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Hail to the Biggest Thinkers

From massive holding company to tiny incubators, *MEDIA* magazine salutes the men and women shaping the industry's future

This is the part where I'm supposed to explain the rationale behind these awards, what our criteria are, and why we picked the people and organizations being recognized here as best-in-class as *MEDIA*'s annual agencies and agents of the year. And even though I've written this many times before, I know it bears repeating, because our approach is so different than others who do awards like these. So let me dispense with the criteria first.

These awards recognize the agencies and agents — including clients, suppliers and individuals — who best demonstrated three things to us over the past 12 months: strategic vision, innovation, and industry leadership. I think the word demonstrated is important to emphasize here, because it could well be that there are others out there doing an incredible job with those criteria, but we only know what we know, and we only know it by what we've been told and shown — either directly, or by covering the people and organizations we celebrate here. Some of the winners have had little or no direct

contact with *MEDIA* magazine; others have opened their doors and brought us into incredibly internal things that have helped inform us.

But we also know there are others out there with great vision, doing innovative things that are leading the industry, and that for reasons unique to them, simply don't want, don't know how, or are afraid to tell us about it. We respect that. In the meantime, we'll continue to recognize those who can.

So I was proud to recognize MPG as our Agency of the Year, for the third consecutive year, just like I was proud to recognize some version of Starcom MediaVest Group for each of the five years before that, and for being named our Network of the Year this year. These agencies are great at seeing where the world of media is headed, getting out

in front of it, and shaping it for their organizations, their clients and the rest of us, too.

But the truth is, a lot of agencies are doing that, and this year's selections were tougher than ever, because we are seeing signs that organizations that typically kept such things close to

their vests are finally loosening up. That's why we named GroupM our Holding Company of the Year, both for *MEDIA* and for our sister magazine, *OMMA*. I hope others will follow, because it means we will get richer stories, richer insights about the industry, and the industry will be better for it.

Good, now that that obligatory part is out of the way, let me take a moment to reflect on some patterns I've observed about this year's selections. And they are the kind that only become apparent after stepping back and looking at them after the fact. The first, and most obvious one is the

YES, SOME OF OUR OTHER WINNERS AND CONTENDERS **MALE CULTURES** FACT THAT SO MANY WOMEN **AREN'T JUST LEADING OUR** INDUSTRY'S ORGANIZATIONS THE ONES I FADING THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE **LEADING OUR** INDUSTRY, IS incredible amount of "girl power" behind our reasoning. And if it isn't already apparent to you, take a moment and reflect on who is running the organizations we've picked: Maria Luisa Francoli at MPG, Laura Desmond at Starcom MediaVest Group, Lisa Donohue at Starcom, Jacki Kelley at UM, Connie Garrido at Posterscope, Jacquie Corbelli at BrightLine, and Beth Comstock at GE (in partnership with the boys at OMD).

Yes, some of our other winners and contenders are still dominated by male cultures, but I think the fact that so many women aren't just leading our industry's organizations, but

are the ones leading the organizations that are leading our industry, is telling.

TELLING.

So now let me tell you about some girl power leading this organization. If it wasn't already apparent from our masthead, this is the first issue being edited by Sarah Mahoney who, while not new to *MEDIA* parent MediaPost, is the new editor of this magazine. And we are lucky to have her. Sarah happens to be female, but she is also one of the best journalists I've ever worked with of any gender.

JOE MANDESE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE NUMBERS

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

ONALA METRICS SRESEARCH

"The networking alone was reason enough to go, but the OMMA team managed to put all of the latest topics and info about metrics into one day! Excellent!"

Peter Marino, Senior Partner, ReelWebDesign

FEBRUARY 21, 2012 SENTRY CENTERS MIDTOWN EAST, NEW YORK CITY



From the Collaborative Alliance to the Meaningful Brands Index, Havas' MPG continues to translate innovation into the marketplace





Not long ago, I had the opportunity to sit in on a secret, high-level meeting of some big agency and TV network executives in the basement of Donovan Data Systems, the company that processes much of Madison Avenue's media buys. And as I sat there listening, fly-on-the-wall style, to these important industry stakeholders discussing how they hoped to reshape some key aspects of the TV advertising business, I could almost hear the whirring through the walls where Donovan's computers were housed, processing billions of dollars of media buys. The meeting was completely unofficial, and technically didn't even have a host. But everyone in the room knew who organized it: Mitch Oscar, whose official title is executive vice president of televisual applications at Havas media shop MPG, but whose actual role inside MPG — and the industry-atlarge — could better be described as "agent of change."

The meeting was one of many examples of Oscar's handiwork — sometimes in public forums like his standing-room-only MPG Collaborative Alliance meetings, and sometimes clandestinely, in gatherings like this one — where he helps to accelerate industry change by putting people together who have common interests and goals in making those changes. It is largely because of Oscar's efforts — both his public forums and behindthe-scenes matchmaking and pressure-putting — that MEDIA has awarded MPG its Media Agency of the Year for the past two years. So coming into this year, we wanted to raise the bar for MPG. We even considered treating the Collaborative Alliance as a separate category, the way we would recognize a boutique of the vertical media service sector, as we have with other agencies and groups. But in the end, we deemed that the Collaborative Alliance is too integral to break out on its own, in part, because of changes at MPG made over the past 12 months. Or as MPG CEO Maria Luisa Francoli puts it, "We began to operationalize it."

By operationalize, Francoli means that MPG took Oscar's Alliance meetings and initiatives from simple goodwill — industry relations, PR, learning and insights - and began to apply them in the way its units do their day-today business. That was an important development for

MPG, for Oscar, and for the industry-at-large, because it took the concept from being a simple forum for jump-starting ideas, conversations and relationships, to a process.

That change was a significant one for MPG: A resource for activating change is now embedded into its overall organization. That's our idea of strategic vision, innovation and industry leadership, the three major criteria *MEDIA* uses to determine its agencies of the year. It is also an important change for Oscar, because while he always had some degree of clout, by leveraging relationships under the auspices of a big media-buying agency, operationalizing the Alliance means that it is no longer theoretical, and that ideas and partnerships incubated there could be applied to the billions of dollars in media buys MPG makes for its clients each year. And it is important for the overall industry, because it means that all the classic objections to change — the fact that new concepts don't have budgets, "departments," or processes, for example are minimized.

That was why the meeting Oscar brought me into was so important. It was exactly the kind of process change he has learned is necessary to get something ingrained into the fabric of the media-buying industry. You can have great ideas, even better ideas than the people who came before you. But unless you can integrate them into the way



people actually do make their media decisions, those ideas are unlikely to go very far.

Since Donovan, and its chief rival MediaBank (both soon to be merged into an entity known as MediaOcean, pending regulatory approval) are where media buys actually get processed, Oscar understood that it is integral to any innovation in media-buying that would change the way buyers and sellers work. I can't discuss what transpired at the fly-on-the-wall meeting, or who specifically attended. But I can tell you there were a number of executives from agencies who compete with MPG, and they came together for a common cause they believe will drive the industry forward, and make advertising more effective for their clients.

What I can tell you, though, is about another, more public example with Donovan that appears to be making a profound difference in the way advertisers and agencies buy media, particularly television: the Alliance's so-called "Set-Top Taskforce." The taskforce, which was a big factor in last year's MPG win, established a framework for using TV audience data from digital TV settop devices as a means of buying television networks that are not rated by Nielsen. Such networks tend to be newer, digital and lower-rated, and don't have enough distribution for Nielsen to justify rating them. They are frequently described as "long-tail" networks. There are about 100 of them, and while their individual audience ratings may be small, they are estimated to represent about 7 percent of total TV viewing. Without Nielsen ratings, those networks were effectively not participating in the national TV advertising currency, and consequently were not on many media plans or advertising budgets.

In 2010, the Alliance's taskforce came up with a simple solution that essentially developed a method for indexing what their Nielsen ratings might be, based on their digital set-top audience data from sources like Kantar Media, Rentrak and other suppliers. The concept, which was developed in conjunction with other industry stakeholders, including rival media shops like Carat and OMD, seemed to have merit. But unless the data could be integrated into systems like Donovan that agencies actually use to buy TV advertising time, it wouldn't have any practical application. After months of collaboration, Rentrak announced deals to integrate its data into Donovan's systems, as well as another important third-party data processor, Comcast-owned STRATA. At least three agencies agreed to utilize the data - MPG, Carat and OMD — and by the end of 2011, Carat announced a deal to begin using Rentrak's data to plan and buy TV advertising based on "exact commercial ratings" versus the "average commercial minute" ratings that are the currency of most TV advertising buys.

Both Carat and OMD were strong contenders for MEDIA's Media Agency of the Year recognition, too, and were given partial weight for the results of this Alliance initiative. In the end, MEDIA felt that MPG simply did a better job of demonstrating more of our most important criteria. And while the Alliance's initiatives — public and behindthe-scenes — were a large part of that, MPG demonstrated enough vision, innovation and leadership in other areas that it likely would have merited it without the help of the Alliance, including some powerful strategic research initiatives; the development of new, advanced modeling systems; and a shift toward so-called "real-time" planning and buying that many in the industry are touting. Some of those developments are still confidential, and will become public this year, so they weren't a big factor in this year's consideration, but they reinforce MPG's vision cred.

Another development that sets MPG apart is the research coming out of Havas Media Labs, especially its so-called "Meaningful Brands Index." Havas Media is the parent of MPG, and the lab, which is overseen by Umair Haque, is generating powerful insights about brands that go well beyond media — and potentially, well beyond marketing, too.

Among other things, the global study explored how important brands are to their consumers at a deep, emotional level — how they con-

nect with their sense of meaning and well-being. The study found that only 5 percent of brands in the U.S. actually impact their consumers in a way that is "noticeable" in terms of their individual well-being and quality of life, and that most people wouldn't care if 82 percent of brands disappeared tomorrow.

MPG is still working on the practical application of those insights to media, but the data, which is part of an ongoing tracking study, is helping the organization to understand what people expect from its clients' brands, and how media strategies and executions can play a role in that.

