

## Live From Worldwide AdForum, New York, Day 3

### Day 3, Wednesday

Well after a two day agenda more packed than my overweight luggage, I had high expectations for day 3. Two highlights walking into it had been the presentation from digital shop Sapient where a bunch of thoroughly bright 'folks' (we are in New York) wowed us with their holistic online/offline work, and a taster of the 190 agencies under the DAS banner (Diversified Agency Services); a very nice 'pick and mix' model of smaller specialized agencies with some very likeable and passionate 'chicos and bananas'.

So day three began with a presentation from Cleve Langton, author of the book 'New Business Lessons from Madison Avenue'. Do you believe that in the new business process, agencies should 'ignore the request for credentials?' Or that 'clients buy teams not agencies?' We generally didn't either, but it was great stimulus to get a healthy debate cooking.

Next came the real highlight: R/GA. Their point is made in their trademarked tagline 'The agency of the digital age' – a small but critical distinction from 'a digital agency'. These guys, ie the darn bright cookie Bob Greenberg, looks at the transformation of the analog world to a digital one in a way that in years to come might just have him sharing the hall of fame with the likes of Bernbach and Ogilvy. Big call? Maybe, but their unleashing of the techno geeks out of the dungeons and into the brand teams is making some very sexy stuff happen. As agencies and clients lag in structuring their people and processes to genuinely deal with and maximize the advent of digital, R/GA are already living and breathing a model that is working for them. Worlds away from the 3 minute mood tapes of pretty online extensions and a welcome move indeed.

So leaving that tecchy session feeling somewhat like a 1988 Amstrad64 myself, it was nice to be on safer territory with a presentation on financial performance and global strategy by Michael Roth (Chairman and CEO of Interpublic Group). This charming man braved the beleaguered years of 05-06, turning IPG around to become a group that in 07-08 shows the greatest organic revenue growth of the top four holding companies. On how and where digital fits into the picture, Michael says 'our mantra is open architecture', and despite continued separation of P&Ls, an incentive scheme for intra-group collaboration could just prove to be a different way of growing their 'digital digits'.

And just like that it was cocktail hour again. It feels like we're graciously accommodating cocktail hour for every one of the 14 countries that the group is representing but no one is complaining. Out loud. So off on the school bus we go to meet Euro RSCG and the man whose reputation precedes him; David Jones, CEO, for a cheeky Veuve or two. With their strong future focus, and recent acquisitions of Cake (a rather spiffy Brand Entertainment company) and The:Hours, a record label – yes a record label, plain cool huh?! - they gave the likes of consultants something to really get their jazz hands out about. That's if the complimentary iPod Touch wasn't doing so already...

So three days down and we've seen an amazing breadth of talent, work and cultures. Wall Street might be collapsing around us here in NY but this industry's not taking its cardboard box home just yet.