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# OMG

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# WHAT MATTERS NOW

BY JULIE LIESSE

**Editor's note:** Since its founding in 2002, OMD U.S. has been named Ad Age Media Agency of the Year three times (2005, 2009 and 2011), in addition to playing a significant role during its inaugural year in OMD Worldwide taking the 2002 Ad Age Global Agency of the Year title. On each of these occasions, Ad Age editors had an opportunity to sit down with OMD executives for an in-depth analysis of that year's performance and to discuss the accomplishments for which they were being honored. While the specifics of those discussions changed from year to year, the underlying message of an agency defining itself by its creative heritage, ambition to innovate and ability to evolve has remained constant.

To mark the 10th anniversary of its founding, OMD shared its story with Ad Age—and not surprisingly, creativity, innovation and evolution were recurring themes. But on this occasion, instead of looking back over the past year from an agency's perspective, the conversation was more about looking ahead, from the client's perspective.

Two years before OMD opened its doors in 2002, one of the most popular movies was "What Women Want," a romantic comedy in which a chauvinistic copywriter at a successful ad agency gains the ability to read women's minds after being struck by lightning. Imbued with this unassailable insight about what really matters to women, he's transformed from a lout whose solution for every creative challenge was Swedish models in bikinis to the guy who lands the Nike Women account with his insight-driven strategies and copy that struck a chord with female clients.

Spend a few days at OMD and you may feel like you're in a remake called "What Clients Want." While there have been no reports of lightning strikes at 195 Broadway in New York, the focus on creating an agency offer that is more relevant to what clients want now and will need in the coming decade is every bit as transformative.

At the time of its founding 10 years ago, conventional wisdom held that OMD U.S. would leverage its Omnicom heritage to build a global client roster and gain enormous clout in the marketplace. Over the past decade OMD has certainly validated that wisdom—but there's nothing conventional about its vision for the role of media moving forward.

"Media used to be an afterthought for most clients," says Alan Cohen, CEO of OMD U.S. "The decisions made by Page Thompson and Omnicom at the beginning of OMD anticipated—and enabled—a seismic shift in media's role in the marketing mix. We have amplified what he began." The result, from Mr. Cohen's point of view, is that "media has become the most important and most exciting part of marketing."

Now as OMD begins its second decade, it is uniquely positioned to meet client expectations in the fast-changing media world.

Founded on a mantra of "Insights. Ideas. Results," OMD strives to "have media stand as the strategy lead for our clients," Mr. Cohen says. "We are not the marketing department, but we use ad dollars to solve business and marketing problems."

## Building strategic partnerships

That philosophy is aligned with what clients want, according to a survey of marketers conducted by Advertising Age and Erdos & Morgan for OMD. When asked what they

expect from their media agency/media department in the next five years, an impressive 59 percent of respondents said their top expectation was that the media team would become more of a strategic marketing partner.

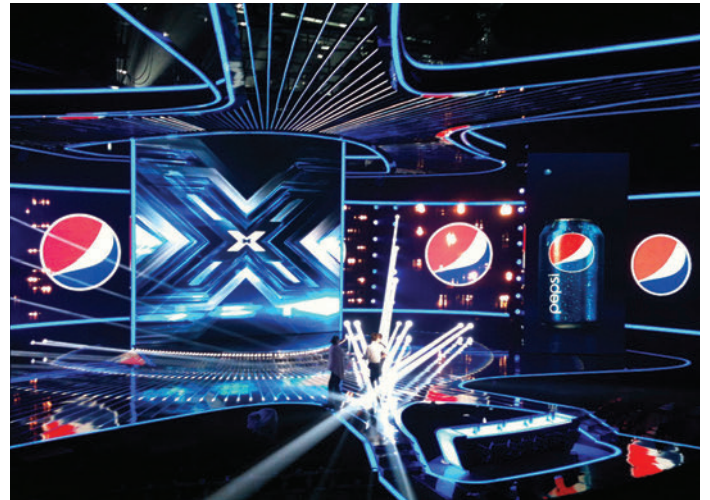
"Clients expect their media agencies to be marketing consultants," Mr. Cohen says. "Today there is so much overlap between how you spend money and your message. How you act in media today really defines who you are as a brand."

