group **GroupM** developed a global collaboration with Amazon Ads, led by The Goat Agency (Part of GroupM Nexus), to introduce creator-led shoppable content to the Amazon advertising suite of services. GroupM clients will have the ability to amplify creator content within the Amazon DSP and in Amazon Sponsored Brand placements.
- Per Sabrina Lynch, six ways to **fix unhealthy agency-client relationships**:
For agencies:
 - 1) Teach business strategy to account teams
 - 2) Prioritize generational insights
 - 3) Don't tag-team client leads
 For clients:
 - 4) Add CIO duties to CMOs
 - 5) Champion entrepreneurship
 - 6) Collaborate on organizational processes
- Ad Age published its "**The State of Agency Operations Report**" in partnership with Teamwork.com, which taps input from over 500 agencies.
Key highlights:
 - 1) 52% of agencies are struggling to hit billable utilization rate benchmarks over 50%
 - 2) 54% of agency leaders are working more than 40 hours per week
 - 3) Only 18% of agencies reach billable vs. non-billable time targets
 Top operational challenges:
 - 1) Difficulty keeping projects within budget (33%)
 - 2) Difficulty keeping projects on schedule (29%)
 - 3) Difficulty projecting team member utilization for projects and getting team members to consistently complete timesheets (28%)
- Per the 4A's, **what it takes to be a true partner**:
 - 1) Be human: Treat others with respect and empathy
 - 2) Be transparent: Frequent communication that treats the team as an extension of your own with consistent feedback
 - 3) Be fair: Provide reasonable compensation and terms
 - 4) Be decisive: Ensure clarity about the key decision-maker, budgets, and deliverables
 - 5) Be vulnerable: Open up about where you lack experience and ask questions to learn
 - 6) Be candid: Own your issues and acknowledge organizational challenges
 - 7) Be bold: Lean into innovation, get comfortable taking risks
 - 8) Be curious: Embrace the power of creativity to produce business-building solutions

- **Interpublic Group** launched a cloud solution called Real ID, built by Acxiom. Used by IPG agencies such as FCB, Real ID uses data to identify people (without cookies) and integrates with a brand's secure cloud ecosystem.
- Per Dan Eisenberg, CMO of Blue Chip, here is how marketers can conduct **30-day RFPs** and avoid being overly complex:
 - 1) Investigate upfront
 - 2) Put chemistry first
 - 3) Keep briefs brief
 - 4) Reduce spec work
 - 5) Get granular on scope
- **TikTok** added a new "Agency" category to its existing Marketing Partners Program to help brands find specialized agencies that deliver TikTok-style creative capabilities.
- **Southwest Airlines** and Austin-based full-service agency GSD&M celebrated their 42-year partnership. At the center is a shared passion for customer satisfaction. Both companies are 52 years old.
- **Omnicom Media Group** launched its agency-as-a-platform (AaaP) model, a multifaceted and flexible organization equipped to address clients' most complex issues using a combination of technology and tools available across all its agencies.
- Per Steve Boehler, founder and partner of Mercer Island Group, **top questions agencies should be asking clients:**
 - 1) What is the primary business impact needed as a result of the agency's work?
 - 2) What level of agency talent do you expect on your business and are you willing to pay market rates for that talent?
 - 3) Do you routinely ask the agency to evaluate the client's performance as an agency partner?
 - 4) What is your approval process, and who can approve what work?
 - 5) What top-to-top check-in cadence can you commit to?
 - 6) What should I know about your future business needs?
 - 7) How will you evaluate the agency's work?
- Per Pile and Company, **10 best new business practices:**
 - 1) Take a temperature check
 - 2) Assess your scope of work
 - 3) Take stock of your staffing plan
 - 4) Be a proactive partner
 - 5) Know the tricks of your client's trade
 - 6) Be specific (and honest) about your agency's abilities
 - 7) Target your top prospects
 - 8) Know when to say no
 - 9) Play by the rules
 - 10) Do sweat the small stuff
- **Top 10 Fortune Best Workplaces in Advertising & Marketing™ 2023:**
 - 1) PMG (Dallas)
 - 2) Basis Technologies (Chicago)
 - 3) Horizon Media (NYC)
 - 4) AppLovin (Palo Alto)
 - 5) Mediavine (Boca Raton)
 - 6) Launch Potato (Delray Beach)
 - 7) NextRoll (San Francisco)
 - 8) Bluecore (NYC)
 - 9) Rokr (NYC)
 - 10) Pattern (Lehi)
- **ID Comms** suggested using three C's to establish the priorities of a pitch process:
 - 1) Capabilities (can the agency do what you need?)
 - 2) Culture and values (can you work effectively with them?)
 - 3) Commercial terms (can they provide reasonable costs and terms?)

Need to manage your Agency Roster?

You already have the right partnerships in place, but do you need to better manage your existing roster of agencies?

There is a better way.

Check out our video explainer about **RosterDeliver**.

New agencies or capabilities, restructurings, and reorganizations:

- WPP announced the combination of two of its major creative agencies, VMLY&R and Wunderman Thompson, to simplify its business for marketer clients and expand its offering in brand experience, customer experience, and commerce. The new entity, **VML**, will have 30,000 employees in 64 markets.
- A new Hispanic-owned holding company called **Culture+ Group** has launched, composed of minority-operated agencies with their own P&L and offering full-service capabilities. Culture+ Group consists of Cien+; its healthcare division Cien+ Health; shopper and experiential marketing agency The Choice+; and market research and analytics company Human Dot Plus.
- **Stagwell** launched a business transformation consultancy called Jemini. The unit is part of Stagwell's Constellation agency group, which includes 72andSunny, 10 Thousand Design, Brand Citizens, Colle McVoy, Exponent, Instrument, Redscout, TEAM Enterprises, Tinsel Experiential Design, and The Harris Poll.
- Stagwell-owned creative agency **72andSunny** opened a brand and marketing consulting arm in LA. 72andSunny Strategy Studio will help clients on a project basis identify new product or service opportunities through brand relevance.
- A new agency called **Creyentes** (Spanish for "believers") just launched to serve brands targeting the Latino community in the US, offering creative and consulting services.
- **Media.Monks** launched Experience.Monks, its first dedicated experience offering, combining teams from experience design shop Jam3, and its capabilities in experiential, events, metaverse, gaming, livestream, VR, immersive web, and AR.
- IPG Mediabrands merged **Kinesso**, Reprise and Matterkind as part of the network's transition to a simplified model under one P&L as clients demand greater speed and flexibility. The agencies will now operate under the Kinesso banner within IPG Mediabrands to unify the data derived from a brand's full marketing system into one growth-driving capability.
- **Interpublic's McCann** launched its McCann Content Studios, a global center for social and creator capabilities, to simplify for clients the process of working on social and creator-led campaigns. As part of this move, IPG's influencer agency, ITB, and the network's social practice, McCann LIVE, will join the new unit. Services will include creative, audience development, creator partnerships, and performance measurement.
- **Dentsu** reorganized its corporate structure in a move to remove barriers and streamline how to work and collaborate with clients. All creative, media, and customer experience management globally are now grouped by practice.
- **Omnicom** merged two agencies within its Precision Marketing Group—digital marketing shop Organic and brand experience agency Barefoot—under the Organic brand with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati.
- **Stagwell** added São Paulo-based and digitally focused agency iClarita to its Stagwell Global Affiliate Program, which has 80 affiliates in 98 countries.
- Boston-based marketing agency **Boathouse Group** launched a new social impact practice to augment its current offering focused on advertising, communication, digital acquisition, and organic social. The agency will assist brands with equity and inclusion, social issues, corporate social responsibilities, philanthropy, employee trust, and more.