MPG cites a litany of other examples of vision, innovation and leadership that are de riguer for best-in-class media shops, including exclusive partnerships to develop new models with leading media suppliers, outreach to the worlds of academia, tech startups and Silicon Valley. And all those efforts appear to be bearing fruit, in terms of the most common metrics used by Madison Avenue to gauge agency results. During the past 12 months, MPG won a dozen new accounts, and expanded its relationship with such big existing clients as Volvo and Panasonic. Total revenues grew about 12 percent.

But the part that CEO Maria Luisa Francoli is most proud of is how the organization has come together culturally during the past year, developing an *esprit de*





corps that will help sustain its momentum for years to come. Francoli, who is also MPG's global chief, stepped into the U.S. CEO's role a couple of years ago, presumably on an interim basis, but she's become the hands-on manager and chief cheerleader for building the spirit of the organization. It started, she says, with a "clean-up day" she implemented for the first time about a year ago, and which has become a mechanism for MPG's organization to bond. The day was earmarked literally for cleaning up, including the physical clutter of unneeded paper and files that fill up any organization over time, as well as the mental clutter that can occupy minds and spirits.

To understand Francoli's focus on the spirit of her organization, you have to sit in her office and gaze out her window, which overlooks both Ground Zero as well as Zuccotti Park — the Ground Zero of Occupy Wall Street. It is as if her office window is a frame of the tumult of the world around us.

One way MPG seeks to tame that tumult is by bringing the world inside it, literally. MPG's U.S. organization, which grew out of conventional old-school mediabuying shops like SFM Media, once a pioneer in the burgeoning independent media services marketplace, has grown into one of the most contemporary, multicultural

This year, MPG and Mobext created an At Bat app for client Volvo and Major League Baseball. Volvo content and branding were integrated across iPhone, iPad and Apple TV.

media organizations in the world. Francoli, for example, is a Spaniard who transplanted herself and her family to New York, and resides in Forest Hills, Queens. Her management at Havas are French. And her new No. 2, Sasha Savic, is Bosnian.

Savic, who joined MPG last year as COO, after running the Procter & Gamble business at Publicis' Starcom MediaVest Group, is also the architect for the new, real-time planning and buying systems that MPG will introduce next year. He has also become an important compatriot of Mitch Oscar's, and part of the team that is working to operationalize the Alliance's efforts within, and throughout MPG. Both have a similar mindset: Innovation is great, but it doesn't mean a whole lot unless vou can build it into organizations and processes that enable people to use it.

Meanwhile, MPG will continue to use the Alliance in just that way, to get important industry stakeholders to come together — in both public forums and private initiatives — to develop, vet and deploy ideas for moving the industry forward. And if the Alliance's last public forum in New York during Advertising Week in September is any indication, it can be a great way of shepherding initiatives beyond mere conversation to actual execution. During the meeting, NBCUniversal senior vice president Sheryl Feldinger presented an analysis of the kind of set-top data the Alliance has been championing to show how it could be used to target certain upscale audiences better than conventional Nielsen data can. The analysis showed how unstable Nielsen's small sample sizes are for measuring very affluent U.S. households — those earning \$125,000 or more — versus the large sample sizes that can be derived from set-top data.

That insight, she says, would enable advertisers and agencies to plan and target those audiences more effectively than by using simple Nielsen data alone. But the important thing about that meeting is what happened next. Oscar called on CNBC's chief revenue officer Tom O'Brien, and asked if the network would consider using such data as the basis of a "secondary guarantee" in its advertising deals with advertisers targeting such affluent households. O'Brien said the network was willing to have those "conversations" with advertisers and agencies. Also in attendance was Jim Speros, the CMO of Fidelity Investments, a financial services marketer that just so happens to target those very same affluent households, and who seemed equally as interested in having those conversations.

It was another example of Oscar playing matchmaker, in order to take innovation from the drawing board to the marketplace. And it continues to be a big reason why MPG is once again *MEDIA*'s agency of the year. **①** Joe Mandese



Nigel Morris CEO, Aegis Media Americas

In overhauling Aegis, Morris' own brand of disintegration is re-energizing Carat, and generating a 40 percent growth rate

To thank him for speaking at our 2010 Outfront Conference, we threw a small, private dinner for Al Gore and some of our industry's top executives.

I can't tell you exactly what we discussed, or who said what, because it was off the record, but I can tell you that the conversation went well beyond advertising and media, and included some of the greatest issues we face — not just as business people, but as people on this planet. During the meal, Gore sat next to Nigel Morris, and when he wasn't speaking to the table at large, spent most of his time talking with Morris. I was at the other end, and couldn't hear what they were saying, but from where I sat, it looked like they were figuring important things out, and I can tell you that Gore spent as much time listening as he did speaking.

I will probably never know what Morris said that held the attention of the man who, some would argue, was the legit leader of the free world, but I did learn later that they were friends, and worked together on some important things in the past. Which could

have meant almost anything related to media or global affairs, since both men are active in both worlds: Gore as chairman of Current Media and a member of some big digital media company boards (Google, Apple); and Morris as head of one of the world's biggest media and marketing services organization, and also actively engaged in global affairs as the lead on the sustainable consumption project of the World Economic Forum.

The encounter I observed took place during the spring of 2010, when Morris was also figuring out some other important things, most notably how to transform Aegis Media Americas, and especially its sagging flagship brand, Carat. The British native, who had previously transformed Aegis' global digital media organization, effectively creating Isobar,

and building it into the centerpiece of a portfolio of coveted digital media and marketing services assets, transplanted himself to Aegis Americas New York City headquarters at a critical time. While Aegis shops, including Carat, were winning business worldwide, they were languishing in the U.S., by far the world's biggest advertising and media marketplace. Moreover, the culture of the organizations had never fully gelled from an attempt to merge Aegis' digital operations in the U.S. with Carat, and was desperately in need of an overhaul.

After assessing the situation, Morris completely redesigned Aegis Americas, reorganizing most of its top management team. He didn't necessarily do that by replacing people, so much as by putting the right people in



the right places. Among those management moves, he took long-time executive vice president-managing director Doug Ray and put him in charge of Carat, and moved president Martin Cass into more of an operational role working on special projects and directly with clients. The management shifts worked, and both the people and the organizations thrived, making 2011 one of Aegis Americas' best years ever. After growing 25 percent in 2010, the group is projected to grow 40 percent for 2011, following one of the worst economic recessions in decades.

Morris accomplished this not just by moving people around — though he did a fair amount of that — but also by altering Aegis Americas underlying approach to market. While most of Madison Avenue is hell-bent on so-called "integration" - merging traditional and digital media and marketing organizations into one seamless whole - Morris opted to zag instead, effectively disintegrating merged organizations that weren't working culturally or operationally. So, Aegis Americas, one of — if not the first media services organization to integrate its digital and traditional media operations in the U.S., busted them up again, putting the best of breeds back together with their own herds and creating a management and incentive system that enabled them to each do what they do best for greater common goods: their

"ALL OF OUR
AGENCIES HAVE TO
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HOW IT WORKS IN
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MIX, BUT IT DOESN'T
MEAN THAT THEY
HAVE TO BE GOOD
AT GOING OUT AND
BUYING KEYWORDS."

NIGEL MORRIS Ceo, aegis media americas

clients, and the shareholders of Aegis Group.

When Morris began the process, Aegis Americas had 11 separate P&Ls among its operating units. Today, it has only one, and an incentive system that induces each individual organization — and individuals within them — to ensure it generates more P than L.

The funny thing is that
Aegis has all the ingredients —
great teams, great expertise,
and great clients. It just had
them spread out in a diffused
way that seemed logical from
an "integration" perspective,
but which produced decidedly
disintegrated results.

Take search-engine marketing. When Morris began the reorganization, generalist media services shop Carat had 40 people dedicated to search, even though it had a sister agency, iProspect, doing the same thing on a dedicated basis.

"How did we think we [Carat] was going to be better search-engine specialists versus iProspect?" Morris recalls, adding that the situation wasn't just bad for overhead and redundancy. It was bad for the individuals involved.

"One of the biggest issues we had was, if you get people who are brilliant at search, where do they go in the organization? But if you take those people and you put them into iProspect, suddenly they have a whole career in front of them."

It was such tweaks from Morris that set Aegis Americas back on path, creating a culture and an organization where specialists thrive within the specialty environments they came into the business for - and which attracted clients to those organizations in the first place. The integration, he says, comes at the top of the organization, by creating compensation and incentive models that allow Aegis vertical teams to work together on behalf of a greater good their mutual client rosters.

Strategically, the integration also happens at the toplevel, with the senior-most client service teams of the Aegis organization working in concert to develop "channelneutral" strategies based on a client's goals, which get executed vertically within individual operations and groups.

"When you start talking search, social and mobile, people simply don't understand the difference between strategy and execution," Morris says. "All of our agencies have to be good at search, mobile and social strategy. They have to understand how it works in their strategic mix, but it doesn't mean that they have to be good at going out and buying keywords. What we do is keep them plugged in to the specialists so that they are really knowledgeable about what can benefit their clients."

Morris says it took Aegis about six months to reorganize itself this way, but if the organization's new business track record — especially Carat's — is any indication, it has arrived at a winning formula, and one, ironically, that might seem counterintuitive to the rest of the industry, which is still pushing for seamless integration within agencies, not across them.

"Making that happen was a lot of hard work," Morris, admits, conceding that it's still a work in progress, with much work to be done in other parts of the organization.

Vizeum, an alternative full-service media network to Carat, for example, is still trying to invent itself, including how exactly it is positioned alternatively from Carat, and earlier this year, Morris reorganized its team, recruiting former marketer (Diageo, Discover Card, Morgan Stanley) Catherine Davis to become president. Doe Mandese

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Jeff Mills, VP. Partnerships, Criteo

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MEDIA AGENCY HOLDING COMPANY

GroupM

From privacy to piracy, GroupM takes its advocacy muscle all the way to Washington

MEDIA has selected WPP's GroupM as its Holding Company of the Year,

and it's not for its size (although it is immense and oversees several global agency networks and specialist agencies). This year, GroupM gets the honor for its efforts addressing several issues of critical importance to the advertising and marketing industries, including both online privacy and piracy.

In addition the company continued to invest in addressable TV technologies, which enable marketers to target individual households with more relevant ads. (Think diaper advertising for new parents, or kitty litter for pet owners.) Such techniques — and their successful implementation — are seen as essential to the future vibrancy of the TV medium.

