



OPINION

The questions Accenture's raid on Initiative's leadership raises for agencies and marketers

TrinityP3's Stephen Wright looks at what the questions Accenture's recent raid on Initiative's leadership team - Melissa Fein, Sam Geer and Chris Colter - raises for the market.

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by **STEPHEN WRIGHT**



Every few years it seems an event happens in the Australian media agencyland which is seismic and which realigns the landscape for all players.

Last Friday feels like one of those. In 2013, it was the [Ikon leadership departures](#). In 2015, it was [the Mediacom troubles](#). And in 2021, it was [Aimee Buchanan's defection](#) from Omnicom to GroupM.

Each of these shifted some of the power dynamics in the vital multi-billion dollar focal point of the marketing ecosystem held by the six holding groups and their respective media agencies.

It has been more than five years since [Accenture acquired The Monkeys](#), and for much of that time both Mark Green and the wider Accenture Song group has been clear to the market that 'media isn't for us'.

On Friday, that tone had definitely changed, with [Green telling media](#): "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."

One wonders if [last year's loss Telstra served](#) was a bit of a catalyst to review its aversion to media and look to cater to a growing number of clients who are seeking holistic offerings.

Regardless of the driver, it is a move which will have larger ramifications for the market. In many ways, this is hardly surprising given the importance of media revenues for the holding groups and its role as a glue for a fully integrated service offering.

For most clients, paid media has always been and remains the largest spend within the PESO framework (PESO refers to paid, earned, shared, owned).



Melissa Fein

Accenture [purchased a best in market creative product](#) in its acquisition of The Monkeys and are well placed in digital, tech and AI with an advanced Market Mix model in its "MMM" product.

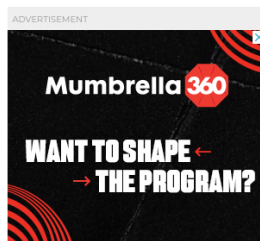
Accenture have technology in their DNA and continues to deliver leading edge AI services in the marketing area.

The acquisition of the Monkeys provided them with best in market Creative services.

The addition of Mel, Sam and Chris in the media area completes the full range of skills and services required to provide 'end to end' fully integrated solutions comparable with the best of the multinational groups.

For the other holding groups, this move raises the spectre of another major competitor seeking to optimise content, data and tech in a new offering and new way.

While many of the holding groups promise a fully integrated offering,



many clients find they achieve varying degrees of success in bringing together a genuine integrated offering.

From TrinityP3's experience in running pitches, those agencies who have made greater progress in bringing together an integrated offering have seen increasingly reaping dividends and grown their market share.



Sam Geer

Truly integrated high quality solutions solve the myriad of problems which face the modern CMO and their marketing teams.

However, bringing everything together in one simple offering is no easy challenge and we can expect Mel, Sam and Chris to design a media product that reflects the new marketplace unencumbered by the existing structures and framework of the holding companies.

It will also likely reflect how artificial intelligence is rapidly changing the market and the old paradigms, on which many of the holding companies have been built.

Increasingly many are finding the old rules no longer apply.

AI and tech based learnings are dominating industry conversation and many are predicting the traditional media buying department is one of the parts of the ecosystem most exposed to being automated systems using machine learning.

As an industry, the media agency space is perhaps most exposed to a world where AI algorithms will increasingly drive clients to the same cost efficient media environments.

However, smart thinking and doing things differently will be the way in which shrewd marketers 'punch above their weight' and differentiate themselves from their competitors.



Chris Colter

As I noted on Friday, the departing trio are one the best pitch teams in Australia and Initiative's new business record and multiple awards are a testament to that.

None of the award winning campaigns won by Initiative in recent years would have come out of AI. What it highlights is that in this new media era a higher price will be put on great thinking.

The more AI takes over the higher the value of the best thinkers and talent will be and this in turn will have implications for all parts of the market.

We live in a dynamic space and industry. We see talent and money flow to the best opportunities all the time and that's what keeps our industry healthy and vibrant. But as AI commoditises certain functions, it will change the value we put on other elements of the value chain.

As Accenture Song global CEO David Droga has observed, we can't fear technology; rather there is a symbiotic relationship between technology and great strategic thinking/creativity. The challenge for all of us – be it marketers, agencies or media owners – is how we bring together these three elements in our respective businesses.

All eyes now will be on Accenture as they evolve and bring together their vision of these three crucial elements.

Stephen Wright is media business director at TrinityP3.

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Richard Goodrich 22 May 24

Wristy, with all due respect the only genuine seismic shift in media was when Toyota's Bob Miller took on the cartel of then media accreditation authority under the trade practices act, on restraint of trade, brought in by Whitlam and Lionel Murphy after then 'It's Time' election. Miller won & that opened the doors for Dennis Merchant (Vale), Mitchell, Total media et al to open the market up. Then the holding companies started up their own media brands. The rest, as they say, is history.
As exciting as it is for Accenture, Mel etc, time as always will tell however, & I wish them every success. However as the editor of La Figaro wrote just after the French revolution, now that was seismic...The more things change... the more they stay the same.."

Richard Goodrich.

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Crazy 21 May 24

Stephen, if you think the Accenture MMM model is advanced, you have no idea what you're looking at. The only advanced thing is the Price tag!!!

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Agency Observer 21 May 24

Good piece Steve.

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