

AGENCY OF THE YEAR 2011



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WINTER 2012

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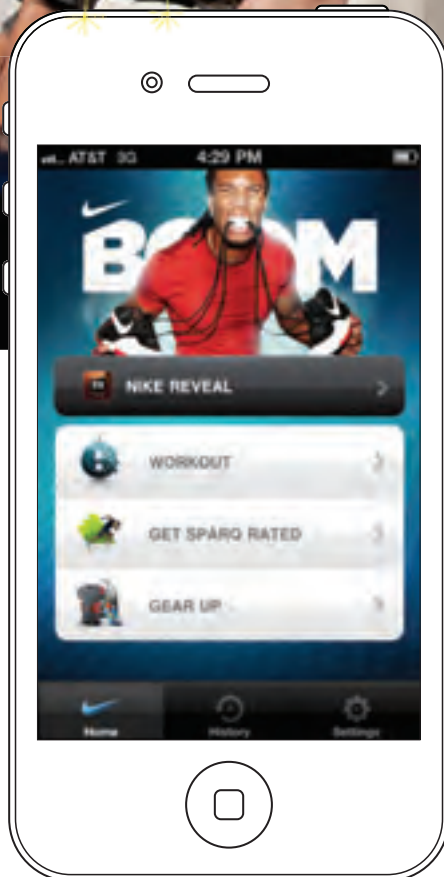
From Netflix blunders to an overhyped cloud, *OMMA* bids bye-bye to all that.

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OMMA Magazine is published 4 times a year by MediaPost Communications
15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016
tel. 212-204-2000, fax 212-204-2038
www.mediapost.com

To subscribe, visit www.mediapost.com/subscribe/magazine
E-mail changes, inquiries, etc. to: circulation@mediapost.com,
sales@mediapost.com, editorial@mediapost.com
For reprints e-mail reprints@mediapost.com or call 212-204-2000

OMMA (ISSN 1533-9475), Publication #024-453) is published 4 times a year (at a cost of \$39 per year) by MediaPost Communications at 15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016. Periodical postage rate paid at NY, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to OMMA c/o MediaPost Communications, 15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written consent of the publisher. © MediaPost Communications. Published since 2005 by MediaPost Communications. SUBSCRIPTIONS: Call 212-204-2000, e-mail us at circulation@mediapost.com or write to MediaPost Communications, 15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016. Issue Number 123

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WINTER 2012



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The Sweet Science

OMMA Salutes the Toughest 12

For OMMA, choosing this year's Agency of the Year winners was more like emceeding a street brawl than narrating a beauty pageant.

As the lines between digital disciplines get sketchier, we're constantly a little dizzy with the pace of updating scorecards. But we love the way a tiny agency can excel across multiple categories in this climate (Hello, Campfire!). And we're just as impressed that among larger agencies known as digital generalists, specialized skills can be as sharp as spears. R/GA, for instance, our Gold winner in 2009, is on our list this year for its killer mobile strategies.

OUR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP AND GOLD WINNER, DIGITAS, IS A GIANT IN EVERY RESPECT, BUT STILL DELIVERING ONE-TWOS WITH BOTH SPEED AND PRECISION.

In fact, the way so many agencies have fought their way across category lines, we felt it was only fitting to invoke the boxing world for this year's winners. Our heavyweight champ and Gold winner, Digitas, is a giant in every respect, but still delivering one-twos with both speed and precision. (Digitas was also our gold winner in 2008.) Proof

positive that the demand for this online prowess has gone totally mainstream? Shortly after her interview with OMMA, CEO Laura Lang was anointed CEO of Time Inc.

Middleweight winner AKQA, which takes this year's Silver, has morphed from a digital boutique to industry leader, using its distinctive silo-busting organizational structure — hooking a technologist up with a creative, or a project manager with a strategist — to create cutting-edge work. (It won gold from us in 2007.) And we felt so strongly about feisty little Campfire that we created a new category: Small Agency of the Year, earning it a Bronze award. We think of this welterweight as the advertising world's answer to Sugar Ray Leonard, with an innovative approach to work that has made it the envy of many companies ten times its size.

If you've been keeping score since OMMA started handing out these awards in 2005, you'll know we have some firmly established categories. In addition to awards for Gold-winner Digitas and Silver-winner AKQA, we also hand out Bronze to those that are best in class in Web Design and Development (this year's winner is Digitaria), Media Planning and Buying (Mediavest), Creative (Deutsch), Search (Covario), Mobile (R/GA) and Social (HUGE).

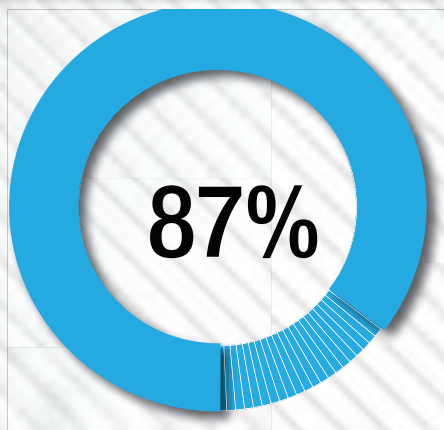
But we've made changes too, in our effort to keep up with the crazy-fast pace of the OMMA universe. (And, yes, it also boggles our minds that Forrester Research is predicting that spending on interactive marketing in the U.S., now at \$34.5

PHOTO: SARAH E. BRYMAN

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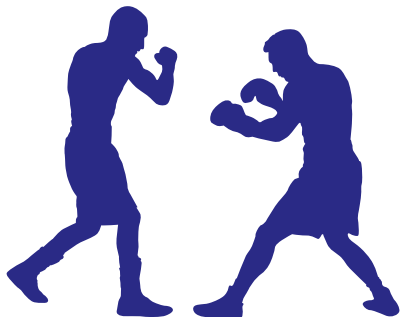


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How We Chose Our Winners

In an industry so flooded with awards and honors, there are many ways to rank agencies. Some are based on very objective measures, such as billings, growth rate, number of awards won, or effectiveness of their work on behalf of clients. We think those are all valid and, certainly, our winners demonstrate that.

But we're not shy about saying our methodology is more subjective, eclectic and — we think — meaningful. Within each category, we ranked them in terms of exceptional ...

- Vision
- Innovation
- Leadership

Thanks to the many agencies that submitted entries, as well as the generous industry sources and MediaPost writers and editors who weighed in as we went through our evaluations. And a special shout-out to RECMA, for the chart on page 42, and Forrester Research, including principal analysts Chris Stutzman and Shar VanBoskirk, and senior analyst Sean Corcoran.

billion and about 19 percent of all marketing spending, is about to hit into \$76.6 billion, or 35 percent, by 2016.)

So in addition to Campfire as the Small Agency of the Year, we're also honoring three additional categories. For the first time, we're including a holding company, GroupM. We couldn't bear to leave them out, and not just because they're ginormous, controlling about 34 percent of all advertising billings. It's because the industry leadership they've shown on privacy issues, which have enormous impact on so many companies in the *OMMA* world, deserves special recognition.

AS WE MOVE INTO AN ELECTION YEAR, WE FELT IT WAS ALSO IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE POLITICAL ADVERTISING AGENCIES, WHICH USE THE INTERNET TO COMMUNICATE WITH VOTERS AS NEVER BEFORE.

As we move into an election year, we felt it was also important to recognize political advertising agencies, which use the Internet to communicate with voters as never before. Our winner, ss+k, which so successfully courted the online youth vote for the Obama campaign in 2008, distinguished itself with its ever-greater insights into the way Gen Y thinks, clicks and votes.

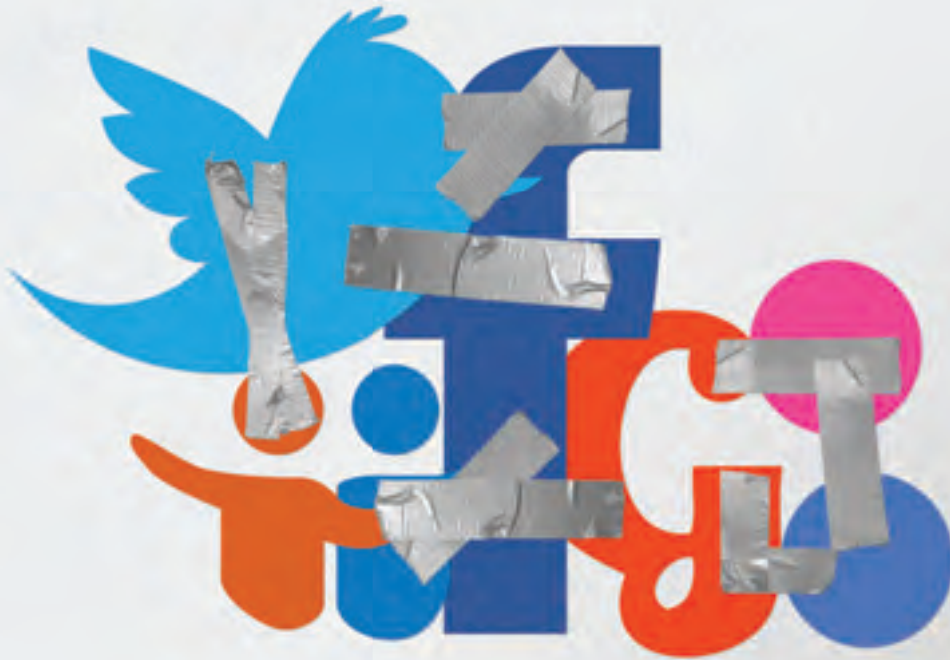
And we added a category for best viral video. You know the stats as well as we do, but they bear repeating: eMarketer estimates that some 160 million U.S. Internet users will watch online videos regularly this year. And of the 71.6 percent of adults who do so, 39 percent watch between one and five hours per week, according