Check out our new article titled "[Improve Brand Decisions: Replace Working/Non-Working Ratios with Deploy & Develop Allocations](#)".

AI (artificial intelligence):

- **OpenAI's ChatGPT** reported 100 million weekly active users and 2 million developers using the platform within two months of launching.
- **President Joe Biden** issued an Executive Order on AI, the federal government's first large regulatory effort in this area, to advance the safe, secure, and trustworthy development and use of AI, while trying to avoid hindrance of innovation. Built on the Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights and the AI Risk Management Framework, the order mandates a set of minimum evaluation, monitoring, and risk mitigation practices.
- **OpenAI** launched Copyright Shield (for users of its business tier, ChatGPT Enterprise, and its developer platform), pledging to cover clients' legal costs in potential copyright infringement suits. The move was similar to that of other AI and image-making software players, like Google, Microsoft, Adobe, and Amazon.
- Per **Forrester**, top 10 agencies will spend millions of dollars building partnerships with tech providers like Adobe, Anthropic, AWS, Google, IBM, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia, and OpenAI, to offer AI-based "brand language models."
- According to the 2023 LIONS Creativity Report, a growing number of **Cannes Lions** entries used AI in 2023: 7.3% of all 2023 entries mentioned AI in their synopses compared with 3.7% in 2022.
- Per **Accenture**, 80% of CMOs plan to increase budgets for AI and data in 2024, up from 57% in 2022, and will primarily be directing generative AI funds toward customer service, marketing, and research. 70% have trained staff on effective uses of generative AI, claiming the technology is improving workforce aptitude.
- **Walmart** launched a new set of generative AI tools, such as generative AI-powered search, a new shopping assistant, "My Assistant," and an interior design feature.
- **Microsoft** launched its first ad product, a format called Conversational Ads, developed specifically for Bing's AI-powered chat to assist consumers in shopping. The solution creates AI-generated tables that display multiple images, products, and product details, such as price comparisons.
- **Havas** expanded its partnership with Adobe, prompting its agencies to use Adobe Firefly and Adobe GenStudio, an enterprise content supply-chain solution built on apps on Adobe's Creative Cloud, Express, and Experience Cloud, to deliver enhanced customer experiences via audience-specific data insights and to accelerate the content process from ideations to delivery.
- **The Coca-Cola Company** used AI to create its newest limited-edition flavor, Y3000 Zero Sugar, along with the packaging design, in partnership with Forpeople, Virtue, and WPP's Open X and EssenceMediacom.
- **Dentsu Creative** launched "The Artificial Client," an AI experiment that generates feedback on creative work from three fictional client personas.
- S4Capital PLC's digital arm, **Media.Monks**, announced a proprietary AI production system that will infuse machine learning into its software-defined production solution to deliver hyper-personalized content across new media formats to tailored, interest-based audiences.
- **BBDO** is using generative AI platforms to help its employees uncover strategic insights and write better briefs.
- **Meta** launched a suite of new generative AI-powered tools for advertisers, including tools like Background Generation, Image Expansion, and Text Variation, available inside Meta's Ad Manager network. These tools allow advertisers to produce multiple backgrounds in advertisements, automatically resize ads to fit different formats, and produce multiple versions of ad copy from an original text. These tools will complement recently launched Meta AI tools like image generators, celebrity AI chatbots, and an AI studio for developers to create AI assistants. The tool can purportedly save at least five hours per week.
- New **YouTube** AI-powered technology, Spotlight Moments, automatically identifies the most popular, relevant videos related to a specific cultural moment, allowing advertisers to drive awareness for their brand next to certain content.
- The **ANA** and **Bloomberg** partnered to publish "The Business Guide to AI," a multi-channel guide providing actionable and practical insights for CMOs and business leaders.
- **Wunderman Thompson** developed proprietary AI technology in-house to analyze emotional responses to ads. The testing solution, called Reveal, studies micro expressions, such as reactions and changes in facial muscle movement, to measure attention and emotional responses to brand content through real-world environments, via PCs and phones.
- **Alphabet's Google** released a range of new and free generative AI product imagery tools for US advertisers to create product imagery simply by using text prompts in its Product Studio. The tools purportedly will reduce the necessity of hiring professional picture editors and enhancing low-quality images without a reshoot.
- **Google** launched an image verification tool allowing users to get a picture's metadata, including its history, and identify AI-generated images. Google's new AI-generated image tool won't have a tag/watermark to inform users that they were manipulated, but the information will be stored in the image's metadata.
- AI firm **Anthropic** received massive commitments from Google and Amazon. Google agreed to invest up to \$2 billion in the AI company and OpenAI rival. Amazon.com agreed to invest up to \$4 billion in Anthropic as well.
- **Google** rolled out invisible AI-generated ad watermarks, called SynthID, for all creative assets generated by AI in Performance Max and Google Ads. The move is designed to prevent systems from engaging with inappropriate and sensitive prompts or policy-violating creatives.

In-house agencies:

- Per Slalom Consulting, four top benefits of handling **media in-house** are:
 - 1) Tech/data ownership (first-party data ownership in a privacy-first, cookieless world)
 - 2) Cost savings (savings of 15%-25% of media budgets from under performance spending, hidden fees, and markups)
 - 3) Control (transparency into media buying operations)
 - 4) Real-time insights
- Per Andrew McKechnie, a board member for WELL/BEINGS, seven key ingredients for an **effective in-house agency**:
 - 1) Shift the primary focus from cost efficiency to high-value expertise/innovation
 - 2) Foster a culture of creativity
 - 3) Develop clear strategies and processes for integrating in-house teams into existing organizations
 - 4) Build a hybrid mix of support with in-house talent and external capabilities
 - 5) Build a flexible talent pool
 - 6) Demonstrate top management support with a clear and unambiguous role for the team
 - 7) Foster diverse talent

Responsible advertising (diversity and inclusion, environment):

- At the **2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28)** over 130 brands, including the world's largest advertisers such as Unilever and Danone, representing over \$1 trillion in global revenues, joined forces and partnered with nonprofit organization We Mean Business to ask global leaders to reduce emissions and the use of fossil fuels.
- **Clean Creatives** published a so-called "F-List" of top-ranked agencies and how many of their accounts/clients are fossil fuel companies or promote fossil fuel activities. Per the report, holding company WPP has 55 such contracts. Clean Creatives recently staged a small demonstration outside Havas's offices in New York to protest their new contract with Shell.
- **Apple's** goal is to be carbon neutral by 2030. In its latest environmental progress report, it said it has reduced its emissions by over 45% since 2015. The brand cleverly asked Human Nature in its recent Apple product showcase conference to walk through the company's green performance to date.
- The **ANA and the 4A's** jointly published the report "Guidelines for Getting Started When Investing with Diverse Media Companies," which has 11 new guidelines.