On the daily operations front, the company put its fourth media agency network — Maxus — on the map in 2011. (GroupM also oversees Mindshare, MEC and

MediaCom.) Maxus started as a planning boutique several years ago, but with the resources of GroupM behind it this year completed the transition to a full-service global operation. The shop's recognition factor was elevated with two huge wins, including the \$1-billion SC Johnson worldwide media account and the North American portion of the nearly \$1-billion NBCUniversal assignment.

Over the past two years, the firm is credited with doing more than any other advertising company to advance the cause of the industry's selfregulatory position on privacy. Online behavioral advertising techniques have been under fire from public-interest groups and Washington regulators who, fearing abuses, want to put legal restrictions on data collected by marketers and agencies.

The industry's response: formulate a strategy to convince those groups that self-regulation, with consumer friendly opt-out mechanisms, is the best solution to their concerns. If legislation is put in place that curbs data collection, the industry argues, online advertising will be less effective, and more costly to

marketers, who would pass the higher costs on to consumers. It would also likely lead to reductions in ad spending which, in turn, would result in industry job cutbacks.

GroupM was a key strategic and tactical player in the development of two of the biggest industry initiatives to date in the drive for a permanent self-regulatory privacy standard. The company's effort was led by John Montgomery, COO of GroupM Interaction.

Protecting Consumer Privacy

The first effort was a publicservice campaign called Privacy Matters, which was spearheaded by the Interactive Advertising Bureau, and was designed to educate consumers about the data that is collected by the industry and how it is used. The campaign also sought to spell out steps consumers could take to protect their privacy online and even decline to be tracked or targeted by advertisers at all.

David Doty, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at the IAB, recalls that from the earliest planning stages of that campaign, "GroupM stepped forward and volunteered all their capabilities to allow us to achieve this."

And the campaign, which ran throughout 2010, "would not have happened without John's help," says Doty, referring to Montgomery. "He was a critical and collaborative partner."

Montgomery brought in Trevor Kaufman, CEO of digital shop Schematic (since re-branded as Possible Worldwide), on board to assemble a team that came up with the campaign's creative content and Web design. Media shop MEC was enlisted to place the spots and do the return-on-investment analytics.

All of the work was pro bono, and Doty says the GroupM team "pushed us to think more creatively, even beyond our comfort levels." The tagline on the campaign was "Advertising Is Creepy." But, says Doty, "we then set about disproving it."

Doty says the results were well beyond expectations. The campaign resonated with consumers, he says, noting that weekly traffic to the IAB Web site soared 60 percent. Some 3.4 million consumers sought more information by rolling over the campaign's banner ads to view the full messages. Earned media was extensive, with 17.2 million media impressions from coverage of the campaign. Also, more than 1,000 tweets about Privacy Matters were posted in the first three weeks of the campaign.

GroupM's commitment to advancing the industry's privacy agenda rolled right into the next major industry initiative — the development of an icon that could be placed in online ads to provide Web surfers with an option not to receive or be tracked by ads.

According to GroupM's Montgomery, the firm's participation in the development

of the icon began after a conversation with IAB president Randall Rothenberg in late 2009. When Rothenberg indicated that his organization, along with other members of the Digital Advertising Alliance, was working on the icon project, Montgomery offered to help.

He put together a team cherry-picked from a number of companies within WPP, including Ogilvy & Mather, Kantar, GroupM Interaction and trading platform Xaxis. The team was tasked with designing an icon and coming up with alternative ways to implement it industry wide.

It was Ogilvy that designed the early iterations of the icon that is in place today. The shop created about 100 different versions that were narrowed down with research assistance from Kantar, Montgomery says.

According to Mike Zaneis, senior vice president for public policy at the IAB, the final Ogilvy design ran into trademark issues. So the DAA did some tweaking to come up with the icon that was launched in April and is now seen in an estimated 20 billion daily online ads, according to IAB estimates. "We believe the vast majority of targeted ads are carrying the icon," says Zaneis.

As to GroupM's contribution, Zaneis says the holding company "showed remarkable leadership and foresight in the area of consumer privacy and industry self-regulation. They were the first ad agency to join the cross-industry effort and they understood that consumer protection was good for the industry and good for the business."

"The more we can get the self-regulatory message out there that the industry wants consumers to understand how we collect data and what we do with it, the better it is for everybody," Montgomery adds. What is good for the consumer benefits the business, "and ultimately it benefits a free Internet. And that's kind of the point," of the

entire effort, he says.

Montgomery says that he's also working with the industry on the adoption of similar techniques for the mobile world, including ongoing discussions with the Mobile Marketing Association. "It's more complex given the screen size," he says. But the company has made some progress. For example, it has drafted guidelines that call for publishers to mask so-called "universal unique identifiers," which are on every phone. Mobile opt-out





alternatives have also been proposed. But mobile privacy policies are a "work in progress," Montgomery says.

Rob Norman, CEO of GroupM North America, says that Montgomery "has become the front man in some ways" on the privacy issue. Indeed, as the IAB's Zaneis notes, the industry thought highly enough of Montgomery's leadership role and communications skills on the issues that he was asked to testify before a Congressional committee in March.

"It's critical," says Norman, to gain acceptance for the industry's self-regulatory stance on privacy. "If our ability to collect and use data is legislatively restricted, it would be a less efficient world and more costly to go to market."

Stopping Piracy

GroupM is also credited with taking effective steps this year to thwart content piracy, a separate but important industry issue. The holding company was first among its peers to enact a company-wide policy that prohibits client ads from appearing on Web sites that support piracy or distribute illegally obtained content.

To give the policy teeth, the company created a list of 2,000 offending U.S. Web sites that vendors are contractually prohibited from placing GroupM client ads on. "Pirates stay alive by advertising and selling subscriptions," says Montgomery. "So when we asked ourselves what we could do, we determined that our best option was to

'THIS IS GOING TO OFFER CLIENTS A REAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE TRADITIONAL AGENCY NETWORK MODEL AND ONE THAT IS FIT FOR THE 'ALWAYS ON' WORLD WE NOW LIVE IN."

STEWART SHANLEY
CEO AND COFOUNDER OF IRIS

help choke off the advertising path. And every single insertion order has language that "bans GroupM clients from any site on the list of offenders." The company works with verification firms to make sure that vendors avoid those sites on the list. "It's a rare exception that there's a violation, so it's working," says Montgomery.

And while piracy more directly effects vendors, Norman says that GroupM's position was more about "what we thought was right as opposed to what we felt we had to do. We believe fundamentally that people who own intellectual property have the right to give it away [or not] of their own free will. Piracy is inherently wrong."

And content owners appreciate the stand that GroupM has taken. "GroupM has recognized that digital theft and counterfeiting on the Internet pose a serious threat to the entire U.S. economy," says Rick Cotton, executive vice president and general counsel at NBCUniversal.

Cotton says that NBCU applauded the leadership that GroupM had shown by "taking concrete steps to prevent their clients' ads from providing financial support to illegal sites that kill U.S. jobs." He also credited them with devising a "reasonable and workable policy, which leads the way toward establishing the broadband Internet as a pillar of the 21st-century economy under a rule of law, rather than as a back alley of illegal activity."

Advancing Addressable TV

Separately, GroupM has been a consistent advocate for the advancement of addressable TV technology. It has invested in a number of firms including Invidi and Visible World, two of the leaders in the space.

"We believe that offline and online addressability is a prerequisite for the future efficiency of the system overall," says Norman. It's hard to know when the industry will get to a fully-scaled addressable national TV platform, Norman acknowledges. "But if you aggregate the addressable TV homes" that already exist on various platforms today, he says, "you get to meaningful numbers, where you not only learn a lot but can also use the output to help model the rest of the media you buy. So that's beneficial."

Meanwhile, the holding company continued to pour

resources into Maxus, the smallest of its four main media shops. The results paid off handsomely this summer when it won three big accounts. In addition to SC Johnson and NBCU, Maxus also won the \$150-million global Barclays media assignment.

The Maxus strategy has been to offer clients "the feel and benefits of a small-agency culture backed up the power and resources of GroupM," says Kelly Clark, global CEO at Maxus.

GroupM — and WPP for that matter — bring a lot to the Maxus offering, including an econometric modeling practice, and an array of specialist units for services such as local broadcast and print buying, as well as data from research arm Kantar and even direct marketing expertise from Wunderman. Maxus in turn provides clients with planning expertise across all communications channels, national TV buying, digital trading and a data and analytics practice.

Kelly credits GroupM and WPP management with supporting the shop's expansion effort. "It's been unflinching from day one," he says. "Every single investment I've asked for, from talent to technology, was okayed."

That, Norman says, is why GroupM exists. "While the org chart may say otherwise, we really work for them," he says of the agencies under the GroupM banner. "Clients don't appoint us, they appoint agencies. Maxus has done an incredible job." Steve McClellan

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Meredith may be best known as the publisher

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of such long-in-thetooth titles as *Ladies' Home Journal, Family Circle* and *Better Homes and Gardens*.

But this Des Moines-based company is turning itself into a digital dynamo, reengineering its relationship with readers and advertisers. It's made our list because of its solidified position as a leader in cross-platform content creation and marketing solutions. It has made acquisitions and investments that enable it to better serve agency partners and brands now, and it continues to make moves that will ensure those decades-old titles have a valuable place on marketing plans for the foreseeable future.

In October, Meredith repositioned its integrated marketing division as Meredith Xcelerated Marketing (MXM), a unit that includes some of the more forward-thinking acquisitions in the publishing world. In the past few years Meredith has expanded its marketing capabilities with pick-ups including The Hyperfactory (focusing on mobile), Genex (digital), New Media Strategies (social media), and Directive (in part, to leverage the company's massive



database of over 85 million names). The acquisitions have been smart and wellintegrated into existing properties and client services.

This fall the company also made a strategic investment in London-based Iris Worldwide, launching the Meredith-Iris Global Network its reach now extends from Des Moines to Delhi and back again. "MXM possesses the optimal mix of services and innovation to benefit clients on a global scale thanks to our investment in Iris," says Martin Reidy, president of MXM, which he accurately refers to as "a truly integrated client service engine."

