Nivea Chooses Publicis Groupe to Help Transform 107-Year-Old Brand

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Publicis Groupe has been named as global agency and marketing transformation partner for Nivea.

To service the account, Publicis has created a bespoke agency, One Touch, that crosses over into 40 markets with major hubs in New York, São Paulo, Cape Town, Dubai, Mumbai, Shanghai, Bangkok, Moscow and Hamburg, Germany. Publicis will begin work on Nivea in January and will serve the entirety of the portfolio, including suncare, antiperspirants, lotions and more.

“Publicis Groupe has demonstrated very strong skills in strategy development and in leading inspiring, persuasive creative ideas. We are convinced that we have found the right partner to jointly accelerate Nivea’s growth through consumer-centric marketing excellence,” said Asim Naseer, Nivea’s chief marketing officer.

The 107-year-old Nivea, like other brands, was looking less for specialist agencies and more for ones with a comprehensive approach, according to Justin Billingsley, CEO of Publicis Groupe DACH.

“We’ve got more and more clients moving towards single, joined-up customer journey focused solutions,” he said. “And when you’re a scaled client like Mercedes-Benz, Samsung or some of [our] other clients, we can create a bespoke agency

that solves a business problem."

Billingsley noted that in the U.S., the new agency will pull talent from Digitas, Rokkan and Leo Burnett.

While the industry is looking more closely at how specialist and bespoke agencies can perform (especially in light of the changing fortunes of DDB's We Are Unlimited), Billingsley said it's crucial for talent not to focus their efforts on one brand.

"Just because something is bespoke doesn't mean it's full of 100% dedicated people. We need to attract diverse talent. We sometimes need specialist talent, so people shouldn't see a bespoke agency as this kind of hidden away cave where there are only people who work on one client," Billingsley said, also noting that the agency's dedicated Mercedes-Benz unit started just 18 months ago and has doubled in size.

"What we've learned with bespoke is to make sure you maintain a fluid approach to resourcing," he said. "The world's greatest talent doesn't want to wake up working on one client. And that's just the truth."

Nivea is the top brand in the category; yet, according to Billingsley, the company is adopting a startup mentality in the face of significant competition coming from incumbents like Procter & Gamble and Unilever, and a vast ecosystem of direct-to-consumer brands.

"It doesn't feel like a 107-year-old company," he said. "I've worked with Mercedes-Benz, which is 119 years old, and Coca-Cola, which is 122 years old. I'm used to big companies with heritage, and [Nivea] are hungry, they're innovative, and they've taken a brave step. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can do together."

Nivea, owned by parent company Beiersdorf, chose Publicis over WPP, Omnicom and Accenture. The brand was with FCB Global and

had been with some form of the agency throughout its history. Earlier this year, FCB resigned from the business over alleged remarks about some work pitched by the agency.

Germany-based Beiersdorf had never pitched Nivea's global business before. Publicis will handle all matters related to the brand aside from media. In the U.S., OMD won the brand's media business in May 2018. Beiersdorf spent 1.53 billion euros on global advertising, trade marketing and more last year.

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