The strategic partnership between OMD and its clients has redefined the day-to-day agency/client relationship. Chris Geraci, president of broadcast at OMD, started his Omnicom career in the media department at BBDO; at that point, he says, "We were not necessarily within earshot of the most senior decision makers at our client companies. We were allocated dollars, but we weren't looked to as a source of ideas and creativity in any big way.

"As time has progressed, that has changed dramatically. Many of our clients now have CMOs and CEOs who pay laserlike focus to the media function. We have evolved as an agency, but obviously that function has evolved on the client side as well."

Jon Haber, OMD's chief innovation officer, says the media team used to see CMOs when they "wanted to make sure the pricing was right." Now, he says, "They want us in meetings because they want to understand their consumer. The CMO now understands that where we talk to consumers is as important as what we say—and that you have to have the media agency involved as early as possible to make advertising effective. When an idea of a campaign is born, the choice of platform can drive the entire strategy."

The expanded role of media agencies in part reflects the choices and complexity of today's media world. For a media agency, "Being the best buyers, efficient and smart, is simply the price of entry—it is expected," Mr. Haber says. "That is not enough any more. To be the agency of record, clients expect you to be experts in everything. Media has become so complex that it is impossible for any one person to understand everything that is available."



OMD's Content Collective unit worked with Pepsi to create its landmark multiplatform partnership with Fox's "X Factor."

## Sparking creative ideas

Mr. Haber came to OMD three and a half years ago to start its Ignition Factory, a division whose mission is to stay on top of new media platforms and how they might be used for OMD clients. He and his staff have about 50 different platforms and technologies they are watching, including everything from holograms to computer chips in mobile phones.

"As an agency, we believe we need to know as much about these things as possible," he says. "Sometimes our job is to tell clients to stay away from a new technology because it's not ready. But many of our clients want to be active players in as many places as possible, and if they are left behind now, they won't be able to make it work as effectively down the road."

Mr. Haber offers OMD's recent mobile apps training program that the agency created in partnership with Apple, an OMD client, as an example of how the agency advances clients' understanding of and comfort in new spaces. "This was an immersive experience for both OMD staff and clients, demonstrating that mobile is not just a

platform but it is a connection to people across every medium, and therefore everyone needs to understand what is going on in the space and how to apply it to their job, whether that job is agency account executive or brand CMO," he says.

Efforts by OMD's Ignition Factory to keep clients abreast of the newest apps and platforms are sometimes ahead of the market itself. In March, it sponsored a 48-hour "hackathon" with the online music service Spotify, bringing in 150 of the tech world's top developers to think through the ways brands could be included in new applications on Spotify's popular platform. Five of OMD's clients were there to share brand perspectives and also potentially partner with the app developers.

In 2011, OMD also hosted its first Innovation Incubator with client GE. The idea was to bring in students, "the next generation of digital stars," Mr. Cohen says, to talk with agency and client representatives about new platform and application ideas. "So many of our clients want to be involved in start-ups—the ideas that could lead to the next Facebook or Foursquare," he says.

Says Linda Boff, executive director, global digital marketing for GE, "As a company committed to innovation and technology, we are always looking for new and interesting platforms that can spark creative dialogue for the next generation of digital media solutions and help digital innovators and student entrepreneurs bring their ideas to life. With this project it was an instant 'yes,' and OMD went into overdrive to make it happen. They continue to be an innovative partner to GE."

Marketers are clearly interested in new platforms. In the Ad Age/OMD survey, marketers were asked to identify their biggest marketing challenges. The top challenge, named by 66 percent of respondents, was the need for new ways to reach and engage consumers.

In the Ad Age survey, marketers also were asked to rate the criteria they use in choosing an agency as a media partner. Some 92.7 percent of marketers said creativity was very important or important to their decision—rating it only behind an agency's willingness to learn the client's business. "Creativity is everyone's job at OMD, but our Ignition Factory group is dedicated to scouring the world for new ideas," Mr. Haber says.

His group has been responsible for a string of jaw-dropping initiatives, seeming to raise the bar higher with each effort.