And Stewart Shanley,

MEDIA SUPPLIER CEO and cofounder of Iris, welcomed the independent agency's new partner, saying, "This is going to offer clients a real alternative to the traditional agency network model and one that is fit for the 'always on' world we now live in."

Meredith has also been active on the publishing side, creating more opportunities for clients to connect with consumers, recently adding EatingWell and Every Day with Rachael Ray to its stable. According to Tom Harty, president of Meredith's National Media Group, the additions give Meredith the largest reach with women who are focused on their homes, families, and personal development of any media company. Harty also points out: "Several of our key brands such as Better Homes and Gardens and Fitness have become among the most highly rated media brands on Facebook, demonstrating their relevancy with today's multimedia, multitasking, sociallyengaged female consumer."

Finding new ways of reaching consumers and providing valuable content, of course, remains central to Meredith's core. "We continue to build our brands across many platforms whether it is with new tablet products, Web video series, or mobile applications," says Harty. "Each of these new platforms or brand extensions further deepens the brand engagement with the consumer, which is a key priority for our marketing partners."

And Meredith backs up its impressive reach with industry-leading accountability practices. Under the Meredith Engagement Dividend Program — which grew out of a year-long internal study to measure ROI begun in 2009 in which purchases by consumers exposed to Meredith properties were measured against shoppers with no exposure agency and brands will have some of the most sophisticated ROI measurement tools in the business, utilizing analytics from Nielsen's Homescan system and Meredith data. Further, the program guarantees brands that advertise in Meredith magazines an increase in sales performance.

Mark Kaline, global media director of Kimberly-Clark (which has such brands as Kleenex, Huggies and Cottonelle and became a premier advertising partner and one of the first brands to sign on to the program) called the Meredith Engagement Dividend, "a breakthrough product for the magazine industry."

Likewise Kelly Foster-Shapiro, GroupM senior partner, sees the initiative as "a step forward for the publishing business and accountability." GroupM/Mindshare, Kimberly-Clark's agency, will work with Meredith over the next year to measure and track performance for the brands participating in the Meredith Engagement Dividend Program. "We believe in print and its ability to drive business and are excited to be able to prove that," says Foster-Shapiro.

"Based on our groundbreaking research," boasts Meredith's Harty, "marketers who invest in this program will receive an average improvement of 10 percent in the sales performance." Dohn Capone

Meredith

Smart acquisitions solidify Meredith's clout in both print and digital



Not many media agency chief executives would have the self-confidence to star in a funny online video celebrating the win of an "intriguing person" award and, perfectly deadpan, introduce his "partner," Little Bill, an action figure version of himself in matching grey suit and red tie. And few would honor a photographer's request to stand on a conference room table, immaculate in formal business suit, for a shoot celebrating an Agency of the Year award.

Hard to imagine any other media head doing either of those things. Irwin Gotlieb? Seriously. Laura Desmond? Surely not. But Horizon Media Founder, president and CEO Bill Koenigsberg did. Still, the whimsy is buttressed by substantive industry thought leadership. Koenigsberg also serves as Chairman of the 4A's influential Media Policy Committee and Horizon is usually among the first adopters of new communications theories and practices

The head of the largest independent media services agency in the world never worries about what his shareholders will say.

He doesn't have any.

Koenigsberg can take the road less traveled or, more to the point, do what's best for his clients rather than his bottom line. And the agency, just like its leader, is confident enough to innovate boldly — it was named one of the 10 most innovative advertising companies in the world by Fast Company — and assuredly go toe-to-toe with global behemoths and win, which it does regularly.

In fact, at \$3.4 billion in annualized billings, the shop is itself a behemoth, ranking seventh out of the top 14 holding company media agencies. Horizon's potent mix of fierce independence, laser-focused client service and willingness to push the envelope is unchanged from when Koenigsberg founded the shop in 1989, and their

rise from major minor to major player top-tier competitor has been steady ever since. "Our engagement planning powered by rich consumer insights and channel planning tools are setting us apart," says Koenigsberg. "The integrated digitalization and socialization of the agency provides a connection approach that is fully actionable in all channels, which leads to significant innovation and media amplification."

Last year Horizon won nearly \$1 billion in new business, up 25% over the previous year, the staff grew 18% to 675, and it was the third consecutive year in which annualized billings grew by more than 20%. The shop made major industry news when it won the \$400 million Capital One business followed by a victory in United Airlines' \$100 million global media review. They also added Kraft Mac & Cheese, Clearwire, Constellsation Brands, Mohegan Sun, Tillamook Cheese, Blockbuster and 1-800-Dentist to its roster.

Even when it falls short in new-business competition, Horizon's flexibility and inventiveness stands out. In the giant Comcast/ NBCU consolidated media review last year, the shop, which handled NBC for many years, partnered with another incumbent, Omnicom Media group, giving a whole new twist to the concept of "frenemy." The partnership

didn't win, but its unique approach gained considerable attention.

Horizon's specialty divisions have also kept pace mostly outpaced, actually — its far larger rivals. The shop's sports and event marketing unit, Scout, has notched a breathtaking 580% growth since it launched in november 2010 and has been involved in the acquisition of more than \$400 million in sports media and marketing assets. Many of Horizon's largest clients play with Scout, including GEICO, Capital One and Corona.

LAST YEAR MAY HAVE BEEN HORIZON'S FINEST MOMENT, AND EMPHATICALLY EARNS THE AGENCY MEDIA MAGAZINE'S INDEPENDENT AGENCY OF THE YEAR HONORS FOR 2011.

The agency's digital group doubled its year-over-year revenue in 2011 and doubled its overall staff. Horizon also launched several key initiatives in the digital space last year, including a partnership with Adap.tv to provide proprietary category insights for its entertainment, retail, CPG and financial services clients; a digital creative management group; and the roll-out of a "Digital CAT Scan" pro-

gram to gauge the level of digital literacy and expertise across the enterprise.

Also in 2011, Horizon entered into several intriguing strategic partnerships, such as its deal with RealVu, the pioneering "viewable impressions" provider that gives Horizon first-mover position in the key area of accountability and transparency of digital media buys. And it was the first agency to partner with Trust Metrics, which provides ranking data on the ad effectiveness of various websites before any media is bought. The shop's social media group, its consumer insights unit the WHY group, and its channel planning offering the WHERE group also recorded significant growth year-over-year.

And then there's that aforementioned flair: Interior Design magazine developed a full feature on Horizon's new New York office with photos in its September issue. (The Western office also moved to bigger offices in 2011.) The Manhattan headquarters' includes 7,500 square feet for an in-house wellness center that when completed will include a yoga center and a gym. The space is also used for many industry-related events, such as a series of "Knowledge Café" events whose first two presenters were Hulu CEO Jason Kilar and Pandora CEO Tim Westergren.

No word yet on whether or not Little Bill will get his own office. **①** Jack Feuer





FULL SERVICE AGENCY MEDIA DEPARTMENT

When it comes to integrating full-service offerings with media, Hill Holliday is way out in front. And for one very good reason: "It became fashionable 10 or 12 years ago to take media out, spin it out and run it separately," says CEO Mike Sheehan. "But we never took the bait."

Hill Holliday

With its "one consumer" approach, HHCC builds media into everything it does

In fact, removing media from the equation was antithetical to Boston-based Hill Holliday's core beliefs far earlier than a decade ago. "We never even considered not having media be part of the agency," Sheehan says. And in the past few years, that decision has looked smarter and smarter, as media became more central to effective creative and strategy. The new mediascape is completely symbiotic. It may have always been to some extent, but now it's vital, with creative, media and brand planning operating on what Sheehan terms a "codependency."

"Today media is as likely to sit at the head of the table as any other discipline or department," explains Sheehan. A few years ago talk turned to blurring lines between media and other disciplines. "Today, the lines have been obliterated," Sheehan says of the departments at Hill Holliday. "There are no lines."

This is not just talk. This summer Baba Shetty, HHCC's media chief, added chief strategy officer duties to his repertoire. "We think it's important to consider that it's one consumer we're serving," Shetty says, explaining the approach, "whether it's with the creative work or the media through which they're encountering that work."

The agency took the same approach to integrating digital and traditional capabilities and appointed Adam Cahill, who has spent 15 years leading digital media efforts, and Cindy Stockwell, who brings

20 years of integrated media experience, as co-directors of the media team. When you walk through the office you're likely see the dynamic duo sitting with creatives.

"You tend to find success when two contrasting dynamics meet," explains Sheehan. "That's what creates energy."

In angling its entire practice to start with consumer behavior, Hill Holliday has presented an alternative to the paid, earned and owned model of media. "The issue is we think that [model] is about the media companies and brands themselves talking. It's not consumer language," Shetty says. "For the average person who does not work in our business, when they see a message from a brand or anything from a brand, what's really important is their experience with that."

To this end, the agency employs a model of incidental, choice-based (those that people seek out, which the agency has determined are 27 times as effective) and social (ones that come from a trusted group of friends, and the most impactful) impressions, taking the framing out of the conference room and putting it onto the consumer. "We are in the midst of a fundamental shift in how brands think about marketing," says Shetty. "If you're the CMO of any major brand, you've been working in a world of incidental impressions for years - decades really - and the machinery on how to get those kinds of impressions out into the world is very welloiled. The thing that's less

well understood and critical to well-managed brands are the social and choice-based impressions."

Ground-breaking efforts, such as Liberty Mutual's Responsibility Project, have come out of having these types of conversations with brands. So has a clever social integration with the Sims video game for client Dunkin' Donuts. (Players could purchase and collect Dunkin' products in the game.) The MLB FanCave initiative in particular — a content machine in a physical space that reached across media and fan communities — showed the full scope of Hill Holliday's vision.

'MEDIA IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE AN EXPERIENCE FOR A PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMER."

BABA SHETTY Media Chief HHCC



"Increasingly, the job of media is to construct a program that's going to generate appropriate choice-based impressions for a brand," says Shetty. "It goes vastly beyond this idea that media is something you buy from someone who has space to sell. Media is an opportunity to create an experience for a prospective customer of the brand."