Noteworthy quotes:

- » "AI is the next quantum leap for marketers—but only if humans steer it." —Mark Penn, CEO, **Stagwell**
- » "To build the perfect client-agency partnership, it's time to start viewing it from a human relationship perspective." —David Muldoon, VP, Strategic Advisory EMEA, **MediaLink**
- » "If we accept that speed AND risk management are both required, it forces us to innovate and deliver speed AND safer supplier decisions." —Conrad Smith, Founder & CEO, **Graphite Systems Inc.**
- » "It's time for an industry code of conduct to ensure people within agencies are treated appropriately." —Marla Kaplowitz, CEO, **4A's**
- » "Relationship therapy is not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of intent, a willingness to get to the root of the problem." —David Muldoon, VP, Strategic Advisory EMEA, **MediaLink**
- » "A purely digital, data-driven (powering AI), faster, better, more efficient, unitary model resonates with clients." —Martin Sorrell, Founder and Executive Chairman, **S4 Capital**
- » "One of the biggest mistakes I've seen over the years is companies entering partnerships based on emotion versus fact." —Barry Byrne, Global Head Employer Branding, EVP & Employee Experience, **Adidas**
- » "Success with AI is going to require us integrating creative and media and production, and it's going to be much easier for us to do that inside WPP with fewer, stronger companies." —Mark Read, CEO, **WPP**
- » "I don't think anybody has a clue how to use it [AI] yet, frankly. I think we're all struggling with it still. And it needs to be struggled with." —David Sable, Vice Chairman, **Stagwell**
- » "Often, it's not what clients are just asking from us but rather something we are working on in partnership. Their businesses are on transformation journeys that we are supporting, and we are changing how we work together simultaneously." —Katie Lee, COO, **Wavemaker UK**
- » "We look at generative AI as a force multiplier in terms of our ability to react and respond to client needs." —Jason Snyder, CTO, **Momentum**
- » "CMOs and agency CEOs need to sit down and draw up simplification manifestos for their relationships—so that each can focus on achieving success in the marketplace." —Michael Farmer, Chairman and CEO, **Farmer & Company**
- » "As an industry, we need to be transparent to audiences when they are interacting with an AI-powered experience—especially when they are directly interacting with it." —Brian Yamada, Chief Innovation Officer, **VML**

WORK AND PERFORMANCE: Driving better work, stronger performance, and value from the partnership



The world of entertainment is in constant transformation. After Barbie’s marketing success, it’s time for another entertainment icon to break through. Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour concert film generated between \$95M to \$97M at the box office during its opening weekend in the US and Canada, according to AMC Entertainment. That makes it the highest-opening concert film of all time; the highest-grossing North American release of a concert film ever; and the widest-released concert film in history, arriving in more than 3,850 locations during its debut.

- Nine ways to **be a great client** per Jared Belsky, CEO of Acadia:
 - 1) Make great agency stewardship a KPI
 - 2) Pick agencies for human skills
 - 3) Onboard intensely
 - 4) Reveal what inspires you
 - 5) Have a well-crafted, realistic goal
 - 6) Make feedback about the brief, not the person
 - 7) Use a now/new/next framework
 - 8) Take a long view and understand if it’s personal or systemic
 - 9) Reset before review
- WARC, in association with Lions and the ANA, published a white paper titled “**Building a culture of creative effectiveness**,” focusing on the culture within client organizations that unlocks true marketing-driven commercial impact. The report highlights that “Effectiveness, as we’ve increasingly realized over the years, is a ‘team sport.’ It thrives when there is an aligned approach within the client organization and there is a true partnership between a client and its agencies.”
- Per the UK-based Advertising Association and its AI task force, the **top five most urgent, unresolved issues surrounding AI in marketing** are:
 - 1) Transparency (the need to clearly communicate such use to viewers)
 - 2) Accuracy
 - 3) Employee morale (related to job security)
 - 4) Ownership (the use of copyrighted assets and content without the owners’ consent)
 - 5) Consent (gain express permission from an individual before using generative AI to represent them in an ad)
- Production advisory firm **Advertising Production Resources (APR)** launched its ACERO tool to serve as the foundation for production and agency spend information to drive significant improvements in production processes, analysis, and insights. The tool provides guided insights and dashboard modules.
- Per Blum Consulting Partners, Inc., some of the most **common causes of extra creative rounds** are unwanted client behaviors, such as:
 - 1) Bad or incomplete briefs
 - 2) Too many approvers
 - 3) Too much input
 - 4) I’ll know it when I see it
 - 5) Late to the party syndrome and/or parachuting in
 - 6) The ones who won’t get off the train
- **WPP** launched the Creative Capital Index, which measures the value of creativity and helps brands assess the value of creativity in delivering different types of measurable growth, including financial and consumer advocacy.
- A bipartisan bill in the US Senate called **The Nurture Originals, Foster Art, and Keep Entertainment Safe (NO FAKES) Act** aims at holding individuals and companies liable for producing unauthorized digital replicas of individuals in a performance, along with platforms that host such content.

How two iconic brands are leveraging the *Barbie* movie’s success to engage their audiences:



- **Social media addiction** is coming under legal scrutiny: Utah's attorney general claims in a lawsuit that TikTok violated a state consumer protection law by causing minors to become addicted to the app and misrepresenting TikTok's content policies. A state judge in California ruled that teens who suffered from eating disorders, anxiety, depression, and other harms as a result of their social media addiction can proceed with lawsuits against Meta, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube.
- **Google** launched an ad measurement tool called Google Ads Data Manager, which connects with marketers' first-party data. It is designed to work in the cookieless digital ad ecosystem and measure ad campaigns across Google properties.
- Per **Michael Farmer**, chair and CEO of Farmer & Company, increased complexity with advertising agencies centers on fee-setting, roster, SOW, in-house, and hiring and firing. Simplification should be a priority.
- Per Adweek, the **2023 Top 5 Fastest Growing Large Agencies** are:
 - 1) Gale (full service, US)
 - 2) Cheil North America (full service, US)
 - 3) WongDoody (creative, US)
 - 4) Brainlabs (digital, UK)
 - 5) Dept (full service, Netherlands)
- OMD was named the best-performing global media network in the **RECMA Network Diagnostics Report** for the sixth consecutive year. OMD's performance led RECMA to declare that "OMD has no direct competitor today" among global media agency networks. OMD ranked as the best-performing agency in North America, EMEA, Central East Europe, and the Nordic region.