to Burst. Yes, that's a lot of *CSI*, Katy Perry, and sneezing pandas. But to ad agencies, it's an amazingly powerful — if elusive — connection, with 18.2 percent of viewers either visiting a brand site or making a purchase based on a video. So as video continues its crossover into social and mobile, the potential reach of a great piece has grown exponentially. But while every client may be asking its agencies for a video worthy of YouTube fame, few agencies can create one. We chose Definition 6 not just because it can, but because of its bigger strategic vision: Making a hit that's true to a brand takes a lot more than a talking Siberian husky.

We'd love to hear what you think of our winners. Email us at sarah@mediapost.com.

Sarah Mahoney
SARAH MAHONEY, EDITOR

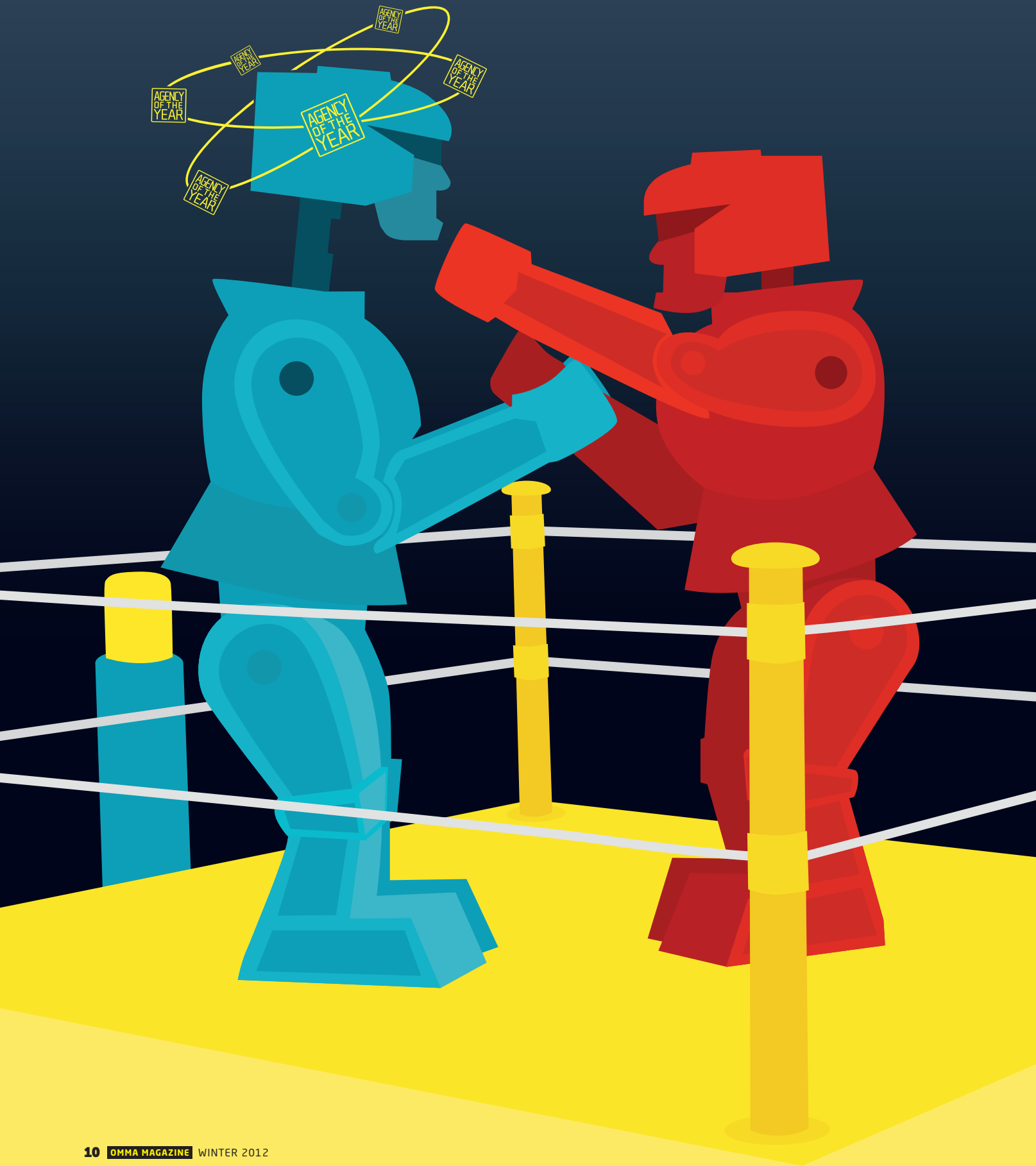
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It was a rock 'em, sock 'em year for the online media, marketing and advertising world. Yes, growth in online ad spending kept zooming, with Forrester Research estimating that U.S. interactive marketing spending reached \$34.5 billion in 2011. (That annual spending is forecast to reach \$76.6 billion by 2016.) But these agencies distinguished themselves as elite competitors not just by keeping up with those fast growth rates — it's their strategic vision, innovation and industry leadership that made them *OMMA's* true champs.

AGENCY OF THE YEAR

TRIPLE OTS!



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
1980

HEADQUARTERS:
New York

OWNED BY:
Publicis Groupe

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
3,000

KEY CLIENTS:
Aflac, Kraft, Procter & Gamble

FIGHTING STYLE:
"Everything we do has to perform."

2011'S BEST KOS:
Mobile labs; the power of VivaKi

AGENCY
OF THE
YEAR

HEAVYWEIGHT
CHAMPION

Google Mobile
worked with
Digitas to
establish their
Mobile Labs in
three cities.



DIGITAS

MASSIVE SIZE ENABLES COMBINATION KNOCKOUT

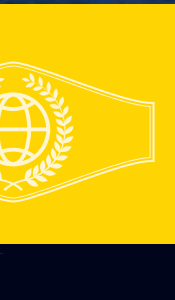


NewFront moderator John Battelle, Chairman, Federated Media; panelist Steven Rosenbaum, Founder of Magnify and author of Curation Nation; panelist Susan Popper, SVP Integrated Marketing Communications, SAP; panelist Susan Sobott, President, American Express OPEN; panelist Beth Comstock, CMO, General Electric.



AGENCY OF THE YEAR

Digitas' NewFront has become a premiere event: host Tyra Banks with Pattie Sellers, editor at large, *Forbes*



PHOTOS: DIGITAS

When a champ is defending his title, he needs to keep pace with the challengers and adapt to various fighting styles, always staying a step ahead. Digitas, a global agency whose regional offices have more people than most agencies have in their entirety, is surprisingly fleet of foot for a heavyweight, and has stayed in front in 2011 by correctly anticipating the next move.

Linking Delta with TED led to one of the year's standout social campaigns.

To this end, the agency's new Mobile Labs, which have been in the works for about a year and a half and are now coming to fruition, have positioned Digitas for the next generation of mobile products. The strategy has paid rich dividends already. Insights gained through partnerships, such as one with Google Mobile, have led to this work's first physical manifestations: a Mobile Lab in Boston, a New York Lab set to open in December and a third Chicago Lab slated for 2012. "We really established some time ago that understanding the next generation of mobile experience was going to be critical for our clients," says CEO Laura Lang, in an interview shortly before the announcement that she would join Tim Inc. as CEO.



In the past year, the knowledge gained from developing mobile capabilities has already been a major factor. The partnership with Google Mobile gave Digitas proprietary insight into how to help clients make the right investments in the mobile experience and found specific in ways that clients could change their mobile strategy through dedicating spending and building platforms that are more effective.

Digitas, a finely tuned machine, is an agency built for performance. But "performance is how you de-

fine it," Lang says. For clients who are direct marketers, the definition is simple: Did you acquire the customer? But others have more complicated goals. "For some clients, it's much more about changing the way consumers feel about a brand, engaging in dialogue or raising a hand for more information," says Lang, adding, "everything we do has to perform."