It was OMD's team, for instance, that first approached Shazam two years ago about using its music-recognition app in an advertising context—allowing consumers to hold an iPad or mobile phone up to a television set and connect immediately with advertising content. "That made traditional media clickable," Mr. Haber says. "Those are the sorts of things our group is trying to do: To think about an issue or problem, look at the players in the space and figure out how to use technology for our clients."

And it was OMD, working with clients CBS and Pepsi, that orchestrated the first video-in-print ad in 2009, putting a paper-thin interactive video player featuring clips from the network's Monday night lineup into a print ad in the fall TV preview issue of Entertainment Weekly. Last year, to promote the premiere of reality series "The Franchise: A Season With the San Francisco Giants," OMD partnered with Major League Baseball to create a billboard that dispensed baseballs, some signed by Giants players, when people checked in on Foursquare at the MLB Fan Cave storefront in Manhattan. Those who shared their Foursquare posts on Twitter or Facebook received a show ad and tune-in message sent to their social-media accounts.



OMD's Ignition Factory created a Gatorade activation within a Ubisoft Xbox Kinect game.

OMD also helped Frito-Lay products integrate into online gaming hit FarmVille and found a way for an Ubisoft Xbox Kinect game to incorporate a special workout that could be unlocked only if a player held up a bottle of Gatorade to the TV screen.

"The media landscape is more complicated, and at the same time expectations are higher," Mr. Haber says. "Our job is to take a leadership position in building the agency model of the future."

#### Uncovering data-rich insights

In the Ad Age/OMD survey, marketers said their other top marketing challenge, along with finding new ways to engage consumers, was "proving ROI on ad and media investments," also named by 66 percent of respondents. Proving ROI comes down to good research, which always has been an OMD strength.

Adam Gitlin, director of analytics, says the agency has recognized two important things as the media world evolved: First, the explosion of digital technologies has expanded both the amount and quality of available data, and the role it plays in media buying.

"This has been a big shift for media agencies," Mr. Gitlin says. "In the past, people buying media or buying digital didn't need to know the technologies through and through. But we saw this was going to dramatically change." Although the majority of clients don't want to become experts in every technology, he says, they do want to know "that they are with an agency that can help them navigate through all these technologies and all this data."

Second, OMD realized that every client needed help in this area, no matter what its size or ongoing needs.



## 10 FIRSTS FROM THE FIRST 10

2002

In its founding year, OMD ushers in a new era of event advertising with a first-of-its-kind deal that secures more than half of the inventory from Paul McCartney's "Back in the U.S." special for OMD clients.



2003

Propelled by the launch of Checkmate, the industry's first interdisciplinary media planning process, OMD captures the first of what will eventually total seven Media Agency of the Year titles.



2004

Predating the age of behavioral targeting, OMD launches Prospector, a proprietary method for understanding consumer motivations in the context of media usage habits.



2005

OMD creates the Next Fund, the industry's first emerging media learning lab, minimizing risk and maximizing shared knowledge for clients' entry into new channels.

2006

OMD's \$300 million upfront deal with MTV Networks includes a first-of-its-kind commitment to measuring the contextual value that a media brand transfers to advertisers across multiple platforms, enabling brand and category benchmarks for measuring campaign performance.





So in 2010 the agency “overhauled our services to become much more strategic as we engage with new ad technologies,” says Mr. Gitlin, who views the structure as a key differentiator for OMD compared to other media buyers. “We created a service that would be experts on these technologies, available to all clients on an enterprise basis. We have a centralized consultancy, and we can steward through problems on an ad hoc basis when clients are not ready for a full-blown digital team.”

Mr. Gitlin says his research team has helped clients understand the importance of good analytics in today’s complicated media world. “They understand that running advertising without some semblance of measurement strategy is like driving on the highway in second gear,” he says. “You’ll get there, but not as effectively or efficiently, and you’ll be missing opportunities to accelerate what you are doing.”

He believes that the best research from a media agency doesn’t just provide accountability. “The measurement is going to be what starts the conversation the next time around,” he says. “When the campaign is over, our idea is to come out with something that feeds the next campaign. That might be something we learned, perhaps a trend or insight that we didn’t know was there.”

**Producing content for maximum results**

In the Ad Age/OMD survey, 56.5 percent of marketers said a third big marketing challenge was “securing enough budget to fund important initiatives.”

