

After 3 Years of Rapid Growth, Agency Advoc8 Goes Through Layoffs

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Advoc8, a Washington, D.C. experiential and creative agency which was named one of Adweek's Fastest Growing Agencies based on its growth from its 2016 launch through 2018, has gone through a round of layoffs impacting around 25% of its staff, which it characterizes as a restructuring.

Advoc8 declined to comment or answer questions aside from the following statement:

"As Adweek recently acknowledged, Advoc8 has experienced rapid growth. That means constantly evaluating our business model, existing capabilities and skill sets against our growth strategy. As part of that exercise, we've restructured several teams to most efficiently align with the company we have grown into, and to stay one step ahead of evolving client needs and industry trends. As we recompose our teams, we've eliminated some positions and added others. The decision to part ways with such talented colleagues is a difficult one, and we are incredibly grateful for their contributions."

Advoc8 laid off around 10 employees in recent months, according to sources with knowledge of the agency. Approximately 10 other employees, including one executive producer and one creative director, also resigned from the agency within months of the layoffs, sources told Adweek. Advoc8 currently employs about 30 people.

The layoffs and departures come after several years of growth at the agency. Still, sources familiar with the agency told Adweek that Advoc8's financial stability had begun to suffer from its pace of expansion.

Advoc8 launched in 2016 and grew in large part due to its experiential events for clients, including CNN and Google, with its founders also leveraging experiences and relationships from their political backgrounds. Founder and CEO John Leggitino served as director of production for Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaign and later worked on production partnerships with the DNC and TV broadcasters in 2016.

Adweek interviewed five sources familiar with the agency's operations, each of whom asked not to be identified by name or affiliation. In describing the roots of Advoc8's recent financial troubles, they cited a perceived lack of managerial oversight and strategic planning, along with overextension of financial resources. These issues reportedly date back to the beginning of 2019.

Sources told Adweek the agency's financial problems began to manifest through office maintenance issues, pest-control problems and past-due payments to vendors.

Agency leadership reportedly held a meeting in which they assured Advoc8 employees its finances wouldn't necessitate staffing cuts, but the layoffs were announced two weeks later.

As Advoc8 alluded to in its statement, the layoffs come at a time of transition for the agency, as it seeks to evolve its focus and expand its footprint.

This year Advoc8 expressed a desire to pivot to "social impact and issue advocacy," as the agency characterizes itself on the Advoc8 website. It has been unable, however, to exit ongoing relationships with conservative-leaning clients such as GOP-aligned strategy firm Targeted Victory, which sources told

Adweek led to confusion as to the agency's present identity and focus, adding that these ongoing relationships also made certain employees uncomfortable.

Advoc8 also seems to have some aspirations to expand its geographical footprint to the midwest with a Chicago office. While this has been a goal for some time, the extent of the agency's operations in the city, sources told Adweek, currently involve one full-time employee in a shared workspace.

<https://www.adweek.com/agencies/after-3-years-of-rapid-growth-agency-advoc8-goes-through-layoffs/>