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Group M Combines Assets to Make 'World's Largest Search Specialist'

WPP's Media Shops Will Each Have Their Own Search Service

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NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- Coming soon to Group M: Account teams led by search specialists?

Group M, the parent company of WPP Group's media assets, is laying the groundwork for such a possibility by consolidating its search operations around the world. The move will create what the company says will be the world's largest search specialist within a holding company.

The operation will combine Group M's existing search assets, including the search unit of 24/7 Real Media (which WPP bought last May); Outrider, an organic search provider; Catalyst, an organic and paid search specialist; and Quisma, a paid search agency.

The global search operation will total about 400 people.

"Very few service providers in search can claim to deliver in multiple geographies and in conjunction with other media capabilities," said Rob Norman, CEO Group M Interaction Worldwide.

Search aids other marketing tactics

Search is by far the biggest online advertising sector. In 2007, advertisers spent more than \$8.6 billion on search, according to eMarketer, which expects that figure to nearly double by 2011 to almost \$16.6 billion. Additionally, because search is so closely tied to consumer intent, it is in a position to help judge the effectiveness of and inform other marketing tactics.

Ultimately, each Group M agency will operate a search service that is fully integrated with the agency (MindShare Search, MediaCom Search, Maxus Search and Mediaedge:cia Search), but they will all benefit from the technology investments, training programs and back-office functions of Group M.

Wherever possible, Group M will adopt the Decide DNA bid and campaign management tool that it acquired as part of the 24/7 Real Media deal. In addition to its search platform, 24/7 has a particularly strong paid search business in Asia; at the time of its purchase in April 2007, 24/7 was said to have doubled WPP's worldwide search business.

This consolidation follows an April 2007 move in which Group M elevated Outrider, a search-marketing company acquired in 2001, to Group M from its position in Mediaedge:cia.