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British Airways pulls digital media from Agency.com

Airline reorganises its digital agency roster, moving its media business to ZenithOptimedia and affiliate work to Neo@Ogilvy

By Suzanne Bearne

British Airways has consolidated its digital media account into ZenithOptimedia following a review of its digital agency roster.

Publicis Groupe-owned ZenithOptimedia has been tasked with handling the airline's digital media planning/buying in addition to that for offline media.

The review also sees digital agency Neo@Ogilvy take responsibility for BA's UK affiliate programme and media attribution business, to investigate how the airline can better optimise its channel mix.

Neo@Ogilvy, which currently handles BA's affiliate program in other regions, has been appointed to enable BA to manage a global affiliate

programme with one agency partner.

The realignment comes as a blow to Agency.com, which previously handled BA's digital planning/buying and UK affiliate accounts.

The interactive marketing agency, which has held the accounts since 1996, retains its role as BA's lead digital agency and will work on forthcoming digital projects including London 2012 and BA's community site Metrotwin.

£1.3m

spent on online media by BA, December 2007 to November 2008 source: Nielsen Media Research



Upgrade to
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Chris Davies, BA's digital marketing manager, said, "We undertook the review to see where we could gain better efficiencies. We have a number of agencies working for us so it was an opportunity for us to get the most out of our current activity."

He said consolidating digital media at ZenithOptimedia offered cost savings. "There's the potential for better rates because it buys both together," he said.

"Agency.com will focus on the creative and strategy side, working on digital creatives and executions. We're playing to everyone's strengths," Davies added.

BA retained Bigmouthmedia as its search agency last September (**nma.co.uk** 19 September 2008).

breaking news

EMI's Simon Gunning joins BBC Future Media

Simon Gunning, former senior VP of digital at EMI, has been appointed acting director of BBC Future Media & Technology, responsible for BBC marketing, communications and audiences. He takes on the temporary role to replace David Bainbridge, who left in December to join ad agency Miles Calcraft Briginshaw Duffy. Gunning was previously director of Entertainment and Games at Yahoo Europe.

GT cuts 12 jobs after losing Audi account

Digital agency GT has made 12 redundancies as it struggles to recover from the loss of its Audi business. The agency has been forced into a consultation process with staff to ensure it's best positioned to manage the loss of the key car manufacturer account. GT denied speculation that it had also lost the Aviva account too, claiming the business was still with the agency but was dormant.

BBC teen brand rolls out interactive drama in major mobile trial

Proper Messy will be broadcast on Bebo, BBC 2 and via mobile as the broadcaster explores teenage viewing experiences

By Alex Farber

BBC Switch is preparing to roll out an interactive drama series that will be broadcast across Bebo, on BBC 2 and via mobile phones.

Proper Messy, the weekly series from the Corporation's teenage

brand, will feature teenagers Jake, Imogen and their group of friends in the lead-up to a Valentine's Day Ball. Produced by cross-platform content producer Conker Media, it's aimed at teenagers and will run for six episodes from 24 January.



The 90-second episodes will be available to view via Bebo, the BBC Switch site and broadcast on BBC 2.

The series will also incorporate an interactive mobile element, which the BBC is trialling. The Corporation is looking to sign up 5,000 teenagers to the trial, which will be managed by agency Mobile Interactive Group.

Subscribers will receive real-time SMS messages, images and videos on their mobiles, sent from the main characters. Their responses will be incorporated into future episodes.

Geoffrey Goodwin, head of BBC Switch, said the interactive series was being used to test viewers' mobile TV habits. "It's designed to explore and innovate in the mobile space. We want to drive a wider mobile viewing experience," he said.

He added that the target audience accepted watching short-form video clips. "Teenagers are compulsive users of mobile and the technology has changed immensely in the last two years," said Goodwin.

Proper Messy is the latest in a raft of online and mobile drama series content to be launched in recent months (see page 4).

PROPER MESSY will launch this weekend

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