Those differences can be seen in the splendid, but very different way Digitas' campaigns perform. Take for instance the effort on behalf of client Aflac

to find a new voice for the duck. (The insurance company had fired Gilbert Gottfried, the previous voice of the duck, over insensitive comments the comedian made in the wake of the tsunami in Japan.) Aflac came to Digitas in crisis mode, and within 24 hours a campaign was going full-strength. With search leveraged to create an opportunistic moment, the campaign garnered nearly one billion media impressions, including both paid and earned media; a partnership with job search site Monster, which drove people to Aflac; and to the positive spin of the quest for a replacement quacker.

Compare that to the deep partnership Digitas spearheaded between client Delta and TED, the nonprofit devoted to "ideas worth spreading." The partnership morphed into "Ideas in Flight," harnessing the power (and goodwill surplus) of TED to change negative perceptions of airlines. Kenneth Parks, Digitas' executive director in Atlanta and Stamford, says this was the deepest partnership TED had participated in, and that their network of fellows and speakers, whom he refers to as "the TEDsters" began brainstorming at TED Long Beach. The TEDsters, says Parks, "took it on as a noble challenge: to try and fix the airline industry." What they came up with was a Delta and TED sponsored co-creation platform where consumers could make real suggestions for change, which both TED and Delta would then shape into real improvements. The effort became one


of the standout social branding campaigns of the year.

If it's clicks you like, look no further than the campaign Digitas ran for client GM on YouTube this year. The effort garnered the highest one-day click volume in YouTube history and broke the paid search record the next day.

One way that Digitas has kept bobbing and moving is by staying out front of the In Front with the NewFront. When Digitas held its first NewFront four years, Lang says, "a lot of people thought, 'Well, this is pretty odd' and they showed up out of curiosity and for a free drink." But

over the past couple of years the NewFront has become a premiere event for digital content, and one that includes many parts of the industry ecosystem. (If you are reading this, it's a good bet you've been, and gotten more than a free drink.)

This past year the NewFront took center stage as one of the must-attend events of Internet Week, and positioned Digitas as an industry leader. "It's actually become a part of the fabric of how we do business," Lang says.

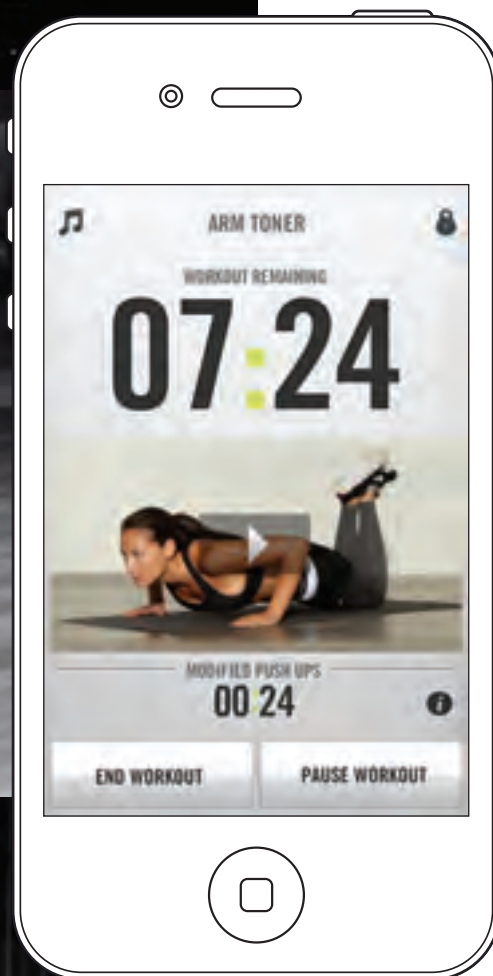
It's another example of the way Digitas has showed vision and acted upon it. The partnerships, research initiatives and white papers become actionable strategy and plans. "We're actually changing the way our clients are building their brands as well as their businesses," Lang says. "We don't just write about it; we do it."  **John Capone**

AFLAC CAME TO DIGITAS IN CRISIS MODE, AND WITHIN 24 HOURS A CAMPAIGN WAS GOING FULL-STRENGTH. WITH SEARCH LEVERAGED IN AN OPPORTUNISTIC WAY, THE CAMPAIGN GARNERED NEARLY ONE BILLION MEDIA IMPRESSIONS, INCLUDING BOTH PAID AND EARNED MEDIA.





Nike's Training Club app, promoted by *Glee* star Lea Michele, helps users track their workouts for better efficiency.



AGENCY
OF
THE
YEAR

Glove speed isn't all there is to the sweet science. AKQA has the footwork to match. Its knockout punch: innovation and high design.

Even a few years ago, AKQA, while highly respected for its creativity and work, was still seen as digital boutique. That word no longer applies. AKQA now has seven offices around the globe and over 1,000 employees. "We're still focused on our digital skill set," says CEO Tom Bedecarré, "but clients come to us and see that we have a good understanding of strategy. We have a good team from creative to technology to client services. And media has become a more important ingredient." In fact, Bedecarré pegs the growth of the agency's media business at 60 percent in the past year. "We're becoming a more important partner. We see it in client relationships that are bigger, broader, and longer term."

Chief creative officer Rei Inamoto says, "We work to inspire. I believe that AKQA is in the business of creating and influencing the future," citing the motto the company has operated under for more than a decade now: The future inspires us, we work to inspire. "That's the vision of the company. It's not like we recite that every day when we come into the office," Inamoto jokes, "but I think it's al-

ways been true to our core being."

And that commitment to innovation has changed AKQA, which has applied its principles to itself, evolving as conditions dictate. In Inamoto's view, the company has long been part innovation agency and part communications agency. But lately he's noticed a shift, and now sees AKQA as a combination of storyteller and product designer, with the products being the software, tools and functions they create on behalf of clients for consumers to use. "When you find ideas at the intersection of those two things is when you can create new experiences," says Inamoto.

AKQA doesn't just have departments of Web designers, programmers and search specialists. Nor have they merely laid a layer of digital execution over the traditional art and copy team. "We don't divide the company into certain functions," explains Inamoto. "We co-locate different functions within a team next to each other. So a creative is sitting next to a technologist sitting next to a project manager sitting next to an account person sitting next to a strategy person."

MIDDLEWEIGHT
CHAMPION



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
2001

HEADQUARTERS:
San Francisco

OWNED BY:
Independent

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
1,000

KEY CLIENTS:
Audi, Sprite

FIGHTING STYLE:
The future inspires us, we work to inspire.

2011'S BEST KOS:
Nike Training Club, the No. 1 app in iTunes' health and fitness category, downloaded more than 1 million times in first month

S I L V E R

AKQA



CROSSFUNCTIONAL TEAMWORK LEADS TO WINNING HOOKS



BIG WINS SUCH AS BEING NAMED DIGITAL AGENCY OF RECORD FOR AUDI AND THE AOR FOR YOUTUBE (WHICH IS THE PROCESS OF A MAJOR REBRAND) PROPELLED AKQA TO 25 PERCENT GROWTH DURING WHAT WAS A VERY CHALLENGING YEAR.

Put another way, the agency approaches its work not as just making ads, but more as though they are creating products. That kind of innovative thinking has led the agency to develop rich software platforms for clients, incorporating social media and mobile devices, such as the Nike Training Club for client Nike, which became the No. 1 app in iTunes' health/fitness category, with 1 million downloads its first month.

"We certainly have a strong feeling that software and user experience and interface design and application development is an incredibly rich area where companies are defining their brands. They're building their business around 12-month, 365-day a year, 24-7 interactions with customers, which is different than having a traditional advertising campaign-based approach," says Bedecarré. "We helped Nike create digital training experiences that go well beyond buying a pair of sneakers a couple times a year to helping

you train and become a better athlete every day of the year."

Big wins such as being named Digital Agency of Record for Audi and the AOR for YouTube (which is the process of a major rebrand) propelled AKQA to 25 percent growth during what was a very challenging year.

The agency, not just global but a good global citizen, also found time to lead an industry-wide effort — partnering with The One Club and Ad Director's Club — called Creatives Unite, to bring aid to tsunami-devastated Japan. AKQA's rapid action (the effort was up and running within 10 days of the initial disaster) is the definition of industry leadership — the old-school kind.

The marvel of AKQA's rapid growth is how it's stayed true to its core principles, and expanded them outward. "We've been able to define a culture and an organization that is AKQA," says Inamoto. "Without creating that culture and context, we are not able to do the work that we do."

AKQA has accomplished all this with a fluidity between offices, with people moving around the globe, and integrating teams in fundamental ways. Inamoto himself has been based in New York, San Francisco and back again. "Different markets have different perspectives and different ways of thinking. We try not to have boundaries and not to focus on offices as much as we do the whole network," explains Bedecarré. "This allows us to leverage all 1,000 people."

If you want to know the types of people AKQA attracts, look at where they lose recruits. An internal study found Apple took the highest number, a company AKQA has more in common with that it does any on Madison Avenue. **John Capone**

**IT'S ALL ABOUT
THE NUMBERS**

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Peter Marino, Senior Partner, ReelWebDesign

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S M A L L A G E N C Y
O F T H E Y E A R

CAMPFIRE

SMALL AND SCRAPPY, CAMPFIRE DEMANDS ATTENTION

Talk about punching above your weight class: Campfire moves like an agile bantamweight, dancing and jabbing, but packing a powerful wallop. The NYC-based shop keeps itself trim — there are less than a few dozen full-timers on board — to stay nimble.