Awards:

- **ANA Educational Foundation (AEF)** nominated Dentsu for its 2023 Agency award, Paramount for its Media award, and PepsiCo for its Marketer award.
- **Adweek's 2023 US Agency of the Year** is Mischieff @ No Fixed Address, after increasing revenue 40% YOY. The agency was previously Adweek's 2021 Breakthrough Agency of the Year and 2022 Midsize Agency of the Year. Recent wins include Outback Steakhouse (AOR), Peet's Coffee (AOR), Sizzler (AOR), Chili's, Heinz Ketchup, and Red Wing Shoes.
- **2023 Adweek Agencies of the Year** are:
 - 1) The Community (multicultural)
 - 2) Alto (small, US)
 - 3) Colle McCoy (midsize, US)
 - 4) Ogilvy (global)
 - 5) Gut Buenos Aires (international)
 - 6) Gut (breakthrough)
- Per Adweek, the **2023 Top 10 Fastest Growing Agencies** are:
 - 1) CourtAvenue (full service, US)
 - 2) Ascent Avenue (in-house, US)
 - 3) Said Differently (full service, US)
 - 4) Media by Mother (media, US)
 - 5) Apollo Partners (media, US)
 - 6) Beinfluence Europe (digital, Belgium)
 - 7) Attn: (full service, US)
 - 8) Refinery89 (digital, Spain)
 - 9) Party Land (full service, US)
 - 10) Chartis Interactive (digital, US)
- Per Adweek, the **2023 Top 5 Minority-led Fastest Growing Agencies** are:
 - 1) Digitalfarm (full service, United Arab Emirates)
 - 2) Said Differently (full service, US)
 - 3) Chartis Interactive (digital, US)
 - 4) Daybreak Studio (digital, Canada)
 - 5) Movers+Shakers (creative, US)

Noteworthy quotes:

- » "Within an agency, the best ideas flock to the best clients. The best team members flock to the best clients. And the greatest velocity of work gravitates toward the best clients." —Jared Belsky, CEO, **Acadia**
- » "Belief and conviction matter in good pitches and proposals." —Steve Boehler, Founder and Partner, **Mercer Island Group**
- » "All great sponsorships evaluation models measure performance against KPIs and the terms are flexible based on performance. If the partnership succeeds both sides win." —Barry Byrne, Global Head Employer Branding, EVP & Employee Experience, **Adidas**
- » "Do you know what it costs when someone parachutes in late to your creative review process? Well, it's not fun and can cause tons of issues, including creating extra rounds of work and wasted human and financial capital." —Jim Wallace, Marketing Operations & Agency Management Consultant, **BLUM**
- » "I'm not using gen AI to create new campaigns, but I'm using it to inspire me to think differently." —Michelle Crossan-Matos, CMO, **Ulta Beauty**
- » "The AI genie is well out of the bottle and has been for nearly a year now. It is not a wolf in sheep's clothing, but rather a tech-enabled calvary that could help rescue the industry from its creative malaise." —Jeff Charney, founder and CEO, **Mkhstry**
- » "AI doesn't replace the artist; it's the ultimate wingman. It hands you the palette; you're the maestro." —Dan Roberts, Creative Director, **The Romans**
- » "Procurement should be simplifying relationships, not cutting fees." Michael Farmer, Chairman and CEO, **Farmer & Company**
- » "My belief is that we will have a stronger impact and a more meaningful impact partnering with every company as long as they're engaged in the meaningful transition journey themselves." —Yannick Bolloré, Chairman and CEO, **Havas**
- » "Our guiding principle has been, 'What we say yes to shapes us, and what we say no to defines us.' We're not going to be all things to all people." —Greg Hahn, Co-Founder and Chief Creative Officer, **Mischief @ No Fixed Address**

FINANCIALS: Driving efficient use of resources



Current global economic challenges—the war in Ukraine, high and sustained inflation, high interest rates, supply chain disruptions, credit market deterioration, and other macroeconomic factors—are causing economic uncertainty and volatility, leading to the delay of projects and sales cycles, and slower-than-anticipated onboarding of new business for some. Yet Microsoft closed its acquisition of Activision Blizzard, giving the software giant another viable avenue to reach millions of gamers and consumers through advertising and its popular titles (*Call of Duty*, *Diablo*, *Overwatch*, *Warcraft*, etc). CBS sold out of its Super Bowl advertising inventory months before the big game, indicating that advertisers are bullish about the future. Amazon, not satisfied to be the largest global advertiser, continues to become a giant ad player as well, dominating retail media and reporting that its advertising business generated more than \$12 billion in revenue in Q3 2023 alone, a 26% increase YOY, despite a macroeconomic context that became more difficult over the quarter. That's half of the revenue generated by Amazon Web Services, one of its largest growth engines. Amazon's US ad business is expected to reach \$34 billion this year. Organic growth for the large holding companies is likely to be 3% to 4% in 2023 (with IPG and WPP trailing between 0% and 1% organic), but they all reduced financial guidance for the year. Omnicom and Publicis are showing signs of strength in their 2023 results.