One way to make client budgets work harder is by crafting deals for branded entertainment and product integrations. OMD created its Content Collective last year “to add that next layer of value for clients and really expand the experience beyond running traditional 30-second brand spots,” says Claudia Cahill, a branded entertainment star OMD hired to run Content Collective as chief content officer. “Our custom research shows that if a brand has an integration in a show, alongside a regular media buy, the brand can experience exponential increases in results.”

The increasing priority accorded marketer-owned content and its growing piece of the media investment pie was the impetus behind OMD’s recent Content Day event, when the agency brought clients together with many of the top names in entertainment production and talent management. The daylong event was designed to help some of the world’s biggest brands rethink their go-to market strategies specific to entertainment and content initiatives.

As one of the more than three dozen clients in attendance at the event, State Farm Advertising Director Ed Gold says, “The world has changed as content producers approach advertisers with integration opportunities prior to garnering a distribution partner. So the key question is, how we can all put the best product out there to meet everyone’s objectives, including engaging the consumer audience for our brands? This is not a simple challenge, and in hosting this event OMD has taken the first step to bring thought leadership forward in the content development world.”

Mr. Cohen says that branded content, such as Pepsi’s integration into Fox’s “X Factor” last fall, helps ensure the success of a television buy. “This takes the pressure off the ratings, because we know those are fragile,” he says. “The content creates value within the media ecosystem so that the media buy is not just about the time the program runs on air.”

As part of the “X Factor” deal, Pepsi produced spots specifically for the show, high-



Claudia Cahill



Jonathan Haber



Chris Geraci

lighting the brand’s history of using popular music icons as spokesmen. In addition, OMD secured special elements—such as the final Pepsi Challenge, where Pepsi social media users had the chance to vote on the songs handed to the show’s five finalists to perform. All the content lived on Pepsi’s online and social media platforms.

Ms. Cahill also worked on a deal for Pepsi as part of a traditional upfront purchase of spots on February’s Grammy Awards telecast. “My group wanted to build out engaging pieces of the program to keep consumers involved beyond that one broadcast,” she says. Pepsi and OMD decided to tap into the Best New Artist Grammy category “because it generates much of the watercooler chatter,” Ms. Cahill says, “and the Pepsi brand is about discovery in the music space.” Her team worked with Pandora, the personalized Internet radio station, to develop the Pepsi Best New Artist video channel, where Pandora users could check out the nominees for best new artist in anticipation of the Grammy telecast.

“A lot of clients struggle with a way to fund content like this,” Ms. Cahill says. “But there are so many resources in the marketplace that we can leverage through a client’s media investment, if it’s done properly.”

“The content developed with ‘X Factor’ and the Grammys reinforced Pepsi’s place in music by enabling consumers to participate in music in new ways,” says Heidi Sandreuter, director-media strategy and investment for Pepsi North America. “With the proper media partnerships, we expect to build ‘content asks’ into all of our media negotiations, increasing the value of our media well beyond an efficient buy. Our team at OMD, led by Content Collective, understands and knows how to navigate all of these nuances, strategically and creatively.”

Part of what makes all this work, of course, is OMD’s considerable presence in the media marketplace—the dollars it represents in the upfront TV market, in particular. Says Mr. Geraci, “If you have a big buying organization that’s connected in small and large ways to the media owners and marketplace, where so many ideas are flowing, you are going to have a vibrant organization.”

He adds, “It’s always hard to say what’s going to be next, but the way we are set up positions us well for the future. There will always be media, there will always be consumers and we will always have clients who want to reach those consumers. I can’t imagine that crucial point of intersection to be changing any time soon. We will continue to use the relationships and knowledge we have to stay on top of that point.”

**2007**

OMD breaks new ground at the Cannes Festival of Media, earning a Gold Lion for a consumer-generated spot for Frito-Lay. The spot makes consumer generation the hot topic at the festival and also helps OMD earn Media Agency of the Year honors for the most number of Lions (four) for an individual agency.



**2008**

OMD launches the industry’s most advanced business intelligence dashboard system, enabling an unprecedented ability to track, respond to and adjust media plans in real time.