One way the agency stays ahead is by constantly looking forward, whether it's in media usage or some new technology. If you spent the day sitting in Hill Holliday's lobby, you'd see a constant stream of visitors from outside the agency technologists, young-start-ups and others. Sheehan estimates there are 20 or more such callers every business day. And, in fact, on the day I spoke to Shetty, AOL's Tim Armstrong had just left the office, yet another in the stream of potential partners vying for time with Hill Holliday's creative, media and brand planning teams.

Amid the gathering momentum, Hill Holliday remains stalwart in many ways. For one, client relation-

ships last longer than is typical. John Hancock, another Beantown icon, has worked with the agency since 1985. And look no further than the CEO's chair for stability. In the 40-plus years the agency has been in business, Sheehan is only the second to sit in it. **D** John Capone



While plenty of marketers have one or two signature dishes they prepare really well — heartwarming TV campaigns, for example, or engaging digital display — American Express has turned itself into an online test kitchen in overdrive. At any given moment, the financial services company has more bubbling on its new-media stoves than all the chefs cooking on reality TV.

"Whether you think of AmEx as a service company, a payment solutions provider, or a travel service, the company is superb at marketing," says Christina Smith, senior vice president and group director at MediaLogic, which specializes in social marketing. Among its assets, she says, are "a closed-loop business model and a loyal and affluent customer base."

Positioned squarely at the intersection of its 94 million cardmembers and the millions of merchants that accept the card, AmEx has increasingly positioned itself as a digital middleman, coaxing both stores and shop-

pers deeper into the world of e-commerce. Earlier this year, it unveiled Serve, a digital payment and commerce platform meant to compete with PayPal, which allows consumers to make purchases and person-to-person (P2P) payments online, via mobile phones, and at millions of merchants who accept American Express cards. The idea is that it unifies multiple payment options into a single account, which can be funded from a bank account, debit, credit or charge card.

And working in partnership with such companies as Google, YouTube, FedEx and FourSquare, it's created



American Express

American Express Leverages online partnerships to befriend both merchants and cardmembers

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innovative programs to help its merchant base do better online. It's also committed to investing \$100 million in start-ups and companies in the digital commerce space, including everything from loyalty and rewards, mobile and online payment management.

(To be fair, some industry wags have called that massive bet a "spray and pray" tactic: AmEx is "aiming its vast resources at every buzzladen start-up and platform it can see on the technological scene and praying that one of its bets will shape up to be a real winner in the mass market," wrote VentureBeat, adding that the company's biggest problem is "suiting up for the digital revolution.")

Certainly, AmEx doesn't see it that way, and says its efforts to think beyond that little green card are already paying off. "Revenue growth reflected a continuing return on the investments we're making to enhance the services we provide consumers, small businesses, merchants and corporate customers," CEO Kenneth I. Chenault says in the latest earnings report. Those revenue gains, he says, "have also generated resources to invest in initiatives that bring customers and merchants more closely together as the worlds of online and offline commerce converge."

AmEx's biggest effort this year was Small Business Saturday, an initiative to get Americans shopping at small stores the day after Black Friday. In its second year and backed by a substantial marketing campaign, the company predicted 89 million people would venture out and shop small. Instead, more than 103 million did so. And public awareness of Small Business Saturday rose to 65 percent, compared to 37 percent in 2010, the company says in its release.

To participate, more than 500,000 small business owners leveraged promotional materials or an online tool, called YourBuzz, which aggregates conversations across such review sites as Yelp and CitySearch, and social services such as Facebook, foursquare and Twitter. And 15,000 small businesses signed up and received free Facebook advertising to promote their products and services.

Big companies got in on the small-business effort, too, with FedEx injecting an additional \$1 million into this effort, handing out \$25 gift certificates to 40,000 customers. Once FedEx put the offer on its Facebook page, it quadrupled its following and sold out in under an hour.

"The No. 1 need of small business, coming out of the recession, was to get more customers to their doors," Mary Ann Reilly, senior vice president at American Express OPEN, told MediaPost in an interview earlier this year. "And we knew consumers wanted to support small business, with 93 percent of those in our research supporting the idea."

In its first year, the effort drew plenty of accolades, including a Grand Clio, and a Clio Special Award (a new award) in the category of Facebook integrated media. But Reilly says it was also a boon in that "it was probably one of the best crossfunctional things we've done, breaking down organizational barriers within the company."

More broadly, MediaLogic's Smith points out that AmEx "put a stake in the ground with rewards as virtual currency leveraging the growing role of Membership Rewards in the digital marketplace, even naming those rewards "the Social Currency." Those points can be used in online games through a partnership with Zynga, or as payment currency, at sites like Amazon. Its "Link, Like, Love" effort, The Gift Chain promotion, and its foursquare promotion, which allows members to sync their cards with their foursquare profile, are more examples of AmEx's constant efforts to cook up more meaningful ways to use social media.

"It understands the power of social stream promotions," Smith says, "targeting specific audiences with both short- and long-term efforts. These promotions benefit dual stakeholders — cardmembers and merchants — with strong media integration. That's a comfort level and confidence that few companies possess."

Sarah Mahoney

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Not long ago, incubator referred to a place where tiny babies grew big and strong. Now it's part of a corporate lexicon of "I" words — including innovation, iteration, and ideation — that refer to the hatching of cool ideas. But while most companies spend money to grow their own talent and business, OMD teamed up with client General Electric to help student entrepreneurs grow theirs.

The impetus for the GE/OMD Innovation Incubator is fairly classic: looking to tap into the swell of new digital ideas, ad agency devises program to spot, train and nurture young talent that will help keep it on the cutting edge. But the formula behind it is unique — one part nurture to two parts venture.

OMD wanted more from its incubator than an infusion of energy and potential new hires (although it got both). The agency wanted to explore new concepts, strategies and business models that could shape its clients' media initiatives. "We've all had to change to get the kind of people running our businesses that are pioneer types of people," says Alan Cohen, CEO of OMD USA. "Clients are changing, too. When you have this much money at stake, everyone is involved."

So last spring, Cohen approached GE with the idea of hosting a digital-media start-up lab for students with innovative business ideas. The students would spend 10 weeks of the summer at OMD headquarters in New York, developing their businesses with input from OMD and

GE staff. All would receive stipends, but one would walk away with a \$10,000 prize to be used for either education or seed money.

"It was something in the wheelhouse of a lot of companies we work for," says Cohen, "but GE stands for innovation. We thought maybe there would be some sort of passion."

They thought right.

It took GE about one second to sign on, according to Linda Boff, global director, marketing communications. "It was an instant yes. GE is really interested in the entrepreneurial start-up space. Our only question was, 'Can we pull this off?' OMD gets all the credit; they went into overdrive."

With only a few months to get the program together, the agency started lining up speakers from its own ranks and from GE. But it also reached out to a range of outside companies, from Pepsi to Pandora to Foodspotting, the foodie social-media platform, as well as a handful of venture capital firms. "We wanted to give the students exposure to people who had real hands-on experience in

the world of entrepreneurship," says Boff. That meant exposing them to how brands think of entrepreneurism, and what agencies think when they're evaluating new media opportunities.

At the same time, OMD began reviewing students from leading business and undergraduate programs around the country. From a pool of nearly 200 applicants, the agency came back to GE with fewer than 20 candidates, according to Boff, and together, they chose the final 12 students for the program.

Some came with startup ideas; others developed them quickly once the program began. Between them, the students worked in teams on six different new-business ventures. including Socrative, a smart student-response system for teachers, Spinlister, a peer-to-peer bicycle rental marketplace, and Broodr, an Etsy-like marketplace for unique products. At the end of August, the student teams had a final "pitch-out" in front of eight judges from OMD and GE, who sat in a "U" with score sheets in hand. "We peppered them with questions," says Boff. "We evaluated the quality of the idea, the presentation, and the quality of the leadership."

"It was almost like a reality show on our floor," Cohen says. "They all had business plans and lawyers and things."

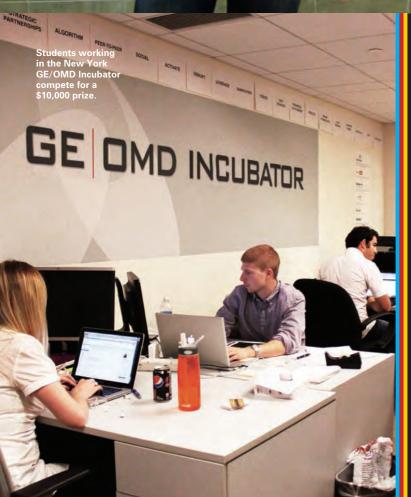
In the end, a 21-year-old

Drexel senior named Ari Winkleman walked off with the prize money for Involvio, a social platform for colleges that allows users to post and promote all events and meetings taking place on campus. Winkleman and his team had almost finished the prototype for Involvio when he applied to the Innovation Incubator; by the end of the program, they had developed a beta. A month or so later, they secured additional capital, according to Cohen, and in November, the site launched at campuses around the country, including Drexel, Tulane, Ithaca College and Florida International University.

The Innovation Incubator paid off for OMD, too. The agency got what it was looking for: intelligence on the new world of digital entrepreneurism, creative energy and ideas, and insight into its own business. For Cohen, the greatest revelation was how seamlessly the "digital all-stars" fit into the agency's environment.

"The biggest surprise was how much similarity there was between these students and what we're already doing for clients," he says. "We expected that it was the next generation, but they were the kind of people we hire all the time. Our staff was not only accepting of the students — they got engaged with these folks, and brought them to their meetings. It showed that everyone could be a star." Gail Belsky





INCUBATOR

GE/OND NNOVATION INCUBATOR

Omnicom and GE bring digital ideas to life by nurturing elite students



Out-of-home may be the oldest medium in the world. But to Posterscope, winning *MEDIA*'s out-of-home honors for the second year in a row, it's also the most revolutionary. In fact, discovering new ways to integrate billboards, bus-stop posters, cinema ads and a host of other out-of-home media formats into the constantly evolving digital and social media landscape is one of the most important things the agency does, says Connie Garrido, its CEO.

"This is an opportunity to be a part of a larger, more consumer-centric media ecosystem," Garrido says. "Media technology is all converging and we need to look at the interplay between bought, owned and earned communications, and see how out-of-home advertising can be interconnected."

