

TBWA named Adweek Global Agency of 2021

With double-digit growth in 2021, its biggest year ever, and significant growth over 2020 with an array of new business wins, stellar campaigns for clients like Amazon and Apple, and holding on to its top 20 clients throughout the pandemic, it is clear why TBWA has been named Adweek's Global Agency of the Year for 2021.



Source: TBWA in Times Square, New York

The agency last earned that title in 2018 and before that won in 2008.

Based on its Apple ads alone, TBWA would be at the top of the agency world every year, but its expansive list of clients and its push for top creative make it a global player far beyond the tech world.

The depth of TBWA's clientele was only bolstered over the past year by new wins including Behr Paint, Moderna, Klarna and Discover, in addition to Philips.

Those clients have helped grow TBWA's business to the tune of double digits through September versus 2020. (Omnicom does not disclose exact figures for its network results.)

"There are probably two things that really drove our growth," says Deepthi Prakash, global director of product and marketing. "One is our local strength, and the second thing is the diversity of our client base."

Local strength comes from a wide range of network agencies, from big shops like TBWA\Chiat\Day LA and NY, to regional shops including Lucky Generals London, 180 Amsterdam, Heimat Berlin, TBWA\Helsinki and Integer Istanbul. TBWA\Paris recently merged with Proximity Paris, and the agency will grow in 2021 by 19%.

Growth through disruption

After two years of a pandemic that has completely altered how business is done, disruption has become a constant in the advertising industry. TBWA\Worldwide saw that disruption as a chance to grow.

“There’s something about disruption as our method and in our culture that we seem to thrive in chaos,” says Luke Eid, chief innovation officer at TBWA\Worldwide.

Since joining TBWA\Worldwide in 2014, president and CEO Troy Ruhanen has pushed the notion of disruption forward, continually striving to change the agency’s culture and launch new products and services that help both the agency and its clients.

He saw the pandemic as an opportunity to reshape the business, become better global communicators and refine the company’s strategy.

“As we continue to see the amount of change that’s going on, you have to be at the pace of change,” Ruhanen says. “This is an opportunity to continue to change - not to go back to what we were pre-Covid, but to continue to evolve as a company.”

DisruptionX

Early in the pandemic, the agency went on a fact-finding mission to understand how disruption was interpreted and practiced across the collective to ensure it was consistent.

Its findings led to an operational system upgrade called DisruptionX, a six-module training workflow launched in early 2021 for the roughly 10,000 people in the collective.

“The beauty of having a moment to reframe what we saw as the problem in the industry and for ourselves - it gave us a compass,” says Eid.

“As we are expanding our view of brand ecosystems and brands, we’re expanding the spaces that creativity plays a role in, and therefore, we are now expanding the spaces that we need to innovate within.”

For TBWA, that has led to more trust in the agency among clients which, in turn, has led to requests for expanded remits and more work at greater scale.

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