Founding partner and executive creator director Mike Monello famously got his start as part of the team that created (and perhaps more importantly, marketed) the *Blair Witch Project*, and this beginning has clearly informed the agency Campfire became — one known for upending the concepts of marketing, branded entertainment and cross-media storytelling by heavily blurring the boundaries between them.

Where some might see digital tools as another distribution channel or a way to collect oceans of analytics heretofore out-of-reach, Campfire tends to see every channel — whether print, video or social — as a unique canvas for telling a single connected story. “The Internet gives us a chance to make storytelling participatory,” Monello says. “And to bring people

into the story and engage them in really interesting ways — and to do that with scale.”

We live in a much different world than we did in 1999 when *Blair Witch* took theaters by storm and taught marketers a valuable lesson about the power of digital tools. Digital media metastasizes so quickly that you don’t have to go back nearly that far to feel like a technological dinosaur. Keeping agile is one of the secrets of Campfire’s success. The challenge, says Monello, is as much about staying on top of the tools and platforms culturally and knowing how they are being used, as it is staying up-to-date technologically. And just as important is knowing how various platforms work together. “A lot of marketers still view them in silos,” Monello says, before droning as if in an Orwellian board meeting: “‘We have the traditional silo, the digital silo, the social silo.’ However, figuring how best to bridge all of them and integrate all of them in ways that improve them all is the biggest challenge.”

“We’re an earned and owned media shop,” says Jeremiah Rosen, Campfire partner and president, “in that we tell stories that attract audiences. But we’ve had the benefit over the past couple of years of applying media stimulus to organic ideas and seeing a huge opportunity to reach scale at a pace that was



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
2005

HEADQUARTERS:
New York

OWNED BY:
Independent

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
23

KEY CLIENTS:
HBO

FIGHTING STYLE:
Cinematic storytelling
with feisty jabs

2011'S BEST KOS:
Game of Thrones' multi-sensual
impact, from scent boxes to food
trucks



Campfire gets theatrical with *Game of Thrones* food truck (top) and *Bag of Bones* promotion.





virtually impossible in the past, and in so doing, also creating naturalistic experiences for brands."

This approach can challenge clients, but Rosen says Campfire has been fortunate to work with clients who bring them in early enough to get the insight and access to create immersive experiences later. The end result, he says, is driving the clients' media dollars to work as hard as they can over a long period of time.

All of this creative talk about platform-agnostic storytelling belies Campfires tech savvy and research chops. "Everything begins with exploring the behaviors of the target," says Monello. Research starts with examining the target, finding the sweet spot, looking at what they are doing online and how they're behaving. Only then will the team develop the idea that can be projected onto that scaffold. "The idea needs to work across any media," Monello says. "Once we have the core idea we apply it to the media that makes the most sense for the target we're after."

This year Campfire tangled with an especially potentially prickly target: the fantasy fans who know every minutia of the book series *Game of Thrones* (and the TV viewers who were about to follow suit). Luckily the team brought an equally obsessive eye to an immersive, five-senses campaign to launch the show. "We all totally

geeked out on the books when we got the assignment and read [all the books]," says Monello.

This led to one of the campaign's more radical executions (for taste) in which chef Tom Colicchio prepared a week of *Game of Thrones*-inspired meals to be served out of food trucks in major cities around the U.S., no small feat when you consider that the series is a medieval fantasy. Campfire creative director Steve Coulson met with Colicchio to brief him on the various lands (each of five territories would inspire one menu per day), including everything from what the foliage would have been like and what animals would be available to the socioeconomic strata of the inhabitants. "What Tom loved about it, was the opportunity to tell stories through food," Monello reported, "which made him such a great partner for us."

As you can imagine by the high-wire act such efforts entail, the group at Campfire is not afraid to get kicked out of a room for suggesting outlandish concepts if they think they're the right solutions. The amazing thing is that they don't kill the ideas internally when it seems they'll be hard to sell to the client. Ultimately, they don't get booted from meetings and end up actually pulling off those impossible feats. **John Capone**

The agency helped *American Horror Story* haunt its Web site.



Know It All

THE SCIENCE OF KNOWING



OMMA

DATA & BEHAVIORAL

"OMMA Data & Behavioral does it every time. This event continues to evolve, thoroughly covering the industry's most current trends and concerns."

Jeff Mills, VP, Partnerships, Criteo

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C R E A T I V E

DEUTSCH

If the well-established, full-service advertising agency Deutsch proved anything this year, it's that creative digital content isn't solely the province of upstart digital-only shops. In fact, Deutsch, which has offices in New York and Los Angeles (each with its own roster of clients), is behind some of the most innovative digital work currently out there.

FROM iADS TO THE DARK LORD, DEUTSCH BRINGS BIG IDEAS TO LIFE



To wit: Deutsch New York produced a Windows Azure iAd for Wired's iPad magazine that allowed programmers to not only see but tinker with the iAd's code; hooked teens on a gesture-based, Green Lantern-inspired online augmented-reality challenge for PEPSI; and scored interest in DIRECTV's NFL package with a Web site and trailer promoting a fake TV series called "Football Cops" starring Peyton and Eli Manning.

Out on the West Coast, Deutsch Los Angeles formulated a campaign for the HTC Sensation 4G that enabled Android smartphone users with the Google Goggles image-recognition app to point their devices at print ads, billboards and even a TV commercial to unlock more information and freebies; devised a free Volkswagen Passat Road Rules app full of classic road games that can be accessed without an Internet connection; and offered face time on a Times Square Volkswagen Beetle electronic billboard to anyone who liked Beetle on Facebook.

While technology was creatively employed in the aforementioned efforts, Deutsch New York chief creative officer Greg DiNoto says that strategic and entertaining ideas were at the core of each success.

"We encourage our creatives to think from the standpoint that the idea comes first — before technology, before any other consideration," says DiNoto, acknowledging, "and that's a challenge today with all this gadget love."

As busy as Deutsch is in the digital space these days, there are still plenty of clients who go to the veteran agency for TV commercials, and Deutsch Los Angeles delivered entertaining and imaginative spots for the Volkswagen Passat and PlayStation this year. Volkswagen's "Darth Vader" tapped into everyone's inner child and the premise that anything is possible if you believe; PlayStation's "To Michael" was a truly epic tribute to gamers.

"They're not only making some great 'big ads,' but also using the Internet properly to seed and get them out into ownable culture, the ["Darth Vader"] spot being a great example," remarks Benjamin Palmer, co-founder and CEO of The Barbarian Group.

"Darth Vader" was actually released via the Internet prior to its Super Bowl debut. The agency spread word of the spot to Star Wars fans, and it garnered 10 million views on YouTube and tons of buzz before the big game. ("Darth Vader" has gone on to achieve a staggering 44 million YouTube views to date.)

PlayStation's "To Michael" also racked up 10 million views on YouTube — thanks in part to PlayStation spokesman Kevin Butler's social media popularity — before it hit the tube.

"From a digital point of view, neither of these two things is particularly digital. Yes, they were celebrated and enjoyed online, but so is everything. It's just a platform," muses Deutsch Los Angeles chief creative officer Mark Hunter, noting, "We're learning — or proving — that you can also use digital for non-digital ideas." **Christine Champagne**



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
1969

HEADQUARTERS:
New York

OWNED BY:
Lowe & Partners, which is owned by Interpublic

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
1,035

KEY CLIENTS:
Dr Pepper, Microsoft, Unilever

FIGHTING STYLE:
Linking strong concepts to gadget love

2011'S BEST KOS:
VW's Darth Vader Super Bowl spot, with 44 million YouTube views and counting



D E S I G N / I N T E R A C T I V E

DIGITARIA

A WEST COASTER WITH HEART, DIGITARIA LINKS DIGITAL TO RESULTS



There's no arguing that Digitaria has delivered impressive results for clients such as Under Armour and Qualcomm.

But the interactive agency has also delivered knock-out results for charity using innovative technologies that have defined them as a digital leader. Their most recent innovation is the the LRA Crisis Tracker, a real-time mapping technology developed for the nonprofit Invisible Children that debuted this fall. The tracker is an early warning system following Uganda's rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army, as they move through Africa.

That's all in a day's work for Digitaria, but the effort epitomizes what they've done well — integrate technology into the real world in new ways. "This is technology to help solve a problem," says Dan Khabie, the agency's founder and CEO. "We can use skill sets of people here to create change. It's part of our culture, to not just create digital products, but to change the world, which leads us to health projects and new mobile health technology

that we are exploring next."