Posterscope has been making a name for itself by testing how advertisers can use the latest technologies in out-of-home and truly add value for consumers - and not just gimmickry. Last year, it won this award by conducting a test with client Nokia, using the mobile-phone marketer's Point & Find augmented reality codes embedded in billboards throughout the city of Colchester in southeast England. Utilizing cameras in their phones, local residents were able to use the QR codes on the billboards to hyperlink to related content, and even to download apps utilizing a combination of image-recognition and GPS technology.

This year, Posterscope pushed its tech innovations even further, testing the prospects for use of near-field

communication, or NFC technology, which enables consumers to touch their mobile phones to ads and download related content. The technology is in its infancy in the U.S., and so Posterscope conducted a rudimentary trial in which participants touched their phones to VH1's busstop posters in New York and Los Angeles for the network's Basketball Wives reality show, which enabled them to instantly download information about the show.

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"The NFC campaign for VH1's Basketball Wives was really exciting because it offered immediate, measurable results and we were first to market," says Wendy Weatherford-Marks, VH1's vice president of consumer marketing and promotion. "Posterscope recognizes all this powerful, new digital innovation happening in the OOH space right now and how it can deliver ROI like never before ... that's what I really like about them."

By the second quarter of this year, phone carriers are expected to roll out new models with NFC capabilities, and Posterscope will then test for opportunities to use NFC to instantly purchase advertisers' products or share on social media and possibly create additional forms of messaging, Garrido says.

This past year Posterscope also conducted a "location analytics plus location-aware" mobile survey, using GPS tracking embedded within mobile phones of willing participants, to track when they passed billboards of a certain advertiser and then visited a nearby location of that advertiser's store. A subsequent survey of the participants asked



questions about the brands they remembered and trips to the store they made as a consequence of seeing an ad.

Another test currently underway with various cinema vendors studies consumer interaction with in-theater experiential audience gaming, in-lobby digital interactive experiences and static inlobby executions with mobile overlays. The goal is to make out-of-home advertising much more interactive and engaging, Garrido says.

Advertisers are not the only beneficiaries of Posterscope's analytics: Media companies can also learn and adapt to the research findings, as one day virtually all out-of-home will be digital, Garrido says. "With all of our studies we can offer a new perspective to our clients, but we also have to educate and embark on relationships with media owners, to show them opportunities in investing in media, enhancing their real estate with new technology," she says. "That way, they can see the value and not feel that the new technology is going to cannibalize the traditional poster, but enhance it with rich and new uses."

Katie Kuehner-Hebert



POSTERSCOPE

By linking cellphones to billboards, Posterscope hones its tech edge









Unilever's branded game for AXE on PlayStation let users win AXEbranded prizes for their avatars.

INTERACTIVE TV

BRIGHTLINE

Zeroing in on gamers, BrightLine brings interactive TV closer to mainstream

For years, the big question in interactive advertising has been that of scale. Can the industry deliver ads to more than just a few pockets of homes here and there?

When BrightLine is in charge, the answer is clearly yes. In 2011, it created a campaign for Degree for Women that scaled across 90 million homes, representing the largest interactive ad campaign to date, running on satellite, Xbox and VOD. And since opening its doors in 2003, it has steadily become the go-to shop for innovative and widereaching iTV campaigns.

Its specialization in iTV has helped the agency to dominate and also lead that market, and it now counts 65 clients on its roster, read-

ing like a who's who in marketing: Unilever, Cisco, GlaxoSmithKline, American Express, L'Oreal, Kellogg's, Red Bull, PepsiCo and McNeil/I&I are all on board. BrightLine has executed over 300 iTV campaigns since its founding, but it's doubled its client roster in the last two years alone. These new clients are coming aboard for the agency's innovative campaigns. For example, BrightLine designed Unilever's first-ever fully branded game for AXE, a brand known for experimentation and pushing boundaries. From the PlayStation home screen, viewers could earn AXEbranded prizes, including AXE body spray, for their PlayStation avatars. And gamers could also perform moves in a branded environment, says Jacqueline Corbelli, BrightLine's founder and chief executive. "This prize made the first-ever branded move in PlayStation home possible, allowing gamers to perform a pit-pit-chest move with the Excite deodorant," she says, referring to the moves that allow the avatars to apply deodorant in a particular fashion. (BrightLine's AXE work has run on PlayStation in more than 20 countries.)

This sort of innovation has been a cornerstone of the company since Corbelli founded it in the playroom of her home back in 2003. "BrightLine has a history of leading iTV advertising with a litany of firsts," she says, "from the first-ever viral VOD experience for AXE back in 2005, to interactive recipe experiences that custom tailor the right recipe for the viewer based on personality profiles, to the first customizable film experience enabling viewers to choose what direction the main character takes next."

To make sure it can keep achieving those firsts, they've added funding. This year, it landed \$30 million in investment money from the private equity firm JMI Equity, earmarked for strategic growth.

JMI isn't the company's only fan. "We think that BrightLine offers a unique solution in the advanced-TV marketplace," says investment banking firm Needham & Company, in a recent report. "BrightLine works with the largest global advertisers to solve these problems within the TV environment by bringing one of the key competitive advantages of the Internet to TV advertising — data."

While predictions vary widely on the size of the iTV ad market, the research firm Parks Associates has pegged the iTV market to potentially hit \$4.3 billion by 2014. And scale is indeed a critical issue. The key is making sure the interactive ad programs can be accessed across platforms, such as satellite with DISH and DIRECTV, telcos with Verizon FiOS and AT&T U-verse, and connected-gaming consoles such as PlayStation and Xbox, she says. (BrightLine has created campaigns for cablers, but finds, in general, that cable's technological capabilities are not as advanced as others.)

And it's working:
BrightLine's programs average
3 percent to 5 percent click
rates, Corbelli says, and attract
audiences from 1 million to 6
million. Daisy Whitney



SHOPPER MEDIA AGENCY

SAATCHI & SAATCHI X

Pioneer Saatchi & Saatchi X brings out-of-the-box solutions to the heart of the supermarket

If Dina Howell has one mission at Saatchi & Saatchi X,

it's to help clients understand that shoppers and consumers aren't the same people, and that speaking to them effectively requires two different approaches.

"When you are a shampoo consumer, you're in the shower. You're thinking about how it squeezes out of the bottle, and how it smells. Not when you are a shopper," says Howell, the agency's worldwide CEO, who joined a year ago after retiring as vice president of global media and brand operations at Procter & Gamble. "Then you're noticing different things: Is the shampoo you want in stock? Are there other brands that appeal to you more?"

But Howell knows that neither approach matters more than the other. "Traditional advertising is critical to help consumers understand a brand, and the big idea. But when that consumer turns into a shopper and walks into the store, there's so much more on her mind."

The precise intersection of shopper with product is what Saatchi & Saatchi X zeros in on it with the intensity that earned it this year's honors. Working for such clients as Diageo, Frito-Lay, Walmart, Wendy's and, of course, Procter & Gamble, Howell explains the agency is intent "on using any marketing stimuli to build brand equity and engage people in a way that leads to a purchase. It can happen in a store, it can happen online. But the key is recognizing that it's not a short-term effort, but building longer-term brand equity."

While many still think of shopper marketing as the dull business of signage and endcaps, it's actually one of the most reliable, measurable and innovative media out there. The Grocery Manufacturers Association estimates that it accounts for between \$50 to \$60 billion in marketing spending, and that many major consumer-goods companies have more than 20 dedicated employees.

"Wow" moments, as Howell calls them, make that spending more effective, and can only come from the customized solutions and creative insights that stem from research. One of

her favorite examples is P&G's Swiffer. "P&G realized there was a huge opportunity, and that there were many people who had not tried it. The barrier was that people couldn't understand what was inside that rectangular box, and why it cost \$10." So they convinced P&G to take the product out of the box and hang it in the mop aisle. "Once [the customer] could touch it," Howell notes, "sales skyrocketed."

Such changes require indepth understanding of every step of the retail process. "It took several years of research to get it out of the box. There were some engineering issues, there were logistic issues, and there were store questions. We had to convince all parties that this was going to create such a difference in shopping and buying momentum that it would be worth it."

It was, says Kristine Decker, associate marketing director for Procter & Gamble, who has also been brand manager for Swiffer. "The game-changing work Saatchi & Saatchi X did with Swiffer to uncover breakthrough shopper insights at the point of sale and turn them into business-building plans is a great example of the

impact SSX has on the marketing landscape," she says. That increasingly global landscape has Howell traveling so often from their headquarters in Arkansas to their 14 offices in 11 countries that she carries two passports.

Balancing store versus digital initiatives is also an area of focus and innovation, especially since the smartphone has created powerful connections between the two. "Now, the shopper may be in the store, standing in front of all your hair dryers. But she's also online, comparing prices and reading reviews."

Demographics are also shaping the science, and keeping up with differences is key: "Millennials are spending five times what Boomers spent at the same age," says Howell. *Five times*.

Using that knowledge, the agency aims to try and make shopping more intuitive and rewarding — a brand-building transaction, not just a financial one. Shoppers, she says, "are ultimately the client. They aren't paying us, but we believe our clients look to us to keep shoppers in the center of everything, and that focus is timeless."



Starcom USA has historically been the media agency other American media agencies want to be. There's that famous Midwestern buttoned-downess. That constant success in reviews. The deep and talented bench that makes management succession seem almost effortless. The industry leadership. The ongoing awards and honors. Its campaigns are always state-of-the-industry, its metrics always a step ahead.

But none of those elements are the shop's secret sauce. The real difference maker is that Starcom USA has, if you will, a creative impulse.

The Publicis unit brings a unique drive to the media space, a restless urge to innovate, to explore, to experiment. Every shop has had to rethink itself, but even before digital changed everything, Starcom was constantly tinkering with its processes and structures, looking for new ways to define its mission and its team and to deliver for its clients.

It's a trait that is tailor-made for a digital world in which innovation is a survival mechanism, options are endless, and boundaries don't exist.

"We're competing in a new arena, where the most successful ideas are those that marry both the art and the science," says Starcom USA CEO Lisa Donohue, the Chicago Advertising Federation's 2011 Woman of the Year. "We have rapidly moved from a world where we planned and bought static things to a world where we design interactive and dynamic experiences for our clients' consumers ... In this new world, traditional agency silos are collapsing and no one owns 'creativity.' "

This is a world in which, once again, Starcom is setting a benchmark for its peers to follow — it was the most awarded media agency last year, and dominated the Effies, where it was named Most Effective Agency in



STARCOM USA

Dirty mouths and dirty shorts. Chevy and Twitter. Allstate socializing bikers. This buttoned-down Midwesterner continues to surprise and delight.





