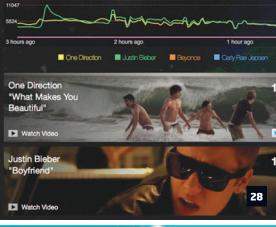


The Kims. They're on the same page.











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Evolutionary Score

Digital + Brains = 360i Agency of the Year

In the 10 years I've been involved with the annual selection of OMMA's Agency of the Year Awards, I've watched the nature of digital agencies evolve, and these awards along with them. In the early days, digital agencies were defined by the media they influenced online display advertising, Web sites, search, and increasingly social and mobile platforms.

So it's probably appropriate that this year's Agency of the Year — Dentsu's 360i — began life as one kind of agency, a search shop, and has morphed into what many would consider one of the best examples of a social shop. If that's all you think after reading this year's recognition, then we failed to explain what's really going on here. And to borrow a phrase from 360i chief Bryan Wiener, that is to be "always on, always evolving." You have to be, because — whether you are a digital agency or just a trade publisher that chronicles them - the nature of digital media keeps evolving.

We saw that last year, when we recognized Publicis' Digitas as agency of the year, for its brilliant adaptation of content marketing and its evolution of the theme with its "Brand Live" newsroom

approach. A year later, any digital agency worth its digits is utilizing real-time newsroom approaches to telling its clients' brand stories. And few exemplify that better than 360i. Sure we all know how it kicked 2013 off, defining real-time messaging with its tweet campaign for Oreos when the Super Bowl went dark, but that campaign and the thousands of other less heralded real-time ones 360i mounted throughout 2013, all have their roots in Wiener's "always on, always evolving" mantra. That's not to lit-

> erally be always on in terms of workflow and manpower. Only machines can do that. It is, he explains, more about the way you think, and the

type of organization your create to think that way. And if you're doing that right, it can mean doing things that are inherently non-digital — whether it is bartering your way across country with nothing but a wad of bacon, or getting people to scream to guarantee a Ben & Jerry's ice cream truck visits their neighborhood. It's not about the media you execute on, adds 360i's Sarah Hofstetter, it's the way you think about how you use them. It is, she says, "about being a digitally-centered agency."

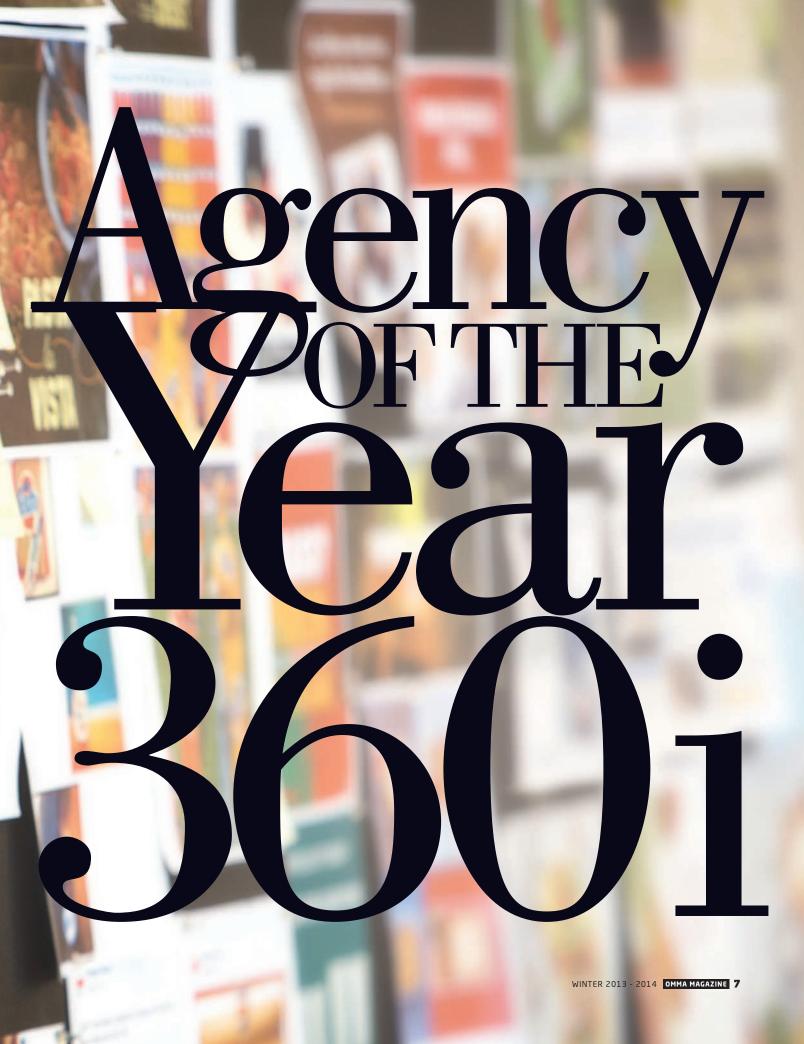
When 360i began doing digital, that meant understanding search engine algorithms and keywords better than anyone. Now that social is the medium of resonance, it means tracking and anticipating the conversation and knowing when to insinuate the right message at the right time on behalf of the right client. But as important as those media are, they are secondary tactics to the strategic way of thinking that brings them to life.

Whether that is social, mobile, search, design, or the next new digital gismo, it's all comes back to some basic understanding of people and why they relate to and connect with brands, and what brands can do with media to enhance those relationships. We in other words, we didn't pick 360i as our agency of the year for what they did digitally. We picked them for what they did non-digitally: how they used their brains.

JOE MANDESE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF









NORMALLY, OMMA BASES ITS ANNUAL AGENCY OF THE YEAR SELECTION ON THE MOST INNOVATIVE THINGS DONE BY AN AGENCY DURING THE 12-MONTHS LEADING UP TO OUR PICK. For this year's winner 360i, the process began at least 24-months ago, when we met with ceo Bryan Wiener and the rest of his top management team, in preparation for our 2012 process. In the end, we didn't select 360i that year, but Wiener planted a seed in our head, asserting. "I don't think agencies, as we know them, will exist in another couple of years."