Of course there are bills to be paid, but Digitaria doesn't seem to have any problem paying them. As of early November, the company expected to finish 2011 with \$20 million in revenue, 52 percent higher than 2010. Head count has risen from 115 to nearly 150, all the more impressive given the economic climate. The interactive agency was acquired in August 2010 by holding company WPP and is now aligned under WPP with advertising agency JWT.

While Digitaria can easily be categorized as a digital shop, the company's ethos is broader. Digitaria aims for what it calls Digital Product Innovation, which refers to the actual design and creation of digital products for clients like Qualcomm, Mattel, Prima Home Theater and the USA Network. As an example, Digitaria created mobile apps for USA using an Adobe technology to build once, rather than many times, for multiple screens and devices.

Occasionally Digitaria's modus operandi lies in finding new hooks into existing mediums, such as social media. At the end of the

summer, Digitaria launched the digital portion of the "Do you hear footsteps?" campaign to help sports apparel company Under Armour gain more traction in the athletic market. Digitaria pivoted off of the brand's TV campaign with star athletes like Tom Brady, but then added new elements such as letting users break into athletes' Pandora playlists, as well as an on-line scavenger hunt. The campaign



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
1997

HEADQUARTERS:
San Diego

OWNED BY:
JWT

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
150

KEY CLIENTS:
Under Armour, Qualcomm

FIGHTING STYLE:
Digital will change the world

2011'S BEST KOS:
Real-time mapping for nonprofit Invisible Children; Under Armour's "Do you hear footsteps?"



Top: Digitaria's Under Armour campaign boosted the brand's performance; Right: Crisis Tracker made for the LRA, featuring real-time mapping technology

lifted brand awareness, drove Facebook fans past 1 million, generated 157 million impressions, and doubled the click-through rate.

Khobie wants to build off this work next year and expand deeper into retail. "We are working on new ways to drive retail through near-field communications, iPhone bumping where you bump a phone against an object, things to make the link between digital and retail," he says.

Digitaria's focus on user design, user experience and technology is what attracted JWT to the agency in the first place, explains David Eastman, CEO, North America, and worldwide digital director for JWT. "However, the thing that makes — or breaks — an agency is culture, and the culture at Digitaria is phenomenal. I love it when I walk into an agency and it feels like they are on a crusade. I imagine that when Dan interviews potential employees he says: 'Do you want to sell Web sites for the rest of your life or do you want to come with us and change the world?'" **Daisy Whitney**

This year — considering the still-nascent state of mobile marketing — we had to ask exactly what it meant to be the best mobile agency, and R/GA gave us the answer...:

"Creative excellence in the work; innovation in the work; and diversity in the work," says Richard Ting, senior vice president and executive creative director of mobile and social platforms at R/GA — OMMA's mobile agency of the year for 2011. "In my mind, being the best mobile agency means delivering on these three criteria."

There's also the matter of preparation as Interpublic's prized unit began engaging in the mobile space over 10 years ago. "By 2007, that involvement took on a stronger, deeper commitment ... and over these last four years we have been steadily

developing and expanding our mobile offerings," says Ting.

This past year alone, R/GA successfully launched mobile campaigns, mobile platforms, apps, mobile Web sites, tablet "experiences," location-based mobile experiences, mobile and retail integrations, mobile and social integrations, and, of course, mobile as part of multichannel programs.

Illustrating the diversity of R/GA's most recent work, Ting is particularly proud of Nike Boom — a training app that served as a consumer engagement platform to better connect Nike's consumers. He also brags about Lawry's Digital Dinner Bell — what Ting calls "the 21st century way for moms to call their families in for dinner"; and R/GA's Converse Sampler — an augmented reality commerce shopping app.

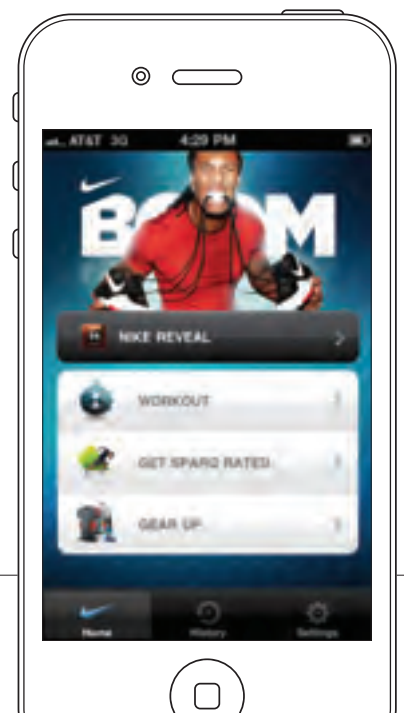
"R/GA's diversity of work is an example of our mobile expertise," Ting points out.

Left: Lawry's Digital Dinner Bell, Right: Nike's Boom app. Both created by HUGE



"THE BEST THAT WE CAN DO TO PREPARE FOR IT IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE RIGHT TALENT IS IN PLACE, AGGRESSIVELY PITCH WORK IN THESE AREAS, AND STAY AS UP-TO-DATE AS POSSIBLE WITH THE TECHNOLOGIES, FOCUSING ON HOW THEY IMPACT CONSUMER BEHAVIORS."

RICHARD TING,
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
AND EXECUTIVE CREATIVE
DIRECTOR OF MOBILE AND
SOCIAL PLATFORMS AT R/GA



It's also remarkable to consider R/GA's embrace of mobile's two most conspicuous problems: small screens and mobile users' singleness of purpose.

"We don't see those as limitations," Ting says. "These so-called limitations actually force our creative team to simplify, to focus on the important features and get rid of the unnecessary ones. It's actually quite refreshing to have to streamline a mobile experience to its core essence because of the built-in constraints of the medium."

Ting also credits "great support" from R/GA's executive management team to develop and train his team.

As a result, R/GA now has more than 40 people on its mobile team — and close to 300 people working on a day-to-day basis on mobile projects across the agency — with a focus on growing internationally.

"Additionally, we have a great culture at R/GA, which supports mobile," adds Ting. "We never have a

shortage of talent wanting to engage in mobile projects. Having this excitement around mobile makes it easy for us to stay ahead of the innovation curve."

What's the best piece of advice Ting can give his competition?

Beware of "thinking too small," he cautions. "Mobile is ready to be the focal point of brand communications, and mobile work needs to be multiplatform, integrated across the Web and tablets."

As for R/GA's own strategy, "we think mobile-responsive Web, near-field communication, and, surprisingly, the sustained importance of multiplatform apps will be key moving forward," Ting says. "The best that we can do to prepare for it is to make sure that the right talent is in place, aggressively pitch work in these areas, and stay as up-to-date as possible with the technologies, focusing on how they impact consumer behaviors." **Gavin O'Malley**



FANCY FOOTWORK, DIVERSE IDEAS AND CREATIVE PUNCH DIAL UP BIG RETURNS FOR R/GA



Clockwise from top: HUGe's UX school; Pepsi app; HBO Go app

When Brooklyn-based HUGe hired a managing director in November 2010 to start a London office, it took a giant leap of faith. It had zero business across the pond, and only one person to drum up any. By the time the office opened its doors in January 2011 it had doubled in size — to two employees, and zero business. (The office doors actually belong to IPG sibling Lowe and Partners, where HUGe is camped out until its own space is ready in January).



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
1999

HEADQUARTERS:
Brooklyn

OWNED BY:
Interpublic

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
400

KEY CLIENTS:
Pepsi, IKEA, Jet Blue

FIGHTING STYLE:
Find 'em young; train 'em hard

2011'S BEST KOS:
30 percent jump in "Great Idea" submissions for Pepsi



S O C I A L

HUGe

WITH TWEETS FROM LONDON AND RIO, HUGe SHAPES NEXT-GENERATION SOCIAL

Weeks later the fledgling office got its first assignment from Unilever and began an ascent that would take it to 11 accounts and 35 employees within 10 months. For HUGE chief executive Aaron Shapiro, landing that business “was the moment of the year.” But it was just the first of many to come — both abroad and at home — that made 2011 a banner year for HUGE.

First, it solidified its position as the industry’s top social strategist, taking its groundbreaking 2010 social marketing program, Pepsi Refresh, to a new level in 2011, adding more social sharing options and putting greater emphasis on content and users’ stories. The result? A 17 percent increase in time spent on the site, and a 30 percent hike in the number of monthly submissions of “Great Ideas” competing for \$20 million in Pepsi grant money. The agency also expanded its work on other PepsiCo brands — completing digital strategy, design and development for Pepsi, Pepsi Max and Propel.

The main event for Target Stores was a Back-to-Campus Web campaign aimed at engaging college kids with shopping checklists, social media sharing and daily promotions. For Budweiser, it was a strategy to optimize the brand’s global Facebook presence for regional markets in their own languages. And for Svedka, it was a digital, social and public relations campaign supporting the brand’s summer Walk of Shame promotion. That campaign doubled overall Web and Facebook impressions, and increased the number of active users by 10,000 a month.

