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Accenture Song's stunning talent raid on Initiative



By Chris Pash | 17 May 2024

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Mel Fein's defection, along with her two lieutenants, to Accenture Song from Initiative is one of the biggest talent raids the local media industry has seen.

Industry insiders say the switch will more than likely mean a big sector shake up as Accenture Song, led locally by The Monkeys founder Mark Green, goes hard in the media market.

Green has bought himself a rainmaker trio -- Fein, the Initiative Australia CEO, plus Chris Colter, chief strategy and product officer, and Sam Geer, managing director.

Accenture Song says it will significantly enhance and expand the existing media services offered to clients in ANZ.

"There is no doubt that media is a business growth driver and strategic differentiator for our clients," said Green.

"Melissa, Sam and Chris are strong hires for us, and their addition to our team in Australia reflects our global strategy to deliver future facing media and integrated solutions for our clients.

"Media is a growth area globally for Accenture Song and we are seeing momentum in our end-to-end media offerings in all regions. These appointments serve to extend our footprint into this market that will improve our ability to service the region."

The hole in initiative is large. IPG Mediabrands CEO Mark Coad was this morning calling a town hall to explain what's happened.

The lure used to entice the trio, with an enviable account pitch win record, to make such a big switch is, so far, unknown.

While the Initiative was on a pitch winning streak last year, the agency recently lost [Afterpay](#) and the agency is currently defending [Specsavers](#).

"The offer must have been attractive," said John Steedman, a major figure in the media sector. "Equity? Good luck to them. Big hole at Initiative, but everything is replaceable."

Virginia Scully, formerly managing partner, people, at independent media agency Hatched, now at her consultancy [Human Kind Collective](#) said Mel Fein and her team are great operators and clearly very tight.

"So they are likely to want to continue to work together and are also attractive as a 'package' based on their success at Initiative," she said.

Simon Hadfield, executive partner at DMCG Global, an executive search and recruitment business, sees it as partly the lure of consultancies.

"Mel, Sam and Chris have all had good tenures with Initiative so it feels like the right time to try something new, you can't blame them," Hadfield said.

"Let's hope the grass is in fact greener and their timesheet filling out skills are up to scratch. Well done I say."

Media analyst Steve Allen, at independent Pearman, said this, in his memory, is the biggest defection any media agency has suffered locally.

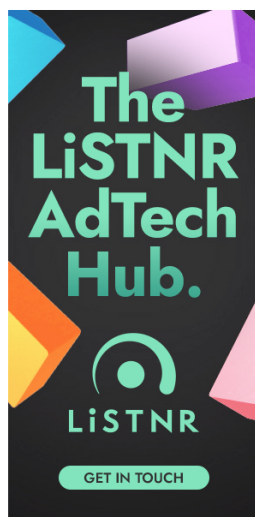
"In my mind pretty clearly with the accounts and commercial leads Accenture Song is attracting, ... integrated full service is increasing what their prospects and clients are asking for," he said.

"Or Accenture Song see this as an opportunity to do the same, and own more or all of the major client communications pie. Integration seems to be the objective.

"Plus, naturally, great talent with excellent business skills, strong understanding of how to create media marketing strategies, and creativity."



Credit: Logan Weaver via Unsplash



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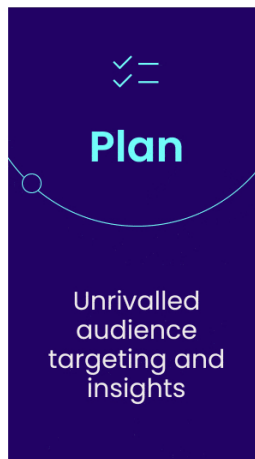
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A senior executive at an independent agency said it's a bold move.

"In theory i can understand the rationale, however we've seen similar moves before and it hasn't panned out for various reasons," they told AdNews.

"Not sure clients are willing to bundle media, creative and consultancy services with a big four consultancy in the current market. From the outside, I'm also not sure there will be the right cultural alignment that is important to make such a venture successful."

Stephen Wright, media business director, TrinityP3, said the great thing about the media industry is how dynamic it is.

"We see talent and money flow to the best opportunities all the time and that's what keeps our industry healthy and vibrant," said Wright.

"Accenture's move overnight has the potential to significantly realign the media agency sector in Australia and will be watched closely by clients and competitors alike.

"The loss of Mel, Sam and Chris is significant - they are one of the best pitch teams in Australia and Initiative's new business record is testament to that. Initiative Australia has done a lot of work to establish itself as a leader globally and the opportunity for Mark Coad and the team now is to bring fresh eyes and build the next evolution of their product."

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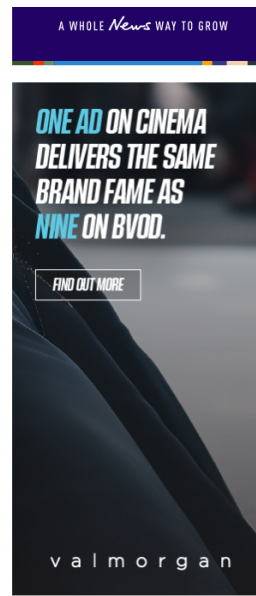
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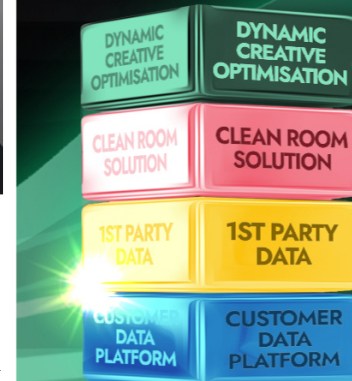


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