- Per Ad Age, **spending by the top 100 advertisers in 2022** increased by 2.3%, totaling \$347 billion. Worldwide ad spending for US-based marketers rose by 8.7%. The world's biggest advertiser was Amazon, whose ad and promotion spending increased by 22% YOY, followed by L'Oréal and Alibaba.
- Per Stagwell media agency Assembly, **political advertising spending** is projected to hit a record \$12 billion during the 2024 US election cycle. Of that, \$3 billion is expected to be spent in the presidential race.
- Per PG Mediabrands' Magna, **US advertising** will grow 5.2% in 2023 and 5.6% in 2024, fueled by digital media.
- Per Juniper Research, 22% of all global digital ad spend and 30% of mobile advertising spend will be lost to **ad fraud** in 2023, or \$84.2 billion. It is projected to more than double (+105%) by 2028 and reach \$172.3 billion.
- Based on Ciesco, notable **2023 M&A transactions** include Uncommon (by Havas), Grabarz & Partner (by Omnicom Group), Tinsel (by Stagwell), Jellyfish (by The Brandtech Group), Corra (by Publicis Groupe), Kinnect (by IPG), amp (by WPP), and Dark Horses (by Omnicom Group). These acquisitions involve creative agencies, experiential and design, digital marketing, e-commerce, generative AI and brand experience, sports marketing, and more. WPP is considered an active acquirer with six acquisitions YTD.
- Per **ANA CEO Bob Liodice** on helping marketers make the case for investment and the need for a shared understanding and belief in the value of creativity:
 - 1) The need for multiple teams, including finance and data analytics, working together, and utilizing the same best practices, playbooks, and KPIs
 - 2) Gaining C-suite buy-in through a common language and outcomes that both marketers and CEOs can use as a currency to validate the impact of creative effectiveness
 - 3) The critical importance of strong client and agency relationships, both from a starting point of clearly written briefs to the same creative evaluation scales, performance metrics, and incentives
- Per COMvergence, the GroupM agency Wavemaker is the **top global media agency network in new business results** for the first half of 2023, with net new business of \$1.2 billion, including \$818 million in retentions from Huawei China (\$315 million) and Adobe US (\$140 million). The net figure factors in \$216 million in lost accounts. Zenith ranked second, including the win of Adobe (\$150 million) and the retention of L'Oréal in Iberia (\$130 million). Initiative is third-ranked (\$555 million), mostly due to its Constellation Brands win in the US (\$534 million). At the group level, Publicis Media ranks first with \$3.3 billion in net new business, including Pfizer (\$1.5 billion), LVMH in North America, Signet Jewelers in the US, and Walgreens in the US.
- **ECI Media Management** released its Media Inflation Report (Q3 2023), and key takeaways are:
 - 1) The global economic outlook is cloudy but with silver linings
 - 2) The Hollywood strikes highlight the accelerating decline of TV, which is expected to fall even further into deflation. **Check out the five-year inflation trends.**
- Per PQ Media, **global influencer marketing** spend rose by 21.5% in 2022 to \$29 billion and is expected to rise by an additional 17% to \$34 billion by the end of 2023, driven by marketers' investments in sponsored social media content in the US from both micro- and macro-influencers.
- The 4A's issued a guidance paper titled "**The Ripple Effect of Extending Payment Terms**" to equip agencies to navigate difficult conversations about standard payment terms and to protect themselves and their clients from the ripple effects of extended payment terms. Such extended terms translate to additional financial burden in the form of loans or dipping into cash reserves to meet business expenses.
- CPG giant **Procter & Gamble** increased ad spending by \$445 million in its fiscal first quarter ended Sept. 30 (a 2.6% increase in marketing spending as a percentage of sales), similar to the \$453 million increase in P&G's fiscal fourth quarter.

- Per **RightSpend**, 47% of marketing decision-makers are too focused on growth and ROI to be on top of streamlining costs. 34% don't have access to the needed, valid data and analytics. 36% claim that better cost management would benefit them by identifying growth opportunities to make marketing work harder and help boost long-term agency partnership stability. 43% realize that they must invest in order to save.

- Per Philippe Dominois, co-founder and CEO of Abintus, **10 ways advertisers are being overcharged by media agencies:**

- 1) Agency miscalculation of media agency remuneration
- 2) Agency mark-ups on digital media technical costs
- 3) Misapplication of commission rates on adjacent costs
- 4) Agency invoicing based on plans, not actual results
- 5) Agency double charging for tools and technology
- 6) Agency not delivering on their contractual obligations
- 7) Agency retaining AVBs for itself (or part of it)
- 8) Agency using inventory media without advertiser consent
- 9) Agency retaining unbilled media for itself
- 10) Agency reselling "free spots" to clients

Holding company financial performance:

- **WPP** reported revenue of £7 billion for H1 2023, up 6.9% YOY and up 1.2% in the first nine months of the year, but net organic revenue declined in Q3 (-0.6%). The firm saw reduced spend from technology clients in North America and other markets, with a greater impact on its media business, GroupM. Recent wins include Estée Lauder, Hyatt, Lenovo, Nestlé, Unilever, and Verizon B2C, for a total of \$2 billion net new billings in H1 and \$3.4 billion

in new business YTD. The firm acquired Goat and Obviously in the fast-growth area of influencer marketing and invested in Majority, a diversity-led creative agency. The firm launched VML, with further integration of GroupM (common products and a single tech platform for Wavemaker, Mindshare, EssenceMediacom, GroupM, Nexus, and Choreograph), contributing to cost savings of at least £100 million in FY25. Guidance is now revenue growth of 0.5% to 1% and operating margin of 15% for 2023.

- **Publicis Groupe** reported organic revenue of €3.2B, or a 5.3% gain, in Q3 2023 (but flat YOY), ahead of expectations thanks to a change in revenue mix (media agencies and Epsilon's data offering) and tailwinds in new business. Net revenue for the first nine months of the year is €9.5 billion. Organic growth was 6.5% in the first nine months of 2023. Epsilon's strong performance further accelerated with 10.5% organic growth in Q3. Publicis Sapient achieved 1.2% organic growth. North America net revenue was up 3% organically in Q3 2023 vs. Europe up by 10.7%. Publicis acquired Yieldify, a London-based marketing technology company; Advertise BG, one of the leading performance marketing agencies in Bulgaria; Practia, a leading LATAM tech company and provider of digital business transformation services; Publicis Sapient AI Labs, an AI research and development joint venture; and Corra, an e-commerce leader recognized by Adobe as one of the top commerce firms in North America. Publicis and Carrefour announced the launch of their joint venture Unlimitail. New business global wins include Adobe (Media), Mondelēz (Production), King (Creative), Ninjacart (Creative), Alvarium Tiedemann (Creative), Amplifon (Creative), Pfizer (Creative, Media, Data, Production), Miele (Media), and Ancestry (Media). Guidance is now 5.5% to 6% organic growth for the full year, with operating margin at 18%.

WHITEPAPER: ECI Media Management's Top 10 ideas for more sustainable media planning and buying

Contributed by: ECI Media Management

While a brand's sustainability credentials have long been the subject of advertising campaigns, the spotlight is now turning to the environmental impact of the ads themselves. With four in five consumers stating that, in five years' time, they only want to spend with brands that practice sustainable advertising, the incentive isn't only moral, it's commercial too.

Luckily, initiatives that reduce a campaign's carbon footprint very frequently also drive media value: effective, efficient media planning is also green media planning. With that in mind, ECI Media Management's experts have compiled their top 10 ideas for more sustainable media planning and buying, helping advertisers to confidently continue their brands' journeys towards a greener future.

Want to read more? [Click here](#) for the full article.