He turned out to be right sooner than he had predicted, because the way most agencies exist today has changed fundamentally from just months ago. And this year, we felt 360i exemplified that change best. It's not just the shift from the siloed mentality of "traditional" vs. digital, or media vs. creative or performance vs. brand. No, that progression has been going on for some time, and few would argue that integration is the new industry standard. The fundamental change that occurred this past year is, in

fact, a temporal one. Agencies and their clients made the leap from a latent or, at the very least, asynchronous mindset to a "real-time" way of thinking; and, increasingly, a real-time way of performing.

And there probably was nothing that epitomized that point better than the way in which 2013 kicked off — literally — with the Super Bowl. And, of course, the indelible blackout moment occurred when the entire world of marketing seemed to be waiting on the sidelines in the dark while 360i seized on the moment, not as an impediment but an opportunity for a new kind of storytelling for client Oreo. You know — the tweet heard round Madison Avenue

The truth is agencies and clients had been progressively shifting into real-time mode for some time now, forced in large part by the shift toward the real-time conversations of social media and the need to be part of them with original brand content and dialogue that both engage and interact with consumers. In fact, last year's winner Digitas optimized that with the groundbreaking work it did with its BrandLive newsrooms for leading Procter & Gamble brands.

360i was there too, building out its own dynamic contentcreation newsroom in its Lower Manhattan offices - listening, tracking, analyzing and reacting with conversations and content in real-time. The work it did for client Oscar Mever's "Bacon Barter" campaign was almost enough to clinch it a year ago. The work it's been doing this year, makes our selection of 360i a no-brainer.

All you need to do is walk through the hallways of 360i's offices where there are walls cluttered with creative executions, and not just for the medium it has become known for — social — but for all the "screens" its clients reach their consumers through.

"It's meant to be a reminder to us and our clients that we have to constantly be evolving to keep up with the consumer," u.s. ceo Sarah Hofstetter says, referring to the "wall" of creative



The depth and breadth of 360i's creativity and content may be surprising to those who only know it for its Super Bowl moment, but Wiener says that's okay, because "it woke the industry up to something we've been doing forever from our early search days: not real-time, minute-to-minute marketing, but marketing to a real-time world."

That's right, 360i began as a search shop, but Wiener says that was really just the point of entry for a new way of thinking about interacting with consumers on behalf of brands, and social is the next logical progression. It's

Hofstetter concurs. "Everything

we ever did, starting with search, was about tracking consumers' behavior to try and understand where they were going so we could help our clients get there with them."

In fact, spend some time chatting with Hofstetter and her team and you're more apt to get into some deep dive conversations about communications planning, ethnography, culture and the zeitgeist than you are likely to talk about algorithms and optimization. It's all about the consumer and the idea.

And because those ideas are

about what the consumer is doing next, Wiener says that gives 360i an advantage over other agencies and the reactive way they think and are structured.

"Now that the rest of the industry is thinking, 'How can we do real-time tweets,' we're trying to figure out what to do next," he boasts, noting that the agency's mission statement is to be "always on, always evolving," and that he expects 360i to be as different "six months from now as we were six months ago."

By always-on and real-time



Barter webpage

Wiener doesn't mean that the agency or its clients are literally deploying 24/7. "Those are just tactics," he says, adding, "The real question is what does it mean to be a '24-hour network organization.' You don't always need people sitting in a war room. Sometimes you need that. But you can't think in annual planning cycles either, because your planning cycle is now a day."

East Rutherford, NJ 9/09/2012 12:15 PM

SEE PHOTO N

And you have to be set up to think and act more dynamically to go along with that orientation... being fleet of feet and nimble, not just in the media you use, but in the way you deliver content and messages through them.

The agency followed its Ba-

con Barter campaign with Oreo's Super Bowl blackout, which was followed by a real-time and realworld experiential campaign for Unilever's Ben & Jerry's brand. The campaign involved all the conventional digital elements, but its centerpiece was the most physical one a consumer could experience — Ben & Jerry's ice cream itself. The activating medium was an ice cream truck that drove up and down the east and west coasts to serve samples of "city themed flavors." Each municipality interacted with the trucks - and the flavors - in a wide array of social executions. If enough of your colleagues or neighbors tweeted, the truck would stop by

your location. Citizens also got to vote on which of the uniquely urban flavors were best.

Campaigns for other clients employed other media — even the old school medium of television — but Hofstetter says the thing that differentiated 360i's approach was that they were all "digitally-centered." Being digitally-centered, she says, doesn't necessarily mean executing ideas through digital media, though that's probably a given. It means a way of thinking, a "mindset."

And if you ask her what 360i's biggest success was during 2013, it was convincing its clients to think that way too.

"Part of it stemmed from being able to get our clients to change from being 'digital as a channel,' to being 'digital as a mindset," she explains. "Using digital as a mindset, you end up getting programs that are more digital by design. If we didn't have clients with that mindset. we wouldn't be able to do the work we are doing. That's really what's been the most progressive thing about this year. The action was in the work and the work was digital by design. Basically, the guardrails were taken off this year."

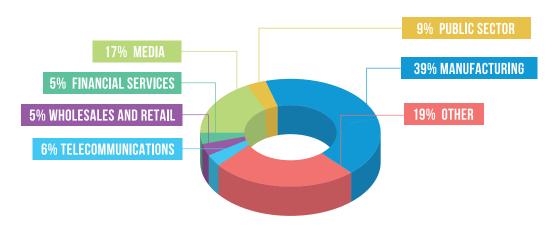
Wiener notes that success has helped breed success. The more open clients have grown about the approach, the more effective their campaigns have become in leveraging social and real-time conversations, which in turn has led to more successes that have led more clients to free up.