The London client roster now includes five Unilever brands across Europe and the Landmark Group, one of the largest retailers in India and the Middle East, according to managing director Ray Samuels. HUGE was also selected to be on the British Broadcasting Company’s digital design agency roster. “We’ve done e-commerce for retail, consumer engagement platforms for packaged goods, rapid prototyping for the BBC, and new-product strategy for a global media company,” says Samuels. Still, it wasn’t until November, when the agency was invited to present at Internet Week Europe, that it hit him: “Oh, my God ... We’ve arrived!

Samuels says they’ve even had to turn people away. There were lots of questions about what makes HUGE,


HUGE, and people wanting to work for us.” Perhaps that’s because Michal Pasternak, Partner, User Experience, spoke about another 2011 initiative that she says has “galvanized” the company: the birth of HUGE UX School.

Given the explosion of the digital industry and fierce competition for talent, the agency decided to grow its own supply by building a three-month training program in interactive design. After interviewing students at 34 colleges, it chose 10 candidates from five countries to make up its first class. They represented a wide mix of experience — digital, graphic, architectural — much like the staff at HUGE, which provided the instruction.

“We assigned the ‘teachers’ from all over the company, not just from UX,” says Pasternak. “It made such an impact on us as a company. It forced us to think deeply and carefully about what we look for in employees.”

HUGE hired nine out of the 10 trainees, holding spots for those who aren’t graduating until June. The agency is planning a second session for this winter, adding courses in design and project management, and another next summer, as well as a technology course. That makes 40 new employees who can hit the ground running — a good thing, given how fast HUGE is growing.

The launch of the London office and expansion in Rio and Los Angeles also helped make 2011 a record year for HUGE, with revenue doubling to an estimated \$86 million, and the number of staff topping 400. But not all the growth came from the emerging offices; billings soared in Brooklyn, too. The agency added American Express, Pizza Hut and Comcast to its roster, and significantly grew its HBO, Pepsi and Target accounts. Its award-winning design of HBO GO propelled the premium channel’s mobile streaming application to the top position on iTunes the day it was released, and garnered 3 million downloads in less than two months. Other 2011 launches include the new ruelala.com, barneys.com, and the new bio.com.

Looking back on 2011’s highlights — the launch of the London office, growth in Brazil and LA, new business in New York, and the promise of new talent thanks to the UX School — Shapiro muses that HUGE may be the fastest-growing agency on earth. He’s not bragging, though — “just savoring the moment.”  Gail Belsky



S E A R C H

COVARIO

SMART STRATEGY AND NIMBLE NUMBERS
POWER COVARIO'S TECH EDGE

2011 was a breakout year for Covario Inc.

Founded in 2006, the San Diego search agency's growth dramatically accelerated in 2011 due to advancements in its agency services and analytical technologies across paid search, SEO search, social media and offline advertising. Covario also significantly expanded its services team in London, Singapore and Beijing to better support client programs worldwide.

Because of these initiatives, its Fortune 500 client roster added Wells Fargo & Co. Urban Outfitters Inc., Epicor Software Corp and a major U.S.-based computer

manufacturer. High returns on investment in SEM and SEO campaigns for clients like Lenovo Group and Nikon Corp., have earned industry awards.

"It's a virtuous cycle: attract the best talent, which in turn helps expand our globally branded client list," says CEO Russ Mann. "This year it's all come together," Mann added, as Covario was expected to achieve a 25 percent increase from 2010's \$22.5 million. They initially launched two products on a software-as-a-service platform: Paid Search Insight and Organic Search Insight, with subsequent upgrades. Both enable clients

to view the totality of their respective searches across multiple product lines and countries, and both make recommendations to improve results.

In 2010, Covario launched its "Cross Media Optimization" (CMO) solution, integrating data from paid search, SEO search, social media, display advertising and offline media, including radio, television, print, and out-of-home ads.

"This [solution] helps chief marketing officers optimize cross-media advertising expenditures," Mann says, adding that it helps them determine which channels to spend more or less on.

And it works. Client Nikon now captures top Google organic rankings at a rate 26 times higher than its primary competitor, which they also displace by 36 percent on Google's high-traffic keywords. And 37 percent of all keywords tracked for Nikon now rank on Google's first page. When Covario updated and measured the tactics used in Lenovo's branding campaign, "For Those Who Do," its share of impressions, according to Google, increased by 833 percent from the beginning of 2011.

Gary Milner, Lenovo's director of global digital marketing in North Carolina, says that Covario also helped train his team on how to better conduct SEO searches. "This is critical, as it can be as much as 20 percent of a Web site's traffic and is likely to rise further as mobile and tablet increase search volumes," Milner says.

Covario was also one of only nine firms that made the 2011 Forrester Research Wave of the top U.S. search marketing agencies, from more than 100 firms considered.

"We have an intense focus on the customer," Mann says, "and use the Net Promoter Score system to evaluate our client satisfaction. Over the past year, we have scored in the high 30s and low 40s.

"Many elements of social media overlap and interact with search, even more than other media disciplines such as display and email," Mann adds. "This integration of search marketing and social media strategies is helping our clients maximize their message, their customer acquisition and their ROI." **Katie Kuehner-Hobert**



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
2006

HEADQUARTERS:
San Diego

OWNED BY:
Independent

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
140

KEY CLIENTS:
Adobe, Intel, Lenovo, Nikon

FIGHTING STYLE:
It's all in the numbers

2011'S BEST KOS:
Driving an 833% rise in Lenovo's
share of impressions



MEDIA PLANNING

MEDIAVEST

While there's no shortage of data on consumer behavior, breakthroughs in media planning can only happen when strategists "distill what is really meaningful and powerful," says Bill Tucker, MediaVest's CEO.

At MediaVest, which takes Agency of the Year honors especially for its strategic and innovative approach to cross-platform campaigns, Tucker says that alchemy requires "a special ability to understand human beings and to gain insight on what is most relevant to them at a certain point in time." MediaVest asks, "What is the relationship with the brand to consumers and how does the brand enable consumers to get where he or she wants to go?"

The agency translates those answers into powerful campaigns because of its "Cross Athletes" who specialize in all types of media. Amanda Richman, president of digital says they want to know where consumers find "gaps in the content they are seeking, what are the motivators for them to share, and where are there opportunities for their brand to bring value to their experience?"

For Kraft's Triscuits MediaVest had dill and chive seeds inserted into four million Triscuit boxes, encouraging people to plant the seeds and track their growth on Triscuit's Facebook page. Interstitials promoting home farming and the Triscuit initiative were featured on the *Ellen DeGeneres* show and in *Real Simple* magazine, allowing experiences "travel across different screens and platforms," Richman said.

Another hit came from a comprehensive campaign with Microsoft's Bing and the CW TV network

FROM MICROSOFT'S BING TO BARBIE'S KEN, MEDIAVEST MATCHES INNOVATION TO STRATEGY

called "TV to Bing About." 13 interview "vignettes" with the actors, creators and producers of CW's six most popular shows, along with Bing bumpers and a "TV to Bing About" bug — were featured on the network and the shows' Web sites, as well as a co-branded Web site, in order to build brand affinity between Bing and CW.

"MediaVest shows us how to look at media in a new evolved word," says Eric Hadley, Bing's general marketing manager. The agency is focusing on tools that mine the way consumer behavior is evolving in response to enhanced technologies and media, such as exploring the way smartphones have become consumers' "remote control" for learning about brands while on the run. The firm also launched Paid, Owned, Earned Methodology (POEM), a tool for identifying what is truly earned media as well as the ripple effect of paid media on owned and earned.

Tucker says MediaVest is a "human experience company" that's constantly looking for ways to strike a chord in people while connecting them to each other and to their clients' brands; this strategy has sparked a 42 percent increase in digital revenues.  Katie Kuehner-Hebert



THE SCORECARD

DATE FOUNDED:
1959

HEADQUARTERS:
New York

OWNED BY:
Publicis

NO. OF EMPLOYEES:
750

KEY CLIENTS:
Walmart, Kraft, P&G, Microsoft

FIGHTING STYLE:
Create what doesn't exist, buy what's not for sale

2011'S BEST KOS:
A reinvigorated Triscuit brand sparked 7,600 home farms



VIRAL VIDEO DEFINITION 6

With personalized panache, Definition 6 dominates a skyrocketing segment

Viral video ads' importance to brands now and in the years ahead is nearly impossible to overstate — and Atlanta-headquartered Definition 6 has firmly established itself in the top ranks of the medium's pioneers.

Definition 6's recent coups include its latest work for HBO: an "Immortalize Yourself" app created for the summer 2011 launch of *True Blood*'s fourth season. The app enabled *True Blood* fans who liked the show's Facebook page to insert themselves and their friends, via an auto-populating function, into a mini-episode featuring the cast of the show, which was shot specifically for this app.