- **Omnicom Group** reported revenue of \$3.6 billion for its third quarter 2023, up 3.9% with organic growth of 3.3%. Notable performances by discipline: 6.1% for Advertising & Media, 4.3% for Precision Marketing, 3.8% for Healthcare, and 9.2% for Experiential. Organic decline by discipline was as follows: 5.5% for Public Relations, 3.6% for Execution & Support, and 1.7% for Commerce & Branding. Operating income was \$560 million and operating margin was 15.7%. Recent client wins include Uber, HSBC, Beiersdorf, Novartis, Under Armour, Amazon, and Telstra. The firm completed several acquisitions in Q3 in Advertising & Media and Public Relations disciplines: PLUS Communications, a top public affairs firm; FP1 Strategies, a leading political consultancy; Outpromo and Global Shopper, two of Brazil's leading connected commerce and retail media agencies; Ptarmigan Media, an end-to-end media and marketing solutions firm to financial brands; and Grabar & Partner, a creative agency in Hamburg. Omnicom was ranked 2023 Creative Company of the Year at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity.
- **Interpublic Group** reported \$2.68 billion in revenue in Q3 and net revenue of \$2.3 billion, an increase of 0.6% and organic reduction of 0.4%, lower than expectations but with some growth in their media offerings, the healthcare sector, sports and experiential marketing, and public relations (media, data, and engagement solutions down 0.5%, integrated advertising and creatively led solutions down 4.1%, and specialized communication and experiential solutions up 6.5%). For the first nine months, the company's organic revenue decline was 0.8%. Reported net revenue for the first nine months was \$6.81 billion, a decrease of 1.2% YOY. Net income was \$245 million and profit margin was 17.2%. Revised guidance is 1% organic growth for Q4 and full-year profit margin of 16.7%.
- **Stagwell** reported a 7% decline in organic net revenue in the third quarter, with revenue of \$618 million and net revenue of \$535 million. Q3 revenue from the Performance Media & Data capability increased by 8%, and net revenue increased by 11%. Revenue from the Stagwell Marketing Cloud Group capability increased by 7%, and net revenue increased by 20%. Q3 net new business reached \$81 million (YTD net new business of \$209 million). The firm acquired Left Field Labs, a digital experience design and strategy company, and Movers+Shakers, a business that provides social media marketing solutions. Stagwell completed the sale of its integrated healthcare marketing agency and pharmaceutical commercialization platform, ConcentricLife, for \$245 million in cash. The firm now expects a 4% decline in organic net revenue and 19% profit margin for the full year.
- **Vivendi-owned Havas** reported net revenue growth in the second quarter of 4.5% (Europe was up 1.5%, North America 3%, and Asia Pacific 2%. LATAM jumped 51.1%). For the first nine months of 2023, Havas's revenues were €2 billion, a 4.3% organic increase YOY.

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activity:

- **Omnicom PR Group (OPRG)** acquired Arlington, Virginia-based PLUS Communications, a top public affairs firm, and FP1 Strategies, a leading political consultancy in a bid to accelerate growth, expand existing offerings, and further solidify OPRG's leadership position in public affairs and corporate and political consulting. OPRG's roster includes public affairs and political consulting firms DDC, GMMB, Mercury, Portland, and Vox.
- **Omnicom** acquired Flywheel Digital, the digital commerce business of Ascential that helps brands sell goods across hundreds of digital marketplaces, such as Amazon, Walmart, and Alibaba, for \$835 million. Flywheel will operate as a practice within Omnicom, which aims at expanding its footprint in digital commerce and retail media sectors.
- Fort Worth, Texas-based independent **PMG** acquired Dallas-based Camelot Strategic Marketing & Media and its client roster, which includes Intuit, Experian, Michaels, and Whole Foods, and 150 employees in Dallas, New York, Los Angeles, and Baltimore.
- **Dentsu Group** made an equity investment in Mountainview, California-based Theai, aka Inworld AI, a leading character engine for games and interactive experiences, to help brands have more engaging and humanlike interactions with customers.
- **Stagwell** made several moves:
 - Acquired LA-based Left Field Labs to deepen the holding firm's AI capabilities. The firm, with clients like Google, Meta, Uber, and Hasbro, specializes in providing digital solutions via AI, as well as other technological approaches such as VR and experiential design.
 - Acquired the experiential marketing and design agency Tinsel. Tinsel joins Stagwell's Constellation Network of agencies, complementing TEAM Enterprises with creative resources and integrated production capabilities to take on larger projects.
 - Acquired creative social agency Movers+Shakers for \$15 million. The agency will operate under its existing name and join Stagwell's Constellation Network of agencies (72andSunny, Instrument, The Harris Poll, etc). The firm is known for its social (including TikTok), cultural, and creative work.
 - Sold healthcare marketing agency ConcentricLife to Accenture Song for \$245 million as part of a streamlining effort to focus on core digital services and invest in AI solutions and other digital capabilities.
- **Havas** acquired Australian Public Affairs, becoming part of H/Advisors, Havas's global strategic communications advisory network, in a move to develop its public affairs, financial PR, and strategic communications offering across the APAC region.

- **Mekanism** acquired Madrid-based boutique agency Zapiens Design, with expertise in digital design and UI/UX to strengthen the agency's digital offering, ranging from digital capabilities and data and 1:1 CRM services.
- Data-driven marketing company **Claritas** acquired ArtsAI, an AI-powered ad tech company, with the goal to drive more efficient and profitable campaigns through additional third-party measurement tools for their 1,300+ combined clients, including Progressive and T-Mobile.
- Private equity firm FVLCRUM Partners and Channing Johnson acquired Black-owned agency **Burrell Communications Group** in a move to expand the agency's work beyond multicultural, digital, experiential, and entertainment.

Noteworthy quotes:

- » "I'm not merely a Procurement Executive; I am an embodiment of versatility, a chameleon of roles in the grand theater of business and corporate life."
—Sébastien Slek, Strategic Advisor, **Seb S Consulting**
- » "We grew profits while also investing in marketing, research and development, and technology, which we funded through gross efficiencies."
—Miguel Patricio, CEO, **Kraft Heinz**
- » "Thanks to AI, the death of the hourly rate is not only near—it's now. As they bury the billable hour, agencies will increasingly price programs and products instead of people and hours."
—Tim Williams, Founding Partner, **Ignition Consulting Group**
- » "Even in an age of algorithms, we observe that so much of the value delivered from agencies is still discretionary and based on people and relationships."
—Tom Denford, CEO, **ID Comms**

- » "We're not using AI to cut costs. We're using AI to bring our ideas to life quickly, cheaply and make it more personalized."
—Mark Read, CEO, **WPP**
- » "We continue to refine our targeting methodology and roll out capabilities across the globe. So as we scale these capabilities, we are becoming more effective and efficient in our spend, which increases the return on investment and therefore is a good incentive for us."
—Andre Schulten, CFO, **P&G**
- » "Agencies do not have the luxury of passing the burden of extended payment terms to their employees, landlords or utility companies."
—Marla Kaplowitz, President and CEO, **4A's**
- » "Agencies are hired to drive business results—they should not be hired to be banks for client-side marketers."
—Bob Liodice, CEO, **ANA**
- » "One thing that marketers will cheer is using AI to create the basics of pitch documents. AI will be able to analyze the requests, dig deep into the data of all past pitches, construct the bones of the next pitch and handle all of the endless annoying compliance."
—Mark Penn, CEO, **Stagwell**
- » "An agency review can cost an average of \$400,000 for the defending account, while non-incumbents can spend \$200,000 just to participate in a review."
—Marla Kaplowitz, President and CEO, **4A's**
- » "After years of fervent discussion about the inadequacies of the time and materials approach to agency compensation, the industry is coming face to face with the fact that time-based billing is a useless concept when applied to problems that can be solved in nanoseconds by machine learning."
—Tim Williams, Founding Partner, **Ignition Consulting Group**

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AGENCY: Agency reviews and roster changes

Disclaimer: The reviews listed often capture larger review activity reported in the industry trade press, which we understand to be only a subset of total review activity. Specialist reviews (digital, social, PR, etc.) are rarely reported in the trade press. Also, due to the increasing number of project reviews (versus AOR/retainer reviews), many of those are not receiving media attention and therefore are not included here.