North America. And it ranked sixth on the global list of Most Effective Agencies.

Because of its leadership in seeding digital in its DNA, its ability to execute in the digital ecosphere, and for bringing its characteristic inventiveness to this brave new world, Starcom is *MEDIA*'s Creative Media Agency of the Year for 2011.

The agency's digital numbers for the year tell part of the tale. In 2011, Starcom USA earned 38 percent of its revenue from digital, 17 percent more than the year before and a significantly higher percentage than most media agencies garner from digital business. It increased its social and mobile revenue by 64 percent over 2010 and drove revenue growth from data and analytics upward 59 percent.

By bringing SMG Search talent under the Starcom banner, the agency upped its search revenue by 17 percent. And branded content unit LiquidThread also refocused its mission on digital and, in the process, increased its digital and social business by 34 percent.

But with Starcom, it's never just about quantity; the agency made some quality creative moves in 2011 as well, creating novel ways to serve its clients and serve up what Starcom calls "human experiences" across a diverse range of product categories. For Orbits, Starcom linked the chewing gum's "Dirty Mouths" ad campaign with "Dirty Shorts," fiveminute videos that featured hilarious situations from Jason Bateman, Will Arnett and their friends. In one, Bateman cross-dressed as an exotic dancer who captivates his audience every time he flashes his bright Orbit smile. In "Prom Date," Bateman plays a father in an awkward situation with his daughter and her date — played by Arnett — that isn't so bad when everyone chews Orbit gum.

Starcom promised the client 500,000 online views

— the two videos together racked up 2.7 million views. More to the point, 80 percent of user sentiment regarding the Orbit brand was positive.

For Allstate, Starcom partnered with Rider magazine to create an online social community for bikers. With almost 100 different routes created, the hub saw over 85,000 page views and 100,000 impressions on an exceptionally small budget. Allstate is seeing qualified leads generated at an astounding 80 percent conversion rate and Rider magazine continued to support the effort by creating a companion Twitter account.

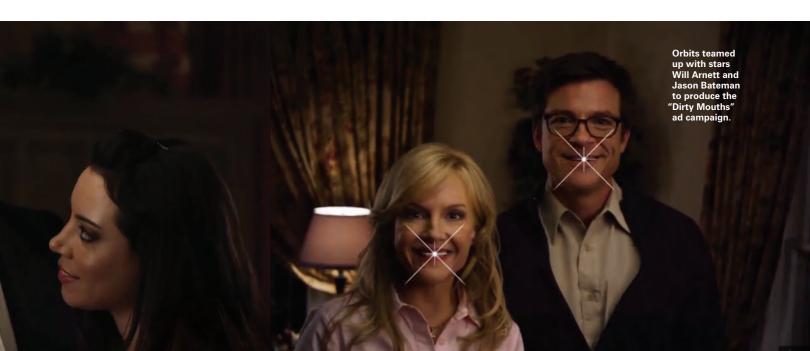
And of course there was a Super Bowl play. As people went online to look for just-aired ads, Starcom not only had search terms locked up for client Chevrolet, but it was also stealing competitors' terms as their ads ran during the game. The shop snapped up hashtags connected to other automakers and gained Twitter traction

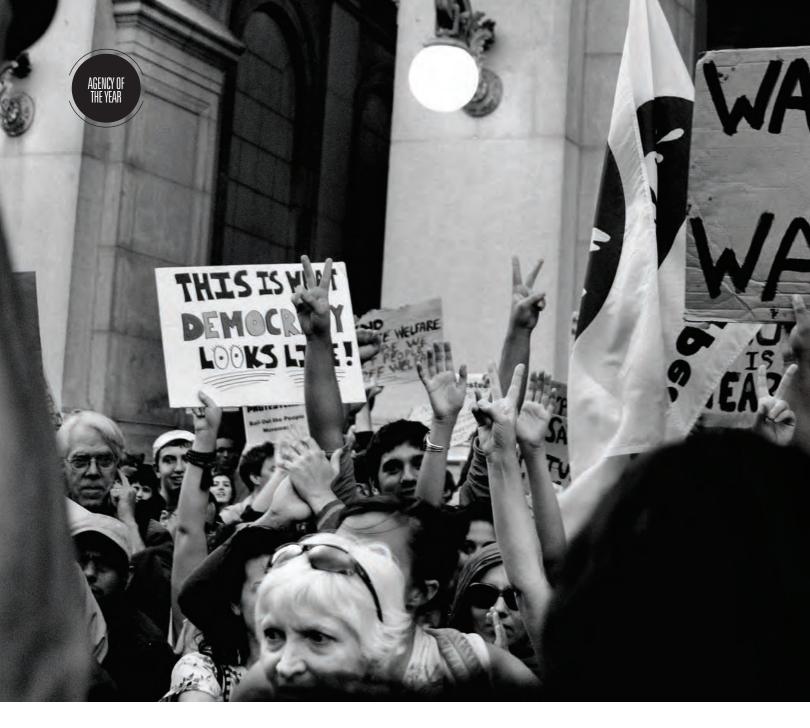
to turn the conversation back to Chevy. Everything drove consumers to Chevy's YouTube and Facebook sites and to chevy.com.

And as always, Starcom innovated organizationally and welcomed top talent in 2011. The Martin Agency's Mark Pavia joined as executive vice president and digital managing director; Jonathan Hoffman was named the first chief experience officer in the media agency business; and Chad Maxwell, a trained anthropologist from Razorfish, came on board as senior vice president and research intelligence director.

"We can't just say the world is different," says Donohue about her shop's relentless march into the future. "We need to act differently and produce a different product."

And that may be the most creatively satisfying thing of all about Starcom USA: They actually do walk the walk. Usak Feuer





Every now and then a movement has so much viral firepower behind it that it can become personified.

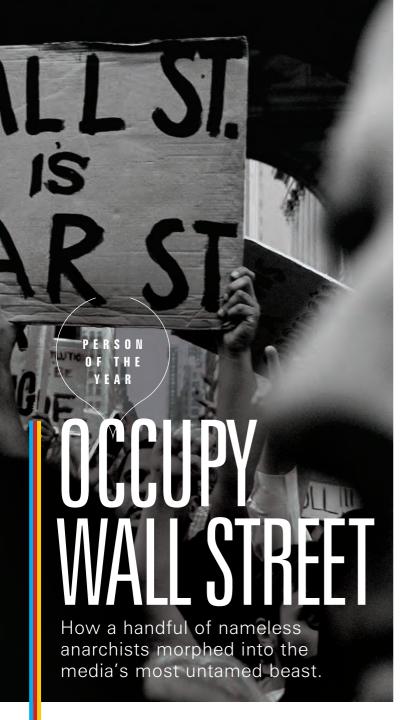
And in the case of Occupy Wall Street, the protest didn't just become a megastory. It became a metastory.

Of course, Occupy Wall Street isn't a person. But in the way that one person can rise above the noise each year in the media business, OWS has also risen above the noise while also being the noise.

By now, everyone knows how it happened. Spawned by Adbusters, an obscure journal for "culture jammers" and beloved by anarchists, the Occupy Wall Street Movement started out as an unformed protest in New York City, and soon spread to more than 1,500 cities around the world. From the beginning, it defied expectations of what it is, and is still stumping reporters trying to cover it.

The Occupy Movement has become about the issues, but also about the movement itself. Because it lacks clear leadership it's a story that's been defined to some degree by the media coverage. It's sort of like a feedback loop — one end feeds the other. And, like a viral video you can't stop watching, sending or sharing, Occupy Wall Street shows no signs of letting up. Whether you agree or disagree with any of its points or tactics, it's vaulted the "We are the 99%" message to the center of the global stage.

"This is the way protests will be done in the future,



self-organizing, de-centered, not even tied to a specific geographic place, never mind a highly focused idea or issue," says David Bloom, a media consultant focused on the intersection of tech, entertainment and politics.

In fact, that fuzziness has meant Occupy Wall Street has touched nearly every aspect of media this fall, from advertising to news to social buzz. It's a movement that's been fueled by social media, defined

at times by journalistic media, and has impacted ad possibilities online. But while the movement has fed the content beast at Web publishers, most have missed the boat in using paid search to drive traffic, says comScore in a recent blog post. Searches for Occupy Wall Street drove 1.6 million visits to Web sites in the first three weeks of October. But few publishers have capitalized on this interest with paid search.

More than 99% of the 1.6 million search click-throughs are occurring for organic search links rather than paid ones, comScore reports.

This underscores some of the general confusion in the advertising media surrounding the protests.

The protests have become a media phenomena not only because the protests are a legitimate news story, but because it's a highly complicated one to cover. "There are stories that either try to portray the protestors as saints or ne'er-do-wells, but neither is correct," Stephen Buckley, dean of faculty at The Poynter Institute and former managing editor for the St. Petersburg Times. "It is not black and white, and it is not a straightforward narrative."

The lack of leadership in the Occupy movement though deliberate — adds another disconnect in the media's ability to understand and report on the protests. Occupy Wall Street boldly declares on its site that it's a "a leaderless people powered movement for democracy... to end the monied corruption of our democracy." But who wrote the mission statement site visitors see? The lack of answers can confound the public, not to mention the media trying to cover it.

While it's too soon to tell what impact OWS will continue to have on politics, its effect on media is already starting to show, say Morley Winograd and OF COURSE, OCCUPY WALL STREET ISN'T A PERSON. BUT IN THE WAY THAT ONE PERSON CAN RISE ABOVE THE NOISE EACH YEAR IN THE MEDIA BUSINESS, OWS HAS ALSO RISEN ABOVE THE NOISE WHILE ALSO BEING THE NOISE.