THE SCORECARD

Date founded: 1997

Headquarters: Atlanta

Owned by: Independent

No. of Employees: 145

Key clients: Coca-Cola, Mitsubishi, LaQuinta Inns & Suites

Fighting style: Build fans by building relationships

2011's Best KO: Vampirizing video app for HBO's *True Blood* drove 1 million-plus visits

Results? More than 2.4 million page views and 50,000 new Facebook likes, with fans creating 200,000-plus videos and sharing them more than 35,000 times via Facebook, Twitter and email, during the launch window alone. By the show's Sept. 11 finale, visits surpassed 1 million.

Definition 6's secret formula? In a word: context. That starts with knowing when a viral video is truly the right move for a brand, within a strategy carefully designed to "connect people and brands that are both constantly in motion," says CEO Michael Kogon.

Kogon and CMO Chris Thornton believe passionately that shared content is the key to connecting meaningfully with consumers. Both cite Buzz Agent's finding that a single word-of-mouth conversation has the impact of 200 television ads, and point out that the desire to share is, of course, social media's *raison d'être*.

Definition 6's shared-content-driven guiding principles also paid off spectacularly with "Happiness Machine," Coca-Cola's first global video produced exclusively for viral distribution, as part of its "Open Happiness" campaign. Launched in January 2010, its success carried over into 2011, providing smiles to more than 4.1 million viewers to date. It reigns as Coke's most-shared video ever, collecting a Gold Clio, the ADD Awards' "Best in Show," and other awards along the way.

"Happiness Machine" served to spur the takeoff of Coke's "Where Will Happiness Strike Next? (WWHSN)" campaign, driv-

en by a Coca-Cola Facebook hub built by Definition 6, which showcases video "happiness moments" created by regional Coke divisions and agencies around the globe. The hub provides tools for sharing/tweeting about the videos, and Definition 6's own follow-up videos include a "Happiness Truck" dispensing surfboards and other goodies in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, generating 1.5 million views since mid-February.

The WWHSN hub, now featuring 50-plus videos, has helped increase "likes" for Coca-Cola's Facebook page (which jumped from 22.6 million to nearly 40 million between February and November 2011).

The "Happiness Machine" and "Happiness Truck" videos are "great ideas, brilliantly executed, delivering value to our brand and our consumers," says Wendy Clark, Coke's senior vice president for integrated marketing communications and capabilities. "In this evolved media world, where content must be what we call 'liquid and linked,' we rely on our partners to deliver fresh thinking that travels across media, while building deeper connections between our brands and consumers. Definition 6 gets this, and continues to push the bar with innovative ideas."

Indeed, Kogon emphasizes that the need to unify so many elements to produce shareable content demands that clients and agencies work together more closely than ever. The make-or-break element, he adds, is "bravery and risk-taking tolerance on the part of both the client and the agency." **Karlene Lukovitz**

HOLDING COMPANY

GROUPM

Industry behemoth, GroupM redefines privacy debate

OMMA hasn't usually named an Agency of the Year in the holding company category, but for GroupM, which pushed the definition of industry leadership to new levels, we felt compelled to make an exception. That's because GroupM went to Washington to take on the privacy debate, which affects just about every company operating online these days.

Privacy is one of the most complex but also one of the most important issues in the digital advertising business, and as such warrants a high degree of insight and attention. This past year the holding company worked with industry groups like the 4A's and the IAB to establish guidelines and self-regulatory measures regarding online privacy. Those efforts have included the creation and rollout of an opt-out symbol in many online ads, and sending John Montgomery, chief operating officer of GroupM Interaction and the chair of the 4A's privacy committee, to testify before Congress on the measures the industry had taken to inform consumers about behavioral targeting and how to opt out of it in some online ads.

"I'm thrilled from a leadership point of view that we have taken on the privacy debate and allocated the strongest resources," says Rob Norman, GroupM North American CEO. GroupM has also adopted mobile privacy guidelines to limit the data collected and shared from mobile devices and also to give mobile users the means to opt out of data sharing.

GroupM has been vocal about piracy, too, Norman says, including the adoption of a new buying policy to prevent its cli-



THE SCORECARD

Date founded: 2003

Headquarters: New York

Owned by: WPP

No. of Employees: 17,000

Fighting style: A competitive edge comes from intellectual and economic scale

2011's Best KO: Leading the charge on industry privacy regulations

ents' ads from appearing on Web sites that support piracy.

"GroupM never hesitates when asked to take a leadership role in any issue — from privacy to piracy to talent management," says Nancy Hill, president/CEO of 4A's. "Their prowess in this space has been infused throughout the organization from the very top down."

Of course, all of this industry work would be hot air if it weren't for the kind of strategic vision and innovation that also translates to outstanding work for clients, and the ability to win new business. This year, GroupM did land big new accounts, with household

products maker SC Johnson and Comcast-NBCU.

But what Norman is particularly proud of is GroupM's reboot of its media agency, Maxus, which had often been regarded as a distant fourth option behind GroupM's MediaCom, MEC and Mindshare. "We turned Maxus into a serious media agency rather than just our fourth brand," he says, citing the new client wins in NBCU and SC Johnson that bring more than \$2 billion in new spending to Maxus.

The Maxus wins can also help elevate Maxus beyond the perception that it's simply a "conflict-free" shop where GroupM accounts get parked if other shops are working with rival marketers. GroupM also infused new leadership at Mindshare North America, GroupM Entertainment and MEC this year.

And while it handles 33 percent of the world's media billings — about \$74 billion — the company is just as happy to brag about individual campaigns from its agencies as it is about industry issues. Standout campaign work in 2011 includes the MediaCom-led Superbowl ad for VW on YouTube, as well as the social media work Mindshare has done with American Express for Small Business Saturday. But Norman also says he's pleased with the analytic work GroupM implemented for Panera Bread to help the marketer better understand the allocation of marketing dollars. "The guts of our business is about allocation, optimization and attribution," he says, "and making sure we are a big part of solving problems for our customers in those areas." **Daisy Whitney**



POLITICAL

SS+K

Sweetheart consultants for Democrats, SS+K extends its reign beyond the Beltway

After the fanfare from the 2008 grand slam for Democrats across the country, in no small part due to ss+k's involvement in Obama's youth campaign, the Democratic National Committee enlisted ss+k to revamp its image. It wanted a timely message that reflected the young Democrats that emerged from the newly Obamanized America. What ss+k did was use consumer marketing knowledge to bring a decades old brand into the 21st century.

ss+k's roots are purely political. In 1993 partners Rob Shepardson, Lenny Stern and Mark Kaminsky found themselves working at the Sawyer Miller Group — a political consultancy about to be acquired by a holding company. Unsure of the benefits of new ownership and wanting to start a firm of their own, the trio broke off and formed ss+k. From the start their vision was to do something different and break

the mold of agency organization, says Shepardson, founding partner: "We felt we could best solve clients' problems with an integrated approach — a political way of thinking about communications."

That combination of D.C. sensibilities with a New York spin led ss+k to quickly find its niche with clients that wanted edgy campaigns. But its groundbreaking work for the 2008 Obama for America Youth Campaign is what put the shop on the map. The Obama team, Shepardson says, believed that "properly engaged and employed" young voters could make or break the campaign. So ss+k went to work — abandoning convention, and launching a technology-driven grassroots campaign employing social media and customizable art in order to drive young people to voteforchange.com, where they could register to vote.

The result was the highest rate of young voters ever, earning the President 68 percent of the youth vote. Along with leading to the election of the President, the campaign won big at Cannes, bringing home a Titanium and Integrated Gold Lion. The company also gained Mike Moffo, now vice president of its D.C. office and former national director of special projects for Obama for America.

It's that commitment to motivating Gen Y that landed ss+k on top of our list. Under the direction of Emmy-winning Kash Sree, chief creative officer, ss+k has positioned itself as an industry leader in cultivating creativity. Most of the agency's 60 employees are under 30, avid consumers of culture and news, with plenty of political

opinions. Bottom line: Everything about ss+k keeps the agency current on not just politics, but what the under-30 crowd thinks.

While the agency is mum on whether it will handle Obama's 2012 effort, it spent the past year hard at work for the Democratic National Committee and the Democratic National Convention Committee, as well as the National Head Start Association. With the trend of politicians requesting brand campaigns, ss+k is in a unique position as they aren't strictly political, and their clients run the gamut from Allstate to Honest Tea.



THE SCORECARD

Date founded: 1993

Headquarters: New York

Owned by: Partially CAA

No. of Employees: 60

Key clients: Allstate's X the TXT, the Lance Armstrong Foundation

Fighting style Build your team with Gen Y genius

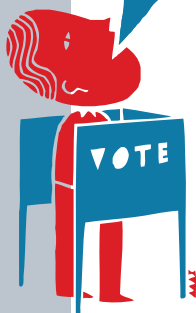
2011's Best KO: Crafted and launched First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" childhood obesity initiative

And while "politics has always been part of our DNA," Shepardson says, the agency's branding work on products informs its political work, and vice versa.

But there's a limit to how far the agency will stretch its client roster. More types of national advertisers? Yes. But GOPers beware: Asked if the agency would ever take on a Republican client, Shepardson laughs and responds with an unambiguous "No." **Carrie Cummings**

I'M VOTING BECAUSE I REFUSE
TO BE A BYSTANDER.