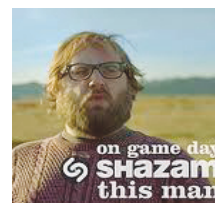


**2009**

Less than a year after its founding, OMD’s Ignition Factory media creativity unit launches two of 2009’s most talked about campaigns. In July, OMD becomes the first agency to crack the code on using Kindle as an ad platform, and a month later the agency claims another first with its Effie Award-winning video-in-print ad for CBS’ Monday night programming.

**2010**

New Orleans wins the Super Bowl, but it’s OMD that changes the game with a Levi’s Dockers spot that includes the first Shazam interface in an ad. By 2012, more than 30 percent of all Super Bowl ads are “Shazamable.”



**2011**

Partnering with GE, OMD takes a unique approach to bridging the industry’s digital talent gap with the GE/OMD Innovation Incubator. The first-of-its-kind digital media innovation lab for student entrepreneurs delivers on multiple fronts, bringing new thinking to the agency’s digital table and giving students a new take on the agency career path.



**2012**

OMD turns the app-development paradigm—develop now, monetize later—on its head, partnering with Spotify on the first brand-sponsored hackathon. OMD pairs aspiring developers with brand experts, who offer insights on building an advertiser-friendly app.



# WHAT CLIENTS WANT

BY JULIE LIESSE

**T**he media world has changed dramatically in the 10 years since OMD opened its doors. Yet even as the business has become infinitely more complex, it remains rooted in a single simple question: What do clients want?

“From day one, our offer has been defined in terms of what matters most to clients,” says OMD U.S. CEO Alan Cohen. “As we enter our second decade, we want to assure that our vision remains aligned with marketers’ priorities and needs.”

On behalf of OMD, Advertising Age and Erdos & Morgan earlier this year conducted a survey of agency and client executives. Clients were asked to rate the qualities they valued most in choosing a media agency. The top-rated quality was agencies’ “willingness to learn my business,” rated very important or important by 96.7 percent of client respondents. In contrast, only 72.9 percent of clients said actual “experience in my category” was very important or important.

But agencies think clients put a higher priority on experience versus the commitment to learn to serve a client. Some 86.4 percent of agency respondents said they thought clients valued “experience in the client’s category” as very important or important. Only 84.7 percent said they thought clients valued the “willingness to learn” as equally important.

Clients also listed as top qualities in choosing a media agency: creativity (92.7 percent cited this as very important or important), data and analytics (92.0 percent), efficient business processes (91.4 percent), effective money managers (89.4 percent), chemistry (88.8 percent) and competitive pricing (88.7 percent).

In the survey, clients were asked to name the biggest marketing challenges they face. They listed “proving ROI on ad and media investments” and “the need for new ways to reach and engage consumers” as the top two. Each was named by two-thirds of respondents.

When asked about the top priorities from their media agencies in the next five years, 58.9 percent of client respondents named “morphing into more of a strategic marketing partner for clients” the No. 1 answer. Another 57.0 percent of clients named “seamlessly integrating digital into all media plans,” and 51.0 percent said “pushing the boundaries on the definition of media” into nontraditional platforms.

By contrast, only 45.9 percent of agency respondents saw “morphing into more of a strategic marketing partner” as a top priority for clients—behind “seamlessly integrating digital into all media plans” (listed by 65.2 percent of agency respondents) and “pushing the boundaries on the definition of media” (listed by 50.1 percent of agency respondents).

When asked “What function (of your media agency) do you value the most to move your business forward?” clients far and away chose “consumer insights” as the No. 1 function of a media agency. Almost 50.0 percent more clients listed “insights” than any other answer. The second most-valued function listed by clients was an agency’s “digital strategy,” and then “analytics/research/measurement.” Agency respondents first listed “analytics/research/measurement” as the function most valued by clients, followed by “channel/account planning” and “consumer insights.”

“This survey showed that the gap between what clients are getting from agencies and what they want is the difference between functional offer and strategic counsel,” Mr. Cohen says, “and it shows the forward path.”