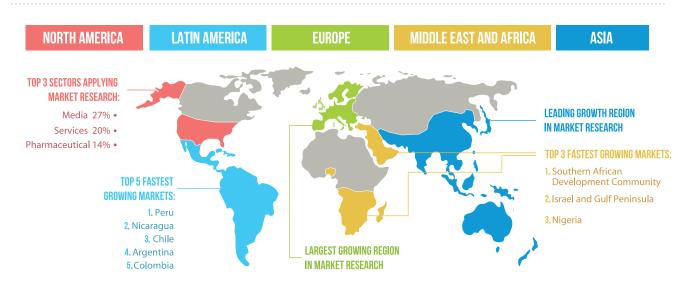
"Great campaigns require great trust," he says. I JOE MANDESE



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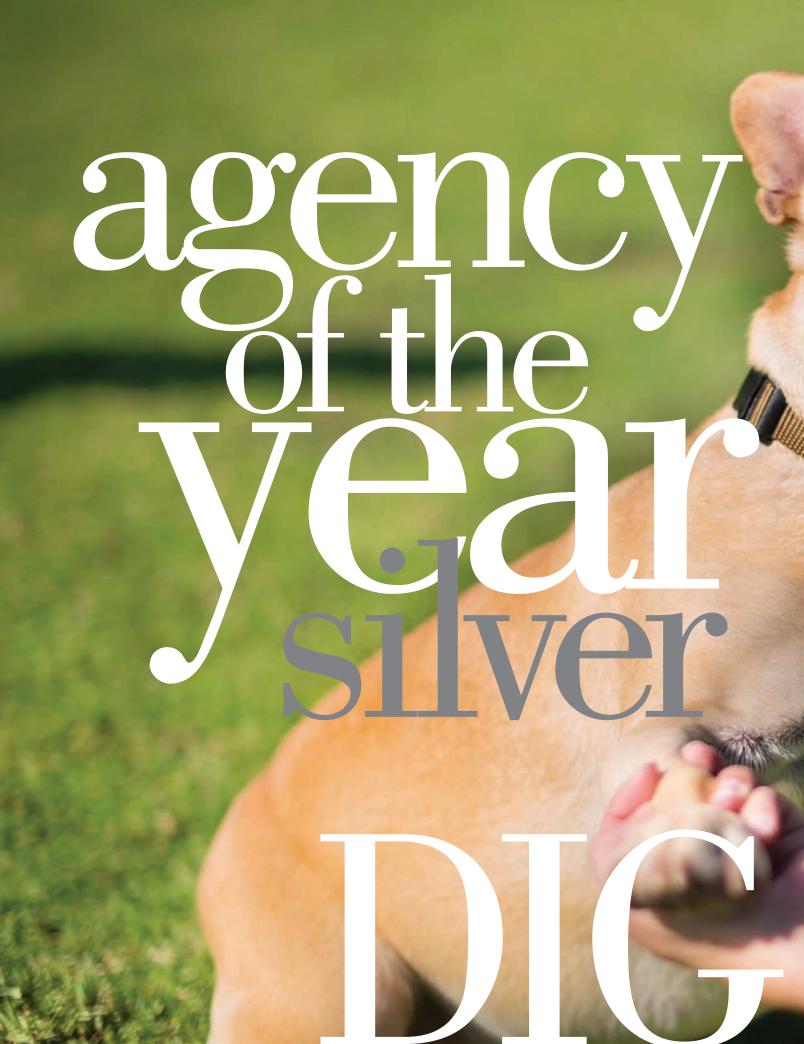


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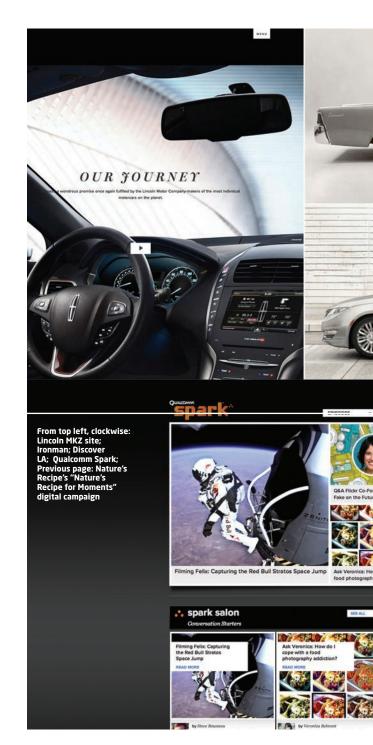


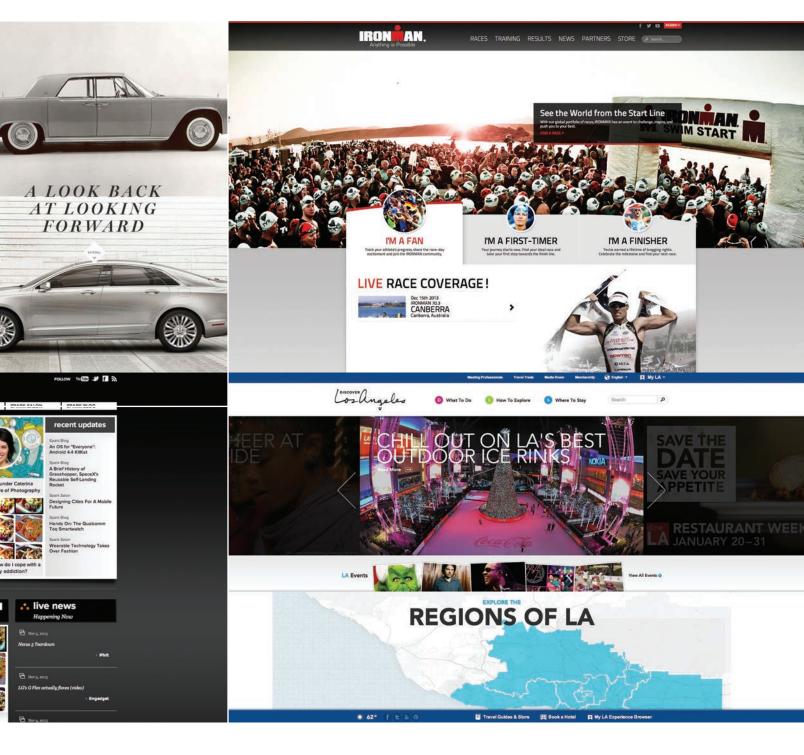
ALWAYS A PERENNIAL IN THE AREAS OF DESIGN. CREATIVITY AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, OMMA IS RECOGNIZING DIGITARIA AS ITS "SILVER" AGENCY OF THE YEAR FOR **BECOMING MORE OF A "FULL-SERVICE" SHOP.**