KELLY K.



Tabula Rasa

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Adios, 2011

FROM NETFLIX BLUNDERS TO AN OVERHYPED CLOUD, OMMA BIDS BYE-BYE TO ALL THAT.

Larry Dobrow reports

Columns that bid a less-than-fond adieu to the outgoing year's biggest loserheads are challenging on two fronts. Stylistically, any such list risks coming off as glibly dismissive or, worse, Andy Rooney-ish. (" 'MySpace'? Looks more like 'EmptySpace' to me. Also, nowadays lawnmowers are way too loud.") On a practical level, most of these columns are filed in early November and often prove outdated by the time they find their way into readers' hands. Along those lines: If Yahoo overpays for Friendster's reanimated corpse or unveils a 2G tablet cell phone between November 15 and the time you're reading this — neither of which, given the company's recent track record, would be much of a surprise — please excuse the absence of both anti-achievements.

Nonetheless, in the first 10-plus months of 2011, there was no shortage of online media- and marketing-related goofs to prematurely eulogize. Consider that...

Netflix spent the first half of the year as the broadband-enabled world's prom king. Even as the content universe morphed into something unrecognizable, Netflix thrived. It gave people what they wanted, at a competitive price. Such complicated business strategies rarely exist outside the halcyon halls of academia.

So Netflix did what any company in similar straits would do: double prices, split its service in two and slap the part appreciated by tech Luddites (the mail-in component) with a name straight off a fast-food value menu. Not surprisingly, users complained reeeeeaaaaaaally loud on the Internet, some even threatening to cancel their subscriptions, maybe, if they got around to it. Then the company apologized and set everything except the prices back to where they once were, and the world continued to spin on its axis. And so it was that Netflix was replaced as The Internet Brand You Love to Hate by...

Spotify. Never mind that the music service's interface felt as intuitive as particle physics, nor that its sound quality (at least for non-premium users) harkened back to the era of transistor radios. Here it was, only a mere 10 years after the music industry destroyed itself by botching the digital-era transition — all the music in the universe, sort of unfettered and mostly free!

Music fascists and music casualists alike rhapsodized about its debut. They extended Spotify's reach by okaying a Facebook connection that announced to everyone within their e-circle what they were listening to and when.



REED HASTINGS, NETFLIX



CAROL BARTZ, YAHOO!



ANDREW MASON, GROUPON



DANIEL EK, SPOTIFY

On the plus side, it was heartening to learn that somebody else had indulged in the dueling-guitars delight that is Def Leppard's "Bringin' on the Heartbreak," even if my version of the metal ballad-anthem happened to be stored...

In the cloud, which replaced the external hard drive as the year's magical technology cubbyhole. Worried that your multiply backed-up files would all be lost in a suspicious grease fire? Afraid that an overenthusiastic night janitor would Swiffer your work computer into disrepair? Fret no more. Just upload every virtual thing you own into a cyber-sanctuary in the sky.

Cloud-y storage arrived in paid (Apple's iCloud, Carbonite) and free (Dropbox, Amazon) packages, sans obstructions and ads — for now. But while it can't protect your physical corpus against immediate harm, it ensured the security of any/all digital items in a year pockmarked by...


Massive disasters that have nothing to do with media or marketing. Judging by the number and intensity of outlier weather events — tsunamis, hurricanes, freak early-season snowstorms — we all learned a valuable lesson in 2011: that today's connection-facilitating, production-enhancing technology isn't all that helpful when one's local power source has danced an unfortunate tango with a rotted-out oak tree. Just imagine the profound despair experienced by electricity-starved storm victims when they weren't able to access ...

Groupon, their localized daily bargain/giggle combo. An ordinary dispatch from Groupon, or one of the 7,200 clones similarly attempting to foist cut-rate

foodstuffs and 12-for-the-price-of-1 tickets to Major League Soccer games on Internet shopping addicts, might read thusly: "Humankind can be divided into two distinct groups: those who avail themselves of today's exclusive offer for teeth-whitening and the English. Joking! English people have interestingly shaped and colored teeth, and there's totally no analogy to be drawn between the decay of their chompers and the decay of their empire. But seriously, this teeth-whitening offer is really good. Please buy it. My stock options don't kick in for another six years. TTYL!"

Yup. In the wake of its late-year IPO, Groupon has a market cap of something like \$732 gastrillion dollars, which renders it — at least perception-wise — a far hotter property than...

Yahoo, which spent most of 2011 attempting to evolve itself into a Google clone, complete with the Internet-advertising moxie and techno-innovation. While the doppelganger/*Single White Female* approach must've been flattering to the Google folks, it didn't take. Yahoo ends the year in a curious state of stasis: big and successful, but not quite big and successful enough to win over the skeptics.

I don't know much about Carol Bartz, nor could I enumerate her supposed misdeeds in any great detail. All I know is that my beloved Yahoo home page is now subdivided by a double-wide randomly generated display ad, which likely subtracts more in goodwill than it adds in revenue. Godspeed, sweet Web marketer. Maybe you're just too beautiful for the Internet. 

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Publication Title: *OMMA*
2. Publication Number: 024-453
3. Filing Date: 10/10/2011
4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 4
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$48.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: MediaPost, 15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York NY 10016
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: same as number 7
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: Kenneth Fadner; Editor: Joe Mandese; Managing Editor: Carrie Cummings, all at MediaPost, 15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York NY 10016
10. Owner: Fadner Media Enterprises, LLC, Kenneth Fadner, 15 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York NY 10016
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: none
12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data: October 2011
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies:	7,771	7,336
b. Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution:		
(1) Individual Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541:	7,018	6,486
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(3) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail:	189	210
(4) Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail:	528	600
e. Total Nonrequested Distribution:	717	810
f. Total Distribution:	7,735	7,296
g. Copies not Distributed:	36	40
h. Total:	7,771	7,336
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation:	90.73%	88.90%

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TOP 50 DIGITAL AGENCIES OF 2011

COURTESY OF RECMA

	Agency	Group / Owner	Staff		Agency	Group / Owner	Staff
1.	Wunderman Digital Global Group	WPP	5450	26.	Possible Worldwide	WPP	1000
2.	OgilvyInteractive Worldwide Group	WPP	4700	27.	AKQA	Independent	1000
3.	Draftfcb Digital Worldwide	Interpublic	3680	28.	Rosetta Worldwide Group	Publicis	965
4.	Digitas Worldwide Group	Publicis	3610	29.	Media Contacts Worldwide	Havas	961
5.	SapientNitro Worldwide Group	Independent	3540	30.	MEC Interaction Worldwide	WPP	908
6.	Wunderman Interactive ww Group	WPP	3330	31.	GroupM Search / Outrider	WPP	863
7.	Euro RSCG 4D Worldwide Group	Havas	2700	32.	Nurun	Independent	850
8.	Isobar Worldwide Group	Aegis	2580	33.	VML	WPP	810
9.	MRM Worldwide Group	Interpublic	2500	34.	Tequila	Omnicom	750
10.	Publicis Modem Worldwide Group	Publicis	2250	35.	E-Graphics Worldwide Group	Omnicom	750
11.	Razorfish Worldwide Group	Publicis	2224	36.	Neo@Ogilvy Worldwide	WPP	740
12.	Proximity Worldwide Group	Omnicom	1800	37.	plan.net Profero	Independent	726
13.	LBI International Group	Independent	1800	38.	Digitas Health	Publicis	720
14.	Arc Worldwide	Publicis	1750	39.	Rapp Digital Network	Omnicom	700
15.	ZenithOptimedia Digital ww Group	Publicis	1529	40.	G2	WPP	660
16.	Havas Digital Worldwide	Havas	1444	41.	Epsilon	Independent	651
17.	Tribal DDB Worldwide Group	Omnicom	1250	42.	Meredith Xcelerated Marketing	Independent	650
18.	OMD Digital Worldwide	Omnicom	1226	43.	iCrossing	Independent	650
19.	Starcom MediaVest Digital WW	Publicis	1222	44.	Critical Mass	Omnicom	639
20.	MediaCom Interaction Worldwide	WPP	1141	45.	Saatchi & Saatchi Digital Worldwide	Publicis	637
21.	R/GA	Interpublic	1115	46.	ZenithOptimedia Digital	Publicis	623
22.	iProspect Worldwide Group	Aegis	1069	47.	RMG Connect	WPP	608
23.	Mindshare Digital Worldwide	WPP	1066	48.	Performics Worldwide	Publicis	601
24.	FullSIX	Independent	1051	49.	GyroHSR	Independent	600
25.	Carat Interactive Worldwide	Aegis	1031	50.	UM Digital Worldwide	Interpublic	569

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Scale ★★★★★		Scale ★★★★★		Scale ★★★★★
Targeting ★		Targeting ★★★★★		Targeting ★★★★★
Interactivity ★		Interactivity ★★★★★		Interactivity ★★★★★
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