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## LEADERSHIP LEGACY

# THOMPSON AND COHEN ON OMD PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

For all the talk about the short life span of the CMO, the turnover at the top media agencies may be even higher. According to a November 2011 article in *Advertising Age*, there were at least eight major CEO changes at media agencies during the previous 18 months. Yet over the course of OMD's 10-year history, only two people have sat in the CEO chair: Page Thompson, who held the title from the agency's founding in 2002 until 2008, when he was named North American CEO of Omnicom Media Group, and Alan Cohen, who took over from Mr. Thompson in 2008. To mark the agency's 10th anniversary, the two sat down to talk about OMD—past, present and future.

**Alan Cohen:** So, Page, tell us what it was like back in 2002—what the mood of the industry was and how you formed a vision for what OMD should be?

**Page Thompson:** It was a crazy time back then. We were fundamentally the last holding company to unbundle media from its full-service agencies and consolidate the individual agency resources under a single media brand—which may seem surprising when you consider that Omnicom was the Big Bang firm. But you have to understand, OMD came out of three highly creative agencies. You had BBDO, DDB and TBWA, the three most creative agencies, and frankly they saw media almost as an extension of the creative departments. So, extracting them at the time was more difficult, and that took longer. But in the end I think that the delay worked to our benefit because the learnings we had from watching the earlier entries helped us avoid missteps and do it better.

I think it's important to remember, too, that it wasn't really the agencies saying, "We're going to change," it was the clients demanding change as media was becoming a more complex and critical component of the marketing strategy. I think that set the tone for us coming together.

**Mr. Cohen:** So it was really the fact that the organization was formed from the media departments from the three most creative agencies that has stayed in the DNA of OMD—being the biggest and being the most creative all through your tenure and mine, so far. But being the last entry was it harder to differentiate OMD in those early days?

**Mr. Thompson:** I don't think it was, because Joe Uva, the former president of sales for Turner Broadcasting who became OMD's first Global CEO, recognized the fact that the position of this company was one of creativity. That was the foundation of the agency and that was our go-to-market strategy. And that put us on the path to our positioning of insights, ideas and results. The fact that we based our philosophy on business results, not just delivering reach frequencies, was in and of itself a huge point of differentiation at a time when buying clout was seen as the coin of the realm.

And of course the other thing we had working for us was the people who came over with us—people like Monica Karo, Barbara Burger, Kathleen Brookbanks and Chris Geraci—the core people who came together as a team and bonded. It was amazing how quickly we took three different agencies and put them together into one major, powerful vehicle.

**Mr. Cohen:** You mentioned being the first media agency to stake the claim that media can influence business results, which is something that we live by today.

The promise you created 10 years ago—insights, ideas, results—was so simple yet at the same time they define everything we do, and really redefined the role of media. How did you see this long before the rest of the industry?

**Mr. Thompson:** I wish I could take all the credit for that, but I can't. Like everything else about the birth of OMD, it was very much a collaborative effort. Having come out of DDB where I had Keith Reinhard as a mentor, I was a firm believer in the power of media insights and the need to look at media in the context of business results. Ten years ago no one was talking about that.

Keep in mind, too, that this was going to be our global positioning, so I was working with Colin Gottlieb, who was my counterpart in Europe. In the U.S., we wanted the positioning to be "Consumer Insights Bringing Business Results." But in Europe, their concept was "Superior Ideas Bringing Business Results."

So we're going back and forth on this and then we had one of those magical moments when you sat there and there it is, staring at you—consumer insights, superior ideas, business results—Insights. Ideas. Results. And the beauty of it is that it was totally ahead of its time then, and more meaningful than ever before 10 years later.

**Mr. Cohen:** Not only in the U.S. but globally, it's what we all live by.

**Mr. Thompson:** Again, when you have a battle cry like that and everyone grasps it, it brings the network together.

**Mr. Cohen:** If you go back over your tenure, what are some of your proudest accomplishments in leading OMD in the U.S.?

**Mr. Thompson:** There were two great accomplishments early on. When we formed OMD, I remember Joe Uva sitting there saying, "I have a three-year goal to become agency of the year." We all looked at each other and said, "What, is he nuts?" I mean, we were just putting this together, this is not the easiest thing. Well, we did it after the first year and became global agency of the year. It was one of those magical moments in history where everything was running on all cylinders.

I think you could also say being part of the pitch to win the McDonald's gold cup. There are watershed moments in everyone's career, and that is one of them. It's important to note that because it changed everything and legitimized everything on a global basis.