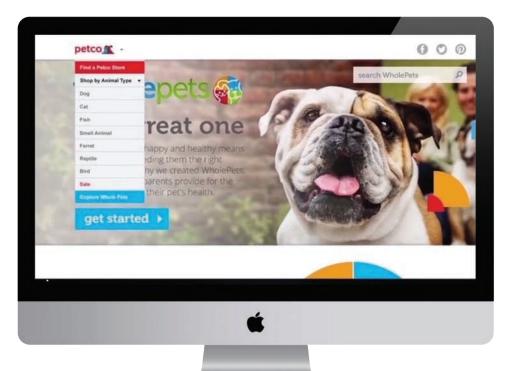
While continuing to excel in those best-in-class areas, Digitaria upped its game in two crucial areas for digital agencies — analytics and social — and pulled something off that even some of Madison Avenue's biggest shops haven't figured out guite how to do: transition into the even higher end service industry of management consulting. Sure plenty of Madison Avenue shops have proclaimed themselves "business consultants" in recent years, even going so far as to recruit talent from the big management consulting firms, but while they were zigging Digitaria zagged. Instead of trying to reinvent itself as a consultancy, it struck a strategic partnership with some blue chips, creating a new hybrid model combining the best of Madison Avenue creative, ideation and execution with blue blood business strategists.

Digitaria already had strong relationships with Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and had been developing a set of guidelines that would codify a partnership. In 2013, the model formalized, and the collaboration led to blue chip assignments including HP and an undisclosed car company account that has yet to be announced. The deal benefited both sides. Digitaria got valuable new business, and Pwc was able to increase its value to established clients by extending their relationship into valuable digital marketing resources provided by the agency.

The relationship worked so well that PWC







Petco, one of Digitaria's earliest clients, has returned to the agency

retained Digitaria for itself, hiring the JWT digital unit to work on a rebranding campaign, which is scheduled to break in the first quarter of 2014. The model actually worked a little too well for PWC, which, as the cliche goes, decided not to pay for some milk when it could buy a cow. In September, the consultant acquired South Florida digital shop BGT Partners to provide direct digital marketing services. In fact, the model proved so innovative that a month later Pwc rival Deloitte acquired Seattle digital agency Banyan Branch.

While the model didn't prove sustainable for Digitaria, it is an example of the kind of industry transforming innovation that keeps сео Dan Khabie and his team on омма's perennial watch list. And the new business it gained from the experiment helped catapult it to its most profitable year ever, a growth of nearly 20% over 2012.

A big chunk of those gains came from a flurry of new business in its San Diego and Minneapolis offices, including some of Del Monte's coveted accounts: pet food brands Nature's

Recipe and Pure Essentials, and Del Monte Master Brands Canned Foods.

Meanwhile, the agency continued to develop innovative digital campaigns that pushed the boundary of user experience and brand storytelling with superior technology and design, including new sites for Qualcomm, Discover Los Angeles and Ironman.

If you want to see an especially clever example of the tech department's work, check out liquidapsive.com, a house site developed by Digitaria engineer Nick Davison that enables users to simply understand the difference between "adaptive," "responsive," "static," and "liquid" Web designs in the best way imaginable — by experiencing them as a user would.

Proving that creativity comes in all shapes, forms and quants, Digitaria's burgeoning analytics department courted top analysts from rival agencies and some impressive pieces of new business to boot, including the analytics agency of record assignment for all of Intel.

On the social front, Digitaria picked up accounts for Island Restaurants, Petco, Oualcomm. Royal Caribbean and most telling of all, the Los Angeles Tourism board, which skipped over L.A. shops to use San Diego based Digitaria.

Lastly, the agency has been a catalyst for growth at parent JWT. In addition to absorbing and transforming JWT's moribund Minneapolis office a year ago — doubling it year-over-year revenue — the digital unit has helped Jwт and WPP land prestigious new clients such as Rolex, Royal Caribbean, Lincoln Motors. D JOE MANDESE



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In the new marketing landscape, technology and creative have fused together with thunderous results. Content creation Content technology. Activation of Big Data insights. Social Media. A massively multiscreen marketplace. And most critically, the emergence of an enabled and ever-more-connected consumer - what SapientNitro Executive Director and Worldwide Chief Creative Officer Gaston Legorburu calls the "always on consumer."

All of these mega-trends and more have combined to transform the communications funnel from top to bottom. And marketers and agencies alike are furiously scrambling to crack this code. But SapientNitro isn't merely a response to the challenge of the new creativity/technology nexus - it was born from it.

The time couldn't be more right for a shop like Sapient Nitro (which, perhaps inevitably, calls its staffers "idea engineers"). Its inventive, technology-powered, awardaggregating marketing oeuvre contains example after example of novel ideas that use technology creatively or enhance creative technologically, or both.

"They are a contemporary



your phone

and pick up vour robot-

made coffee at the kiosk





The overarching idea that animates SapientNitro's work is a concept the agency calls STORYSCAPING.

company," notes MediaLink President and coo Wenda Harris Millard, "very much in lockstep with the new needs of the смо... an excellent combination of deep strategic and creative thinking and execution."

For its impressive success in creating effective campaigns for clients around the world in what is, essentially, a new commercial art form, SapientNitro is OMMA's Creative Agency of the Year for 2013.