Michael D. Hais, co-authors of the newly published book "Millenial Momentum," which looks at how the young generation is remaking American politics. "Simply interviewing selfappointed leaders, accepting press releases and statements, or even observing demonstrations from afar are likely to be ineffective methods of coverage. What is likely to emerge will be greater reliance on immersion in the events as they unfold by reporters, and constant examination of the social networking tweets and postings of movement participants." they write in an email interview. "This will, in turn, require greater skill at analyzing and synthesizing information from disparate sources than many reporters now possess." Daisy Whitney



UNIVERSAL McCANN

By combining art, science, math and humanity, UM achieves analytic breakthrough

We were so impressed with Universal McCann's new media analytics technology that we created a new category and declared the Interpublic agency this year's winner. UM has found an innovative way to refine the media plan *as* it's playing out. Therefore, it can make adjustments accordingly and, it is hoped, reach the targeted audience more effectively.

How does it work? Think about Wall Street, where stockbrokers constantly evaluate which stocks are working harder than others and moving money around to their advantage. Well, over on Madison Avenue, this media agency has produced a continuous cycle of "measure, analyze, optimize." It's called UM 3.0.

Huw Griffiths, executive vice president and head of global performance, describes the methodology as a "onetwo punch, an accelerated market-mix approach with macro feedback [that] tells you broadly to move money to national TV, to print, say, complemented by [audience measurement] research.

"These are high-level, strategic learnings of what's working and how to execute the change at the channel level. We hand that to the planners and buyers, and it's not conceptual any more; it's very practical."

Clearly, the agency has made a significant investment in 3.0. One reason is that it is moving toward a pay-forperformance compensation model. "We have to have a high degree of confidence that we can impact and optimize this," Griffiths says.

"The key part is that we've created a next-generation measurement first, about measuring performance, the business impact our plans are having for our clients," he says. "Not just reach of frequency but how many units are sold, media performance. We try and take that and blow it out. These techniques allow you to link media with sales."

Whereas the methodologies of the last 10 to 20 years are to do this annually or every six months, Griffiths says that is too late to change anything that isn't working.

3.0, he says, does the analytics every month or weekly, even,

depending on how fast data is available, making mid-campaign changes possible.

"It's a combination of having the technology to handle data sources and deploying the right people — having enough people to build and execute models faster," he says. UM has invested in modeling and analytics talent and has the bandwidth to build the technology out.

Hari Abhyankar, executive vice president of global performance enablement at UM, says the level at which you make the

"MATH IS NOT BE-ALL AND END-ALL. IT'S ALL TOP DOWN AND STOPS WHERE HUMAN JUDGMENT TAKES OVER. IT'S ART AND SCIENCE, MATH AND HUMANS CONTRIBUTING, CLOSING THE LAST MILE, TO A DEGREE."

HARI ABHYANKAR Executive vice president of global Performance enablement,

UNIVERSAL McCANN

buying decision is more granular than mere analysis. He notes the yin and yang of 3.0.

"The first part is a combination of doing analytics more frequently and the planner, buyers and analytics working together. No amount of math will ever solve this problem. Math is not be-all and end-all. It's all top down and stops where human judgment takes over. It's art and science, math and humans contributing, closing the last mile, to a degree."

Abhyankar's been on a five-year journey to where he is now and excitedly speaks about having arrived. "It's happening! Data's coming in, clients want it; it's all coming to life in meetings. We are at the proving stage." (Among the clients already using 3.0 are Charles Schwab, Chrysler, Johnson & Johnson and Sony.)

Keith Camoosa, UM's senior vice president and head of North American research, is the guy behind UM's Audience Measurement Platform or AMP, the engine that drives 3.0.

It is "the umbrella term for data platforms, involving lots of sources of data across the media industry. We customize and create data with suppliers in the industry," he says, noting that the types of data NPD Group and Nielsen offer "are not things that can be purchased off the shelf.

"Agencies have invested in a lot of data intelligence to plan and buy, but not in the data that tell us how well those are working or not working. It's a new way of thinking about research within the agency."
Nina Lentini



CONE COMMUNICATIONS

Strategically aligning do-good efforts to brand mission, this cause champion strengthens consumer bonds – and the bottom line

Anyone who has ever tried to count the number of pink-ribbon products out there knows what Cone Communications is up against. But since the agency's founding in 1980, it has sought to pair brands with relevant causes that won't fade away into the pink jungle or grate on consumers' ears. Instead they aim to create a bond between people and products, and with their work for major brands like Yoplait's "Save Lids to Save Lives," Betty Crocker's "Stirring Up Wishes" and Timberland's "Earthkeepers Plant a Tree," Cone is ensuring consumer relationships impact bottom lines.

Craig Bida, Cone's executive vice president of cause branding, believes aligning companies with just the right mission is what makes cause-related marketing work. "It takes lots of listening and figuring out what makes brands who they are," says Bida, whose career spans 20 years in both the public and private sectors. "It's important the company is clear with what cause it wants to take on," he says, and then zeros in to find the right issue within that cause.

This thinking is what led Cone to create a groundbreaking campaign for Ben & Jerry's. The Vermont-based, progressive-leaning ice cream company already knew it had a sizable chunk of cause-oriented consumers, and came to Cone for campaigns that would bet-

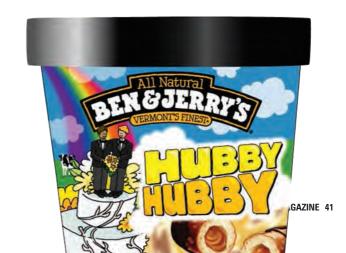
ter align with its demographic. Cone saw an opportunity to take advantage of Vermont's recently passed legislation legalizing gay marriage by temporarily changing the name of best-selling ice cream Chubby Hubby to Hubby Hubby. Ben & Jerry's teamed up with Freedom to Marry to promote the new flavor with the tagline "Now more than ever, Vermont is for lovers ... & for lovers of marriage equality." The announcement was made on Ben & Jerry's and Freedom to Marry's Web sites, as well as on Ben & Jerry's Facebook and Twitter pages. According to Cone's numbers, reaching out to consumers through social media led to the third most interacted with posting ever on the Ben & Jerry's Facebook page and became a Twitter trending topic

with over 35,000 relevant tweets in the first two weeks.

Cone can also take a product and create a movement around it, which is just what it did with Timberland's Earthkeepers. The outdoor apparel retailer began manufacturing Earthkeepers shoes made out of earth-friendly products — recycled bottles, converted scrap rubber, certified organic cotton. The team at Cone took Timberland's Earthkeepers idea even further with the "Earthkeeper Plant a Tree" Facebook application. The idea was simple: Users installed Timberland's application on their Facebook pages, invited friends and created a virtual forest. When the user downloaded and shared the application, one tree was planted in the user's honor by Timberland. The company

made good on its promise and planted more than 1 million trees as a result of the Facebook initiative.

"Cause marketing is not immune to the same forces that affect brand marketing," says Bida. Cause marketers must understand the target audience and what's important to them. Many people are motivated by children's issues, for example, but why are some brands a better fit for children's literacy, and others for after-school programs? Understanding consumers from a cause angle takes finesse and patience, he says. But in the end, consumers want to spend money where it makes a difference, to vote with their dollars. And when it comes to gaining those votes for brands, Cone wins by a landslide. @ Carrie Cummings





STARCOW MEDIAVEST

SMG succeeds by reinterpreting media through the lens of human experience

The field of communications has been high mowing in recent years: Competition for audiences' attention has never been greater — amid historically dry corporate budgets and consumer spending. Such unforgiving conditions didn't keep Starcom MediaVest Group from celebrating one of its best years ever, earning it the honor of Media Network of the Year.

During 2011, SMG landed multinational clients including Microsoft, Burger King and CocaCola; introduced new innovations to leverage digital speed and hyperlocal knowledge; and employed their bold "human experience," strategy to connect clients to customers.

"The heritage of SMG is to strategically lead our clients in the marketplace, so we're constantly challenging ourselves and looking for an edge to define the future and redefine our place in it," CEO Laura Desmond says. "We don't take anything for granted."

SMG sowed the seeds for their biggest strategic bet back in 2008, when the agency began redefining its purpose around "human experience," dynamic and interactive experiences where consumers could lean in or opt out.

"We believe all of that interactivity, that experience and participation, will move into the first screen world," Desmond says. "It's not 'if,' it's 'when.' Everything that is analog will become digital. Every device will have an IP address."

To understand the customers behind their devices is the job of SMG's Human

Experience Strategy Network, led by Laura Krajecki, chief consumer officer. In the past year, a few people in key markets have grown to a global "sounding board" of 150 strategists. Some 1,700 people worldwide offer consumer insights from key audiences — youths and moms — and their opinions are available 24/7/365. Custom research initiatives can activate Sensing Investigations, which offer clients a global perspective on a topic or theme to hone-in on behaviors and actions that help them understand their audience.

The competitive edge comes to life through branded content produced by Liquid Thread, which has grown from a U.S. company to an international network with nearly 20 offices in over 15 countries since late 2010. It stranded a UK rock band in the middle of nowhere with only their BlackBerry devices to navigate and communicate via social feeds. The feat helped BlackBerry move from being known as a mere utility device to reach a younger audience.

"If you have a bold strategic vision, you'd better have a bold innovation plan," Desmond says. Her aim: to create a virtuous cycle of innovation, with new ideas and tools coming online every three to six months.

One example is POEM, MediaVest's proprietary methodology for measuring interactions between paid, owned and earned media. Truly earned media can exponentially increase the impact of paid and owned media. Using these new modeling algorithms, POEM helps clients amplify the return on their marketing investments.

Cutting-edge tools and its daring strategy have earned SMG won 287 new business pitches (a 65 percent conversion), scored more than 200 global industry accolades, and seen close to a 9 percent increase in organic growth.

RECMA also awarded SMG with several No. 1 honors in its July 2011 report, including Global Overall Activity Billings, Overall Billings for the Top 12 Countries (a 13.5 percent growth rate), and Overall Billings in the Americas, leading other agencies with a 15.7 percent increase.

But SMG's exponential growth has brought it back to where it began — its people. Developing, attracting, and helping them lead in an industry that's both fiercely competitive and wildly creative is her greatest challenge of all.

"We try to create a culture of winning and leading, walking the talk and delivering what our clients want," Desmond says. "You get to create, imagine, lead clients to build brands, and help people with those brands meet their needs. If you really love ideas and you love change, this is a great business to be in." "Victoria Scanlan Stefanakos

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