EXCLUSIVE: Layoffs Hit WPP Media Agencies Days After Reports of GroupM Rebrand

Layoffs at WPP's media buying unit have hit, just days after WPP reportedly rebranded GroupM as WPP Media, to unify its media agency operations, multiple employees told ADWEEK.

ADWEEK was unable to confirm the extent of the cuts.

A GroupM spokesperson declined to comment.

While employees had expected leadership consolidation and operational restructuring, multiple employees told ADWEEK there was no warning that layoffs would follow just days later.

GroupM CEO Brian Lesser acknowledged impending layoffs in an internal memo this week, according to a report by Ad Age.

These cuts appear to span multiple WPP media agencies, according to multiple people.

"My bosses texted me right afterward, saying, 'Hey, we had no idea. I'm so sorry. No one informed us of this,'" said one person who was laid off.

That staffer joined a meeting on May 7 at 3 World Trade Center, for an invite labeled "Connect."

"I was like, 'Okay, well, this probably isn't great,'" this person told ADWEEK. The walls were glass, and this person recognized an HR executive sitting in the room. "I walk inside, and then they say, like it's just business as usual, that my position no longer aligns with the strategic needs or business needs of the company."

The person asked to say goodbye to their team, but was told to leave immediately.

There was time for a final goodbye. Before being “kicked out,” this person stood by what was once their desk, and told colleagues: “Hey guys, I’m being laid off. They’re not letting me talk to you guys. Sorry it’s so quick, but, you know, pleasure to work with you guys.”

A second recently laid-off employee described a workplace filled with silence and anxiety.

“I’ve been joking with people that it’s kind of like the Soviet Union, where people are getting disappeared, and you’re just supposed to pretend it didn’t happen,” the person said.

Both former employees, from two different WPP agencies, told ADWEEK they were immediately locked out of their email accounts following the meetings. Without an official list or internal communication about who had been let go, they discovered others had been impacted only through bounce-back emails.

A third source who was not laid off told ADWEEK that their agency also suffered layoffs hitting “at every level—associates, managing partners, directors,” and that the agency’s HR lead and chief strategy officer are no longer with the company.

The former employees believe the layoffs are tied to recent account losses—including Coca-Cola—and broader dissatisfaction with leadership.

A fourth source familiar with WPP Media did not believe the layoffs were mostly due to client losses. The person suggested

that the media unit had grown too big and hadn’t changed because GroupM has long been the industry’s top media-buying agency. This person said the layoffs are meant to help WPP Media become more software- and AI-driven.

But that’s little comfort to the employees who were surprised by how suddenly they were let go.

“I think it’s crazy how, just because of title, they’re not kept in the loop,” said the second source.

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