The overarching idea that animates SapientNitro's work is a concept the agency calls storyscaping. SapientNitro Vice President, Global Chief Strategy Officer Darren "Daz" McColl explains: "Content is about tying stories to audiences. Technology is often about creating an experience for users. But the reality is the consumer wants and needs both ... stop thinking about audiences or users and think about people. When you do that, it opens up a whole new space

for interactions and experiences infused by a brand's story and its spirit because you're working from both angles."

"There are incredibly talented and smart people at every agency and most clients," adds Legorburu. "What they fight is muscle memory and legacy." In addition, "clients have a really hard time driving what's been learned from one discipline to another but that's what creates innovation. It really is about having a diverse group of people, more a think tank than a bunch of people that feel and look the same. That is the magic sauce. Create an environment conducive to connected thinking. cios hate the cmos and ad guys think the digital guys aren't any good

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but if you get all of those people to work together with a single purpose and one culture, amazing things happen."

Storyscaping manifests in all sorts of intriguing ways at the agency. SapientNitro won a Gold Lion at this year's Cannes International Festival of Creativity for RBS GetCash, a mobile app it created for the Royal Bank of Scotland that allows consumers to withdraw money from thousands of ATMs across the UK without having to use their bank cards. GetCash delivers a sixdigit, time-sensitive code that allows them to take their money out. The idea, created in partnership with Nile and Monitise Group, sprang from Sapient-Nitro's "always on" insight that people are far more likely to lose or leave home without their wallets than their mobile phones.

"Here's a brand talking about driving simplicity and being helpful, so we created a product that says 'hey, if you lose your wallet or your kid is at the mall and needs \$20, you could text

him some money," says Legorburu. "Go to an ATM and punch in a code. Is that really creative [as opposed to technology]? I think so. It's not technology and it's not media. It's the whole experience."

Also in 2013, the agency created an innovative secondscreen experience for ESPN X Games viewers, either at the

venue or at home, creating a Trick Tracker so viewers could watch every single trick while social networking.

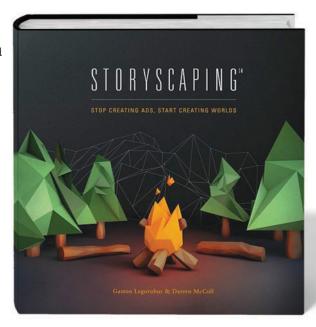
In an ongoing effort that began late last year, Sapient-Nitro designed a digital mirror for LensCrafters that snaps

Above: LensCrafters' MvLook technology: right: Storyscaping, by Legorburu and McColl

photos of customers so they can see how they'd look in glasses through their own prescription lenses. Called MyLook, the technology also allows users to collect opinions on their prospective new looks via Facebook.

The shop's emerging thought-leadership position will be bolstered in February with the launch of a book co-authored by Legorburu and McColl called Storyscaping: Stop Making Ads and Start Creating Worlds. Which is only fitting, considering Legorburu's contention that "you should hire an agency for their future, not their past."

His writing partner is confident that SapientNitro's future is bright. "Clients are starting to see the need for a more connected approach, for agencies like us that can offer everything from brand strategies to e-commerce platforms," concludes McColl. "I believe that if it doesn't exist, we can build it." O IACK FEUER



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FOR MANHATTAN-BASED MRY, OMMA'S AGENCY OF THE YEAR: SOCIAL, 2013 could have been a year of just getting the internal alphabet straight. Earlier this year, the Publicis Groupe shop saw through a merger that was big stakes for a company of only 200 people: swallowing up a bigger, and more corporate, fish — the U.S. operations of LBi. The 300-employee LBi operation, best known for its work in back-end specialties like CRM, might have seemed a laborious fit for the cheeky MRY, an agency that until 2012 had been known as — no one over 30 need apply — Mr. Youth.

But the notion of letting mere merger machinations slow down progress seems foreign to a new media born-and-bred agency like MRY. As founder/CEO Matt Britton observes, "This is not an industry for slow-moving, fat players." And so it was that even as MRY was incorporating LBi into its operations, it never broke stride in winning business in 2013 and creating the kind of data-driven, socially-infused, brand-building it is known for. If anything, the merger of MRY and LBi made it easier for the shop to expand on its mission to build "the right mix of art and science," as Britton describes its approach. "We were able to put a great mix of talent together," he says.

Its 2013 wins include global social agency-of-record for Blackberry, National Grid and Newell Rubbermaid, and digital AOR for Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol and Jagermeister. The agency also built the new ecommerce site for Moleskine. and is developing u.s. student strategy for Spotify. The new clients are worthy editions to a roster that already includes Coca-Cola, Visa and Adobe, brands that demonstrate the agency's cred with a broad range of categories. Let the oldline agencies create Super Bowl spots and hope they go viral;

MRY wants to seamlessly weld social data and big ideas into earned media that has impact.

But in talking to Britton, who started MRY in 2002 as a youth marketing agency, it's clear he equally values the agency's intramural branding, the efforts that win over employees and bring them, and clients, together. The agency sponsored what it billed as the world's first Vine-a-thon in September, bringing together emerging Vine Stars with clients and staff. The goal, says Britton, "was to test the limits of what we can do on Vine."

Another, more focused, effort? MRY's in-house barista app, which allows employees to order their lattes from their smartphones, for pick-up when they're ready from the shop's barista/yoga instructor.

Vine-a-thons and barista apps are the kinds of catchy initiatives that perhaps obscure what powers MRY behind-thescenes, and that's analytics. "Analytics come at the beginning of our process, the middle of our process and the end of the process," Britton says.

One such piece of creative/ science social media perfection was its work for Coca-Cola during the London Olympics, for which it won "Digital Marketing Innovator of the Year" at Mashable's 2013 Mashies. The initiative, "Move to the Beat," took recordings of the sounds made by athletes — curated into an Olympic anthem by the British DJ Mark Ronson — and essentially turned the music's



"At Visa, we believe in developing campaigns and ideas that are 'social at the core.' We chose MRY as our partner in this effort because they are a pioneer in break-through social media campaigns. Matt and his team have helped consumers engage with our brand in new and innovative ways."