The final thing was our growth—we went from the third-largest agency to the largest in two years, and of course that's a legacy that you have continued. Those are some really important moments that I have great pride in, not for myself, but for the people who work here.

Of course there've been some tough moments too, and I think those are the really defining moments for a company and for a CEO. For instance, when you came on board in 2008, you had started some great things and we were growing, and then—boom!—the economy collapsed.



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Alan Cohen and Page Thompson

“After the crash we went to every client and proactively re-evaluated their media plans, looking ... to save them money as the economy was tanking. And while it started out as more of a one-shot effort to help calm people’s fears, it ended up being a defining moment in terms of how we can best serve our clients in a world where both the economic reality and the media landscape became vastly different from anything we had known before.” —*Alan Cohen*

How did that become a defining moment for you?

**Mr. Cohen:** As I look back on our immediate response to the crash—which was the Economic Recovery Act—I can see the seeds of our broader vision. After the crash we went to every client and proactively re-evaluated their media plans, looking for any and all ways to save them money as the economy was tanking. And while it started out as more of a one-shot effort to help calm people’s fears, it ended up being a defining moment in terms of how we can best serve our clients in a world where both the economic reality and the media landscape became vastly different from anything we had known before. And that meant becoming more proactive about bringing them new information, new ideas and new approaches. So in a way 2008 helped make us a better and more valuable partner to our clients.

**Mr. Thompson:** How do you support that level of proactivity on an ongoing basis? And what are the deliverables?

**Mr. Cohen:** We started by building on what you had created and what was in the DNA here already—insights and ideas. It was a matter of amplifying and accelerating the process—giving the clients deeper insights and the newest thinking before they asked

for it, and preferably before the marketplace even knows about it.

**Mr. Thompson:** But at the same time you still had to plan and buy media.

**Mr. Cohen:** Exactly. And we couldn’t ask the account teams to take on what was essentially another full-time role. That’s how the Ignition Factory was born—we wanted to build a media innovation and ideation resource that could support the account teams in bringing first-to-market ideas and executions to clients. It started with a handful of people in 2008, and today we have more than 50 people.

**Mr. Thompson:** And from what I’ve seen you cast a wide net in staffing this, bringing in a lot of new talent from outside the agency world.

**Mr. Cohen:** We intentionally looked for people who didn’t grow up in this space, but who know marketing and are tuned in to the latest technology and trends. We have people who’ve worked in fashion, in entertainment management, in the music industry. And I think it’s that range that makes them so effective and valuable to the teams—they’re looking at media from a totally different perspective and that’s what leads to breakthrough ideas.

# 10

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to reinvent the model to the point where we're more like consultants for our clients.

**Mr. Thompson:** You did a program last summer—the GE/OMD Innovation Incubator—that I think was a great example of how we can move out of the traditional agency role and deliver value on a whole different level.

**Mr. Cohen:** That's a perfect example. We went to GE and said, "We're thinking about creating a program where we would work with student-owned digital media start-ups—one of which could be the next Flipboard, Foursquare or Facebook—and teaching them how to monetize their models from a marketer's perspective, and getting ground-floor entry to the next big thing. We'd also have them working with our digital team, bringing the next generation of digital ideas to the strategy table. Would you want to partner with us on something like that?"

Well, GE loved the idea—and that we proactively brought it to them—and the GE/OMD Innovation Incubator was a terrific collaboration that delivered value all around, even beyond our relationship with GE. Our digital teams were energized by working with the students. And as we both know, digital's best and brightest aren't exactly flocking to agencies, but our program opened their eyes to options outside of start-ups—as a matter of fact one of our Incubator students now works in the Ignition Factory. So we're really looking forward to year two of the program this summer.

**Mr. Thompson:** One final question: What keeps you ticking? What keeps you motivated?

**Mr. Cohen:** In any job you have, you have to have one thing—a passion for what you're doing. Obviously you love it and I love it; if we didn't love it, we wouldn't want to keep doing it. But we always have to be reinventing to stay ahead—that's the job and if we don't do it there's always someone else waiting for a chance to do it better. So we push the envelope, and we try new things. Then we make the new thing the thing—and we start all over again.



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