- **Amazon** kicked off a massive review of its media account (the brand's worldwide advertising and promotion spending went up by 22% in 2022 to \$20.6 billion). IPG's Initiative is the incumbent for media buying, media planning, and strategy for various pieces of Amazon's business.
- **Ancestry** selected Starcom's Publicis Vita (powered by Publicis Media's Starcom) as its global media AOR, consolidating its \$200 million account with the bespoke media agency. The agency will handle media strategy, planning, partnerships, and buying.
- Rail system **Amtrak** selected Mekanism as its creative and strategy AOR following a review, replacing five-year incumbent WPP's VMLY&R. WPP's EssenceMediacom retained Amtrak's media business, and independent shop Culture One World retained its cross-cultural account.
- **BMW of North America** selected Omnicom's Critical Mass as its national and regional media AOR in the Americas following a review, replacing 14-year incumbent IPG's Universal McCann. The brand is consolidating off-line media services for BMW, Mini, and BMW Motorrad in North America and LATAM in a five-year contract. The agency will partner with other roster agencies, Omnicom's Silverstein & Partners (creative), Interpublic's Performance Art (data and CRM), and Anchor Worldwide (social media).
- Skin care giant **Beiersdorf** selected Omnicom's OMD as its global media planning and buying AOR for all of its brands, which include Nivea, Eucerin, and Coppertone, following a review. The review is a part of a consolidation, replacing various incumbents from WPP, Publicis, Dentsu (Carat), and others. OMD was previously the AOR in the US.
- Pernod Ricard USA-owned **Código 1530** premium tequila brand selected San Francisco-based Argonaut as its creative AOR following a review.
- Banking and financial app **Chime** selected AKQA as its Integrated AOR. The agency will handle strategy, branding, creative, social, and community building for the brand.
- **Duracell** selected Publicis Groupe's BBH as its new creative AOR in the US following a review, replacing incumbent Wieden+Kennedy. The agency will handle all creative and brand strategy duties.
- Event and ticket seller brand **Eventbrite** selected independent agency Mojo Supermarket as its creative AOR, handling all brand positioning, strategy, and creative output. The agency was Ad Age's Small Agency of the Year in 2022 and was recently awarded AOR status with Death Wish Coffee.
- Pet food brand **Freshpet** selected Empower Media as another media planning and buying agency, joining Cage Point to its roster. The agency will focus on strategies, sustainability expertise, influencer networks, and marketing science capabilities. Cage Point will continue to handle linear TV, CTV, OOH, online video, social, and other channels.
- **General Mills** selected Interpublic Group of Cos.' UM as its global media AOR following a review, replacing incumbent GroupM's Mindshare. The agency will handle all strategy, planning, buying, analytics, performance, and commerce efforts in more than 36 markets.
- **The Gorilla Glue Co.** selected Cincinnati-based Curiosity as its media planning and buying AOR, replacing 10-year incumbent Empower Media. The agency will partner with the in-house creative team.
- Baked goods company **Grupo Bimbo** selected PHD as its global media AOR as part of a consolidation following a review. The agency will handle all things media for the brand across the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa.
- **Hyatt Hotels & Resorts** selected WPP-owned VMLY&R as its creative AOR. The agency will handle all creative duties for World of Hyatt worldwide, which includes over 1,200 hotels and all-inclusive properties in 76 countries across six continents.
- Financial services firm **HSBC** selected Omnicom Media Group as its global media planning and buying AOR following a review. Omnicom's PHD previously won the account in 2018.
- Berkshire Hathaway-owned jewelry retail chain **Helzberg Diamonds** selected Kansas City-based Walz Tetrick Advertising as its lead local media strategies and buying AOR following a review, replacing incumbent Horizon Media. The agency will handle account management, media planning, and buying, research, and marketing consultation.
- **Ikea** selected IPG's McCann as its global brand marketing AOR, replacing a wide number of agencies across the globe to streamline and consolidate efforts. The agency, which worked with the Swedish brand for over 10 years, will now lead the account from its Madrid office but support the brand in 30+ markets.
- **Kimberly-Clark** selected an integrated Publicis bespoke team, K-C One, to lead US media planning and buying in 2024 following a review, replacing incumbent WPP's Mindshare. The bespoke team includes Publicis-owned agencies Epsilon, Spark Foundry, and Profitero, expanding on the existing relationship with Epsilon. Omnicom's OMG will continue to handle EMEA media and WPP's Mindshare parts of Asia.