ANTONIO LUCIO, Global Chief Brand Officer, Visa Inc.

components over to the youth market so crucial to Coke's business. By building an engine that could turn each user's Facebook activity into a distinctive, custom beat and they could create a video integrating Olympic-themed activity with each user's Facebook photos, the campaign achieved both personalization and reach;



3.5 million songs were created and there were 25 million video views.

A 2013 campaign for Visa #goinsix — took the whole concept behind Vine and turned it into a multi-platform social experience aimed at making consumers see the card as their gateway to great living. (In reality, the "six" of the hashtag is a nod to the sad fact that, as a video about the effort explains, "brands have just 6.5 seconds to make their point before losing people's interest.")

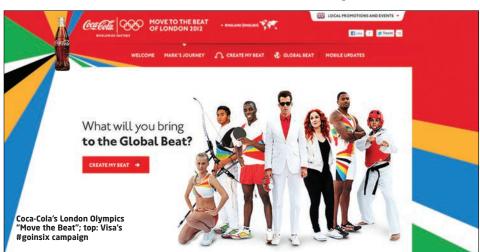
The resulting campaign moved across all of Visa's social platforms, always incorporating six into the experience, be it a Vine featuring six quick video clips, a six-word tweet, or

a Facebook post of six pictures. With the help of influencers, the campaign exploded to 284 million earned impressions, which, as MRY's video about it points out, was more than five times as many impressions as the client's most recent NFL campaign ... all accomplished for 1/18th of the media spend.

The comparisons MRY makes to TV are not incidental. Britton is well aware of the continuing sway TV has over advertising's decision-makers. "Everything is still around the 30-second spot," he says. "Everything else is kind of just scraps."

MRY's goal is to leverage media as it really is today - a set of constantly shifting paid, owned and earned channels all continually spitting out data — and work it to maximum effect. In fact. Britton pooh-poohs the notion that real-time is the trend of the year. He is looking at the future, namely using analytics predictively to figure out not just where the target market is, but where it's going next. "The data that's being created right now is making advertising so much more powerful," he says, "because now you have the power of context."

CATHARINE P. TAYLOR





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FOR MEDIAVEST, 2013 WAS A YEAR OF BIG CLIENT WINS, big

new industry partnerships and a relentless pursuit of new insights that helped the agency and clients better understand the forces driving consumer behavior. For those accomplishments the shop has been named OMMA magazine's Media Planning and Buying Agency of the Year.

Both new and existing clients bought in to the agency's "human experience" approach to market. The shop boosted revenues by 30%, half of which were the result of existing clients adding new services such as social, mobile, content marketing and search, among other capabilities.

As MediaVest CEO Brian Terkelsen put it, "new clients and existing clients need to futureproof their businesses. That's what organic stands for."

The company also entered into several new major partner-

ships with key industry players like Twitter. Axciom and Share-This in a bid to keep clients on the cutting edge of advances in data analytics, social media advertising and new metrics.

The agency believes that the future of television "is the marriage between TV and Twitter." A partnership struck earlier this year with the social network provides MediaVest clients with access to prime inventory and Twitter innovations. The companies also agreed to create a social TV lab and to conduct

"in-tweet" mobile surveys to generate real-time insights.

Terkelsen says the deal is "tremendously important" given the learnings the agency is likely to glean about the social media process. He offers a plumbing analogy to explain the significance. "In a bathroom people see all the shiny fixtures outside the wall and that's what 99% of us understand about plumbing." The Twitter deal, he added, gets the agency "inside the wall" to better understand "how all the pipes fit together."

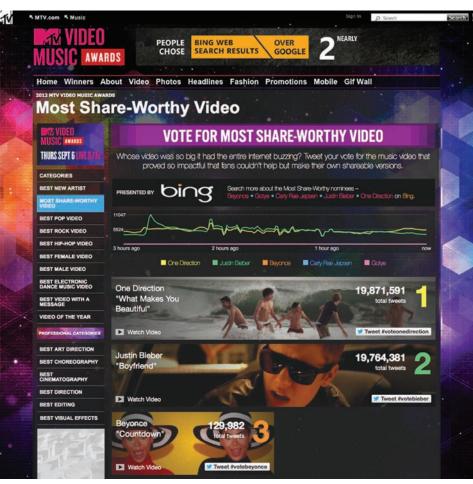
The agency won lots of new business, including the \$1 billionplus America Honda Motor media planning and buying assignment, the \$245 million Mondelez International u.s. media account. and media duties for Nike's Converse brand, among other wins.



In prepping for the Honda pitch earlier this year, the agency redefined the auto purchase funnel, having discovered a critical need to pay as much attention to consumers postpurchase as pre.

It's a remarkable insight that along with a turbo-charged digital strategy helped steer Honda onto the MediaVest client roster. The client said going into the review that it intended to devote significantly more resources to digital than it had in the past. "We're helping them become the digital marketer they want to be," said Terkelsen.

Content and social are two of the most powerful forces that marketers can muster to engage consumers and MediaVest creatively exploited both areas to client advantage over the past



The last hours of voting for the MTV VMAs' Most Share-Worthy Video; following page, P&G's lifestyle website mom.me

year. Case in point is a campaign the agency developed for client Microsoft.

The agency created the "Most Shareworthy Video Award" for MTV's Music Video Awards program, turning social media shares into votes for popular artist's music videos. Fans cast 54 million tweet-votes in 6 days, showing how Microsoft's Bing is the "most social search engine." The VMA broadcast became the most commented-on cable program of the year with Bing playing a visible role in the conversation.

And the agency was part of the "war room" team of Oreo roster shops that gathered to monitor social conversations during the Super Bowl, which led to the client's now famous "you can dunk in the dark" tweet in response to the blackout that occurred in the stadium during the game. According to Media-Vest the tweet drove 175 million earned impressions, or \$8.6 million in media value, or nearly three times what the brand paid for a spot in the game.

