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Jan 15, 2008

Ogilvy & Mather tops ad agency rankings again

Firm retains title on its good number of new client signings, slew of awards last year

By Chua Hian Hou

OGILVY & Mather (O&M) has defied industry expectations to win the top spot of a closely watched annual ranking of advertising agencies, its second straight win.

Consistently strong performances across the board have delivered O&M the honour after it scooped up numerous new clients and several top industry awards.

And O&M has pledged to 'stay hungry' despite the back-to-back wins in the annual ST-R3 agency rankings.

Advertising industry consulting firm R3, which compiles the rankings, released last year's results to The Straits Times yesterday.

Last year, O&M clinched a good number of new clients, including Kodak, IBM and Unilever.

It also scooped up a slew of awards such as the Creative Circle Award's top agency award.

This, said R3 principal Goh Shu Fen, was the reason the firm kept its top spot in the annual rankings, which are now in their fourth year.

O&M won first place in 2006, after jumping to the top spot from third in 2005.

O&M Singapore group chairman Stephen Mangham was delighted by the win and pledged to try to 'stay hungry', so that the firm would stay on top in the notoriously competitive industry.

Ms Goh said the agency that O&M pipped for top place, TBWA, had been widely expected to claim the pole position, because it had secured the most new business deals of any agency in Singapore.

An agency's ability to secure new deals and keep its existing clients is the biggest determinant of the winner, at 40 per cent of the score.

The other factors include the number of international awards won, which makes up 25 per cent of the score, while the number of local awards picked up makes up the remaining 35 per cent.

TBWA's key wins last year include accounts with Singapore Airlines and integrated resort operator Resorts World.

The headline-grabbing new business deals - which Ms Goh describe as 'the best indicator of an agency's vitality and attractiveness in the market', propelled TBWA from its ninth-place finish in 2006 to its runner-up position last year.

What derailed TBWA was its 'relatively poorer performance in international awards', compared with O&M.

Any agency that wants to claim the coveted top place, she said, must 'score consistently in more than one area'.

TBWA managing director Dan Paris was not too disappointed, though, as the agency had soared from a lowly ninth spot to second.

'Jumping seven places is pretty good - by any measure,' he said, adding that the agency has every intention of gunning for the gold this year.

Ms Goh said an agency to watch out for this year is Euro RSCG.

The agency did not make it to the top 10 in 2005 and 2006, but jumped up the charts to sixth in last year's rankings, thanks to an impressive client list that includes soft-drink giant Coca-Cola.

And over the last year, Ms Goh said, the company has been 'upping its ante on creative firepower'. For instance, it hired rival agency Leo Burnett's deputy creative director, Mr Victor Ng, and its head of art, Mr Jon Loke.

Mr Mangham declined to say how he thought O&M would do this year as this would be 'arrogant... I have huge respect for our competitors, but none of them worry me as such'.

Media agencies, which help companies plan media buying and strategies, are also ranked by R3.

The winner last year, for two years running now, was OMD Singapore.

In second place was PHD Singapore, which was not placed in the top 10 in 2005 or 2006. MEC kept its No. 3 placing.

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