- **Krak Boba** selected InnoVision Marketing Group as its creative AOR. The agency will handle marketing and advertising campaigns for its portfolio of milk teas, coffees, smoothies, fruit teas, and yogurts.
- **Kraft Heinz** selected Dentsu's Carat as its US media AOR following a review, replacing longtime incumbent Publicis Groupe's Starcom as part of a consolidation. The agency is adding US media management to the work Carat was already doing for its International Zone, Canada, and Global Center of Excellence.
- German airline **Lufthansa** selected independent Serviceplan, House of Communication Munich, as its creative AOR, replacing 12-year incumbent Accenture Song following a review. The agency will handle all worldwide marketing communication for the brand.
- **Lenovo** selected Wunderman Thompson as its B2B global creative AOR following a review, as part of a consolidation. The agency will handle digital and social marketing as well.
- **Mazda North American Operations** selected Optimal as its first search AOR. The agency will handle all paid and organic search efforts combined with digital media, direct response, search, and performance marketing. The agency had a working relationship with the brand prior to this assignment.
- **Mattel** kicked off a review of its creative business for its Barbie brand, seeking to hire a creative agency for project work.
- **Nestlé** consolidated its European media account under WPP following a review, under WPP's OpenMind, a bespoke agency created for the brand. OpenMind will handle all media planning, media buying, and campaign activation and leverage its advanced data and analytics capabilities. The move will replace distributed work in Europe handled by incumbents Publicis Groupe and Interpublic Group of Cos.
- **PayPal** selected WPP's Group M as its global media planning and buying AOR following a review, replacing incumbents Havas (in Europe), Media.Monks, iProspect, and Spark Foundry.
- **Papa Johns** selected Dentsu's Carat as its media AOR in the US, following a review and replacing four-year incumbent Havas Media.
- Georgia-Pacific owned bathroom tissue brand **Quilted Northern** selected New York-based Orchard as its new creative AOR following a review. The agency was among the Ad Age A-List 2023 and won Small Agency Campaign of the Year in 2023 for its integrated Ocean Spray work.
- **Quest Nutrition** (owned by The Simply Good Foods Company) selected BBH USA as its lead creative AOR for the Quest brand without a review. The agency will handle brand strategy and the creative platform for Quest and its product portfolio and will lead the inter-agency team across campaigns.
- **Shell** selected Havas as its global media B2C strategic AOR following a review, replacing incumbent WPP's GroupM.
- **Sparkling Ice** selected Philadelphia-based Red Tettemer O'Connell + Partners (RTO+P) as its AOR. The agency will handle all creative, branding, innovative content, and activations and partner with MRM Media, which will handle all media strategy.
- **SiriusXM** selected Uncommon Creative Studio as its creative AOR following a review, replacing incumbent Translation, which the brand used on a project basis.
- Royal Caribbean Group's luxury cruise line **Silversea** selected Interpublic Group's Mediahub as its North American media AOR following a review. The agency will handle media planning, buying, data, and audience strategy, expanding on existing work for the brand in the UK.
- **Talking Rain Beverage Company** selected Philadelphia-based Red Tettemer O'Connell + Partners (RTO+P) as its creative AOR and MRM Media as its media strategy AOR on its bottled water brand Sparkling Ice.
- Nexstar-owned **The CW** selected independent media agency Known as its media AOR without a review, replacing incumbent Omnicom Media Group's OMD. The agency will handle the network's media strategy, planning, buying, and optimization and leverage its AI and predictive algorithmic tools for planning.
- The **US Department of Defense's Defense Human Resources Activity** selected Interpublic Group of Cos.'s MullenLowe as its creative AOR following a review. The agency has been working for that US Department of Defense's arm for 20+ years and will handle advertising, direct marketing, leads, and marketing database certification and management, integrated media negotiation and buying (to include national TV, nonlinear TV, digital, and social media), website development and maintenance, interactive (digital) marketing, public relations, and brand strategy/research. The win is estimated to account for a \$454 million military contract over six years.
- **Uber** selected Omnicom Media Group as its global media AOR for both Uber's rideshare and delivery businesses, following a review and replacing three-year incumbent GroupM's Mediacom. The agency will handle all media duties in North America, Europe, and LATAM and will leverage its Omni marketing orchestration system. EssenceMediacom retained APAC.
- **Virgin Voyages** selected Hearts & Science as its global media AOR. GroupM's EssenceMediacom apparently initially won the account, but Adweek reported that the brand experienced "unforeseen operational concerns," leading to the change of agency.
- **Verizon** selected WPP's Ogilvy as its lead AOR for its consumer business, replacing eight-year incumbent IPG's McCann and adding to its prior win of the business-to-business account. Other IPG agencies on the roster include FCB, R/GA, Golin, MRM, and Momentum. The agency will partner with the brand's media AOR, Publicis Groupe.
- **WeightWatchers** selected Gut Miami as its global creative AOR following a review. The agency, which worked with the brand on project basis prior, will now handle all creative work in the US and globally, including brand strategy and production.

Agency roster summary:

COMPANY LOGO	CLIENT	INCUMBENT	CHANGE/SCOPE	FOCUS AREA	NEW AGENCY	REVIEW?
	Amazon	Initiative	Media	Global	IP	Y
	Amtrak	VMLY&R	Creative and Strategy AOR	US	Mekanism	Y
	Ancestry	Unk	Media AOR	Global	Publicis Vita	Unk
	Beiersdorf	WPP and others	Media AOR	Global	OMD	Y
	BMW of North America	Universal McCann	Media AOR	NAM and LATAM	Critical Mass	Y
	Chime	Unk	Integrated AOR	US	AKQA	Unk
	Código 1530	Unk	Creative AOR	Unk	Argonaut	Y
	Duracell	Wieden+Kennedy	Creative AOR	US	BBH	Y
	Eventbrite	Unk	Creative AOR	Unk	Mojo Supermarket	Unk
	Freshpet	Expanding Work Beyond Cage Point	Media	Unk	Empower Media	Unk
	General Mills	Mindshare	Media AOR	Global	UM	Y
	Gorilla Glue Co.	Empower Media	Media AOR	Unk	Curiosity	Unk
	Grupo Bimbo	Unk (consolidation)	Media AOR	Global	PHD	Y
	Helzberg Diamonds	Horizon Media	Media AOR	US	Walz Tetrick Advertising	Y
	HSBC	PHD	Media AOR	Global	Omnicom Media Group	Y
	Hyatt Hotels & Resorts	Unk	Creative AOR	Global	VMLY&R	Unk
	Ikea	Unk	Brand Marketing AOR	Global	McCann	Unk
	Kimberly-Clark	Mindshare	Media	US	Publicis	Y
	Krak Boba	Unk	Creative AOR	US	InnoVision Marketing Group	Unk
	Kraft Heinz	Starcom	Media AOR	US	Carat	Y
	Lenovo	Unk (consolidation)	Creative AOR	Global	Wunderman Thompson	Y
	Lufthansa	Accenture Song	Creative AOR	Global	Serviceplan	Y
	Mattel	Unk	Creative	Unk	IP	Y
	Mazda North American Operations	None	Search AOR	NAM	Optimal	Unk
	Nestle	Publicis Group and Interpublic Group of Cos.	Media	EU	WPP	Y
	Papa Johns	Havas Media	Media AOR	US	Carat	Y
	PayPal	Havas (EU) and Others	Media AOR	Global	GroupM	Y
	Quest Nutrition	Unk	Creative AOR	Unk	BBH USA	N
	Quilted Northern	Argonaut and Others	Creative AOR	Unk	Orchard	Y
	Shell	GroupM	Media AOR	Global	Havas	Y
	Silversea	Unk	Media AOR	NAM	Mediahub	Y
	SiriusXM	Translation	Creative AOR	NAM	Uncommon Creative Studio	Y
	Sparkling Ice	Unk	AOR	Unk	RTO+P	Unk
	Sparkling Ice	Unk	Media	Unk	MRM Media	Unk

IP = Review In Process
Unk = Unknown

Agency roster summary, continued:

COMPANY LOGO	CLIENT	INCUMBENT	CHANGE/SCOPE	FOCUS AREA	NEW AGENCY	REVIEW?
	Talking Rain Beverage Company	Unk	Creative AOR	Unk	RTO+P	Unk
	Talking Rain Beverage Company	Unk	Media AOR	Unk	MRM Media	Unk
	The CW	OMD	Media AOR	US	Known	N
	Uber	Mediacom	Media AOR	NAM, EU, and LATAM	Omnicom Media Group	Y
	U.S. Defense Human Resources Activity	MullenLowe	Creative AOR	US	MullenLowe	Y
	Verizon	McCann	Lead AOR	Unk	Ogilvy	Unk
	Virgin Voyages	EssenceMediacom	Media AOR	Global	Hearts & Science	Unk
	WeightWatchers	In-house	Creative AOR	Global	Gut Miami	Y

IP = Review in Process
Unk= Unknown

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