MediaVest content unit LiquidThread continued to drive value for clients last year. The agency estimates that a branded content execution on behalf of Procter & Gamble's CoverGirl with TV show America's Top Model drove \$40 million in sales and was the number three driver of brand equity.

The agency also created a lifestyle website for P&G called mom.me in partnership with BermanBraun that is now being used by the client as a model for developing lifestyle-based

content platforms worldwide.

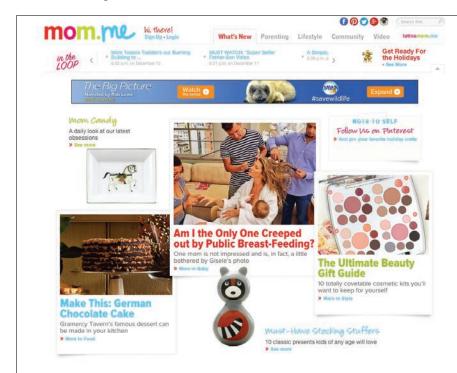
"Content and content marketing is the only way in a precisionbased marketing world that we are going to have a high-touch relationship with consumers," said Terkelsen.

A year ago at the company's annual holiday gathering Terkelsen asked staffers to "put your brave on" and embrace a handful of principals that would help drive superior product and service to clients. And the staff delivered big-time. Terkelsen said. "I'm so proud of what they've accomplished."

At this year's gathering, said Terkelsen, he's asking the troops to be "all in." That means embracing and consuming client products from driving Hondas to wearing Converse sneakers. It also means knowing the agency's offerings1 inside out. "If they don't know what a DSP is they've got to get it on because we're there now and we're not waiting around for people to figure out what those things are."

Next year, he added, technology and Millennials are high on his priority list. On the technology front, for example, "someone has to figure out the back-end" of the agency's approach to programmatic buying which he describes as having gone "from a small fraction [of agency activity] to beginning to become more meaningful." More broadly, he added, technology leadership will drive efficiency and productivity for clients and the agency. "We need to be a little bit more of a software company," he said.

His other big focus for next year: making MediaVest a "Millennial ready company." Like technology, the millennial issue is something the industry needs to contemplate, Terkelsen said. Millennials care about issues like what a company stands for and its contribution to society. "They might not value money over work-life integration. We need to become a company where these 1.8 billion Millennials want to work " O STEVE MCCLELLAN





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TO HEAR MOST AGENCY HEADS TELL IT. FIRMS MUST BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT IN THE LIVES OF THEIR CLIENTS.

If that means opening a satellite office in East Jabib to accommodate the client recently relocated to the region, well, so be it. Serve the client, at all costs, always. Perpetually be at the ready in the event the client, say, needs some late-night handholding, or perhaps needs to borrow some flour.

That's why it sounds borderline sacrilegious when Rockfish founder and CEO Kenny Tomlin talks about the decision to open offices in Atlanta, Austin and Chicago during the last year. "We're talentdriven," he states succinctly. "We don't open offices around clients as much as we do around people. The real reason we're there now is because we knew some good people in the area and knew we could build some great teams."

None of that is to say that client service is a secondary concern for Tomlin; indeed, he's quick

to point out numerous clients in proximity to the three new office locations. And clearly clients buy into what Rockfish is selling: 30 new ones signed up in the last year alone, among them Mizuno and Intercontinental Hotel Group, and these additions fueled a hiring spree that jumped head count by 100, up to 250. But the people-first approach is consistent with the Rockfish ethos, which prizes empowerment and entrepreneurial spirit and rejects all things hierarchical.

"We don't have middle management. We don't

have people whose job it is to tell other people what to do. Everybody at Rockfish is working," he says.

Since its birth eight years ago, Rockfish has been lauded as one of the marketing world's elite digital design firms. Without question, the company remains true to that initial core competence; its roster still includes clients who avail themselves of that expertise and that expertise alone. But over the last few years, Rockfish has evolved into something that hews less to the traditional agency model (or the digital agency model, whatever that is) and more to a start-up mentality.

Take a look at the types of assignments Rockfish has handled during the last year. It collaborated with Walmart on SPARC (Supplier Portal Allowing Retail Coverage), a tool designed to help the retail giant make smarter real-time shelf-stocking decisions. For Sam's Club, Rockfish worked on a project

designed to drive sales via mobile devices. On behalf of United Health Foundation, it repurposed data visualization techniques as a tool to raise awareness of health issues.

Those go far beyond the usual scope of a digital agency, as do several of the projects hatched in the company's Rockfish Labs incubator. The firm launched YouEarnedIt, an employee-recognition platform, a few years ago as Rockfish Rewards. "We wanted to make sure people knew they were appreciated, but to democratize that recognition. The idea was that the recognition would come from all parts and places of the company, not just from me or any of the office leaders," Tomlin explains. The program proved enough of an internal success that Rockfish redubbed it YouEarnedIt and, this year, spun it off into a company of its own. It now has offices in Austin and counts 13



full-time employees on its rolls.

The growth of YouEarnedIt and other ideas incubated within Rockfish Labs vindicates the firm's approach to 21st century marketing. Tomlin believes that agencies such as Rockfish shouldn't just dabble in the creation of intellectual property; they should make it a priority. "Our competitors are less and less other agencies than the start-up community," he says. "These nimble start-ups are innovating so

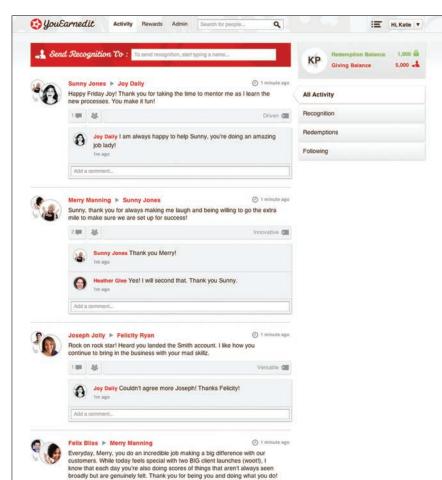
much, especially in terms of branding and marketing. It's where a lot of the best thinking is taking place. It's important for us to be in the game."

In a nutshell, that's the challenge Rockfish faces in the months and years ahead: how to straddle that line. On one side, there are existing clients with more traditional needs. On the other, there's the entrepreneurial itch many of the agency's people can't wait to scratch.

"We're strong technically, but we're also strong with strategy and creative. There's lots of value we can add for any company," Tomlin says. He then answers the next question before it's asked: "Yeah, sometimes focus can be a challenge."

Still, don't expect Rockfish to slow down anytime soon. Tomlin says the agency has already identified staff for a soon-to-open office in the Pacific Northwest — likely in Portland, Ore. — and international expansion (at least one European market, maybe more) is high on the to-do list. Even as Tomlin discusses the future, he sounds a little awed by his company's continuing evolution.

"I remember day one of Rockfish. I was sitting in a coffee shop with my laptop, doing a project for a relative. It was so intimidating, it really was," he recalls. "We've been really fortunate. We'll never take any of it for granted." • LARRY DOBROW





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SUCCESS MEANS DOING BETTER THAN BEFORE OR ACHIEVING SOMETHING DESIRED. In business, some call it winning. This year, San Diego-based search agency Covario can boast it won the OMMA Search Agency of The Year title for a third consecutive time, even though it made a long list of changes to the organization.

The most recent change came in November when Russ Mann, Covario founder and CEO became chairman of the board: and Jeff Johnson and Mike Gullaksen, Co-ceos. Claire Long, cfo/coo, also stepped into the executive team, helping to make daily decisions.

Amidst the shuffle. Covario built a content marketing team that works with third-party social media experts, as agencies began focusing more on creating content for specific audience segments. The team continuously refines messages across the Web to align with audiences by increasing the odds of discovery.

That thinking attracted former McCann ceo Nick Brien. He joined Covario's board of directors. Former Kodak смо Jeffrey Hayzlett became an advisory board member.

A slew of new clients also came on board. Not just in the United States, but worldwide. The company continues to expand internationally, growing its staff in Tokyo, London, Singapore, Sao Paulo, Beijing and Toronto to support global assignments from existing clients like Lenovo, Intel, Guthy-Renker, Bank of America, and T-Mobile. As part of its growing presence in Asia-Pacific the company set up a dedicated office in China.

The global staff of more than 200 search and content marketing professionals manages

more than 500 client projects worldwide. Execs estimate Covario should earn double-digit revenue growth again this year, in part, by supporting several new clients such as Sony, Jenny Craig, among others.

In fact, privately-held Covario should close the year managing in aggregate about \$200 million for clients, up from more than \$150 million in 2012, and \$100 million in 2011.

Despite the growth, the company experienced challenges in 2013. Two clients cut their budgets, said Jeff Johnson, co-ceo. "We overcame this by winning new business largely through existing client referrals, which led to client diversification and rev-



Covario's new Co-CEOs, jeff johnson, and left, Mike Gullaksen

enue growth," he said.

Maintaining growth remains one of the major challenges for companies on top. Mike Gullaksen, co-CEO, said maintaining the "rapid pace of double-digit growth" as search evolves becomes one of Covario's challenges in 2014.

Growth requires quality of service. The company uses a third-party Net Promoter Score (NPS) survey to monitor its

commitment to clients. This year the scores fluctuated between the

high 50s and 60s, the company's highest ever. Client customer satisfaction pushed the numbers well above the industry standard, both for agencies and for B2B companies.

Customer satisfaction can become a catch phrase, but Covario employees take the meaning more seriously. Meeting certain standards, company executives audit processes and commitments twice yearly to measure employee relationship with its clients. The NPS results contribute to annual financial compensation, so all employees take a stake in customer satisfaction.

The findings access the economic impact of Covario's work in 2013 with a direct-to-consumer paid search client. The study reveals working with Covario helped to achieve 60% improvement in order volume from non-branded paid search, 10% rise in click-through rates, and a 4% increase in conversion rates, while overall spending fell as much as 15%, and cost of orders rose as much as 8.5%.



cord revenue from the Google Display Network. In six month, the dynamic retargeting produced 300% higher clickthrough rates, 37% lower costper-conversion, 13% higher return on investment and 16% higher conversion rate.

Campmor isn't an anomaly. In just 90 days for Sony, Covario completely restructured the company's paid search campaign strategy and implemented seven national product awareness programs. In return Sony garnered 25% increase in return on investment, 66% increase in ROI for product listing campaigns, and 100% increase in click-through rate compared with a two-year average.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION CAN BECOME A CATCH PHRASE, BUT COVARIO EMPLOYEES TAKE THE MEANING MORE SERIOUSLY.

Increasing brand awareness, Covario's search experts tapped into Google's Dynamic Remarketing Beta Program in its infancy, giving Campmor an early advantage on the Google Display Network. Campmor, an ecommerce recreational equipment site struggling to transition from a catalog-based retailer, faced dwindling brand searches after reducing its annual catalogs from seven to two.

CAMPMOR

The campaign relied on keyword contextual and interest-category targeting, while using remarketing to target non-purchasers. Prior visitors to Campmor.com see the company's ads on other

sites across the Google Display Network for products they previously viewed while visiting the Web site. The retailer can target consumers who abandoned a shopping cart or viewed specific pages, for example.

Tags supporting retargeting allow Campmor to segment consumer lists based on preferences, geographic location and more. During the 2012 holiday season, the strategy let the company create nearly 100 new dynamic lists to drive re-

The average order value rose 25% year over year, the highest in more than two years.

It gets better. For Lenovo, Covario delivered more than 2,000 page of optimized code, developed hundreds of new landing pages, and created 10 templates resulting in a 258% increase in searches landing on page one for non-branded search queries, 84% year-overvear increase in organic search traffic and 40% increase in ecommerce sales from organic search traffic. <a>IAURIE